

CAREER TRANSITION FOR THE 40 SOMETHING

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A noted author and expert on one of the most well-known and trusted personality assessments, the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, recently spoke at a seminar in Atlanta, GA. He said that people often become more aware of their mortality in their late 40's and early 50's. This prompts them to consciously or subconsciously want to strengthen some of their less developed psychological traits in order to feel more complete.

Most of us know people in this age range who have embraced new careers that are dramatically different from their established career path. The workaholic attorney who resigns his six-figure position to renovate houses. The senior executive who elects to stay at home with the children. The scenarios are endless. One explanation for this is that new career paths give people the opportunity to develop under utilized psychological preferences in order to feel more integrated.

So, what is different about a career transition at this age from one at, say, age 27? Let's look at some factors that are important to consider.

Transferable skills. Most of us in our 40's and 50's have worked long enough to accumulate a considerable body of knowledge and an array of skills. Evaluate your skills and recognize which ones will assist you in transitioning into a new arena. Employers typically feel more comfortable hiring candidates who have experience similar to what their position requires. An efficient office manager has developed good organizational skills. An office manager applying for an event planning position should be able to articulate how his or her experience and skills will benefit the event-planning employer. Be prepared to promote your skills and address any concern an employer may have.

Assessment. Contact a qualified career consultant and explore career and personality testing options. What if you are interested in a sales profession but are highly introverted? Is this really a good fit for you?

Examine with an objective professional what is driving your desire to change jobs or careers. The most successful career transitions occur when people embrace new positions or areas of interest rather than change jobs to get away from a bad situation.

Resumé. Devote most of your resumé to your accomplishments, not job duties. Write your accomplishments displaying skills that will be needed in your new profession. Sift through your work history and pull out what you have done in the past that will be of value in your new profession. Employers assume that your past work performance is the best indicator of future performance, and your accomplishments indicate how you actually performed the work. This also helps distinguish your resumé from those of other applicants who simply list what they were hired to do, rather than how they

performed. Use accomplishments when you interview. Give examples of your behavior and accomplishments in specific situations.

Know your **financial** needs and obligations. Prepare a budget and be realistic about how much money you need to live. Is this the best time for you to transition into a new profession? Will you have to take a pay cut? Do you need additional education? How much in savings do you have to draw on?

Salary. Research and know what market compensation is for your new position. Will you have to take a position that is more entry level than your current job? How much of a pay cut is realistic for you? How long will it take you to return to your current level of compensation? Are you planning to go into business for yourself? What will you charge?

Investigate your options. What opportunities exist for someone with your skills, personality, values and interests? What new professions have emerged since you were last in the job market? The world of work is in the greatest transition that we have experienced since the Industrial Revolution. Employers are clamoring for dedicated employees and are willing to hire people who need training. Are you a subject matter expert in your field? Consulting may be an option for you.

Training. What additional education and skills do you need? How long will it take you to complete a training program or earn your MBA? What will make you more marketable? Some government agencies provide free education or training in areas where there is a shortage of qualified candidates. Traditional education and training are being replaced by on-line classes that offer more flexibility if you need to work while you are in school.

Occupational Outlook. Find out what the Department of Labor is predicting for the profession you are investigating. The America's Job Bank, www.ajb.org, has information on the growth or decline of every job imaginable. For example, garment manufacturing is an industry that is moving overseas. Not a good time to enter this profession in the U.S.! Is technology going to eliminate your new job in five years?

Informational interviews. Talk to people who are currently working in the field that you are trying to enter. What is it like on a daily basis? What do they enjoy about their work? What opportunities exist in this profession? What is changing? What will it look like in five years? In ten years?

Professional associations are a great place to network. Almost every profession has at least one professional organization. Your reference librarian can assist you in locating chapters in your area and this information is also readily available on the Internet. Many professional organizations have job banks that can only be viewed by members.

In summary, due to the entry of increasing numbers of Gen-Xers into the workforce, technological advances, and globalization the workplace is changing. Opportunities

exist now that were inconceivable even just five years ago. People of all ages are successfully navigating the waters of career transition every day and new doors are continually opening to mature workers with 20 and 25 years of experience. Don't let your age hold you back!