

BUSINESS

# Looking for a second career? 'Take it a step at a time.'

Networking is job No. 1 for those changing their professional trajectory.

By **Burl Gilyard** (<https://www.startribune.com/burl-gilyard/8532056/>) Star Tribune |

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What started out as a job has turned into a profession. Months turned into years. You worked your way up and now make a decent salary.

But things have changed. The company is different, management has been overhauled and your values have transformed. Where you work no longer feels like home.

What now?

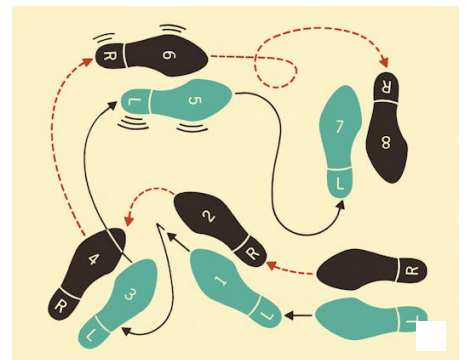
Freda Marver of Begin Again Coaching said her clients are often frustrated with their current jobs but don't have a clear idea where that should lead them.

"Most people, when they come to a career coach, they don't know what they want. They know what they don't want," Marver said.

People are often searching for causes, values and a mission they align with. A quest for more meaningful work could lead to working with nonprofits, artistic groups and environmental organizations.

"The work that I do tends to be with people who have been doing something for a while but it doesn't feel right to them," Marver said. "People feel what they do goes against the grain of what they stand for."

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If you're ready for a new career path, there are steps you can take.

Finances, flexibility and personality can also play a role in finding more meaningful work. Here's how to work through a career change.

## Find your path

Many people look to career coaches to help navigate the uncertainty of making a major change. Those services average \$170 an hour, [according to an industry trade group \(https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/smart-money/career-coach-costs\)](https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/smart-money/career-coach-costs), but costs can vary widely.

More than job hunting, coaches can help manage the anxiety that comes with a major life change.

"It can be scary territory," Marver said. "As a career coach, I want to lighten that load of misery."

To go it on your own, first determine what kind of job you'd like to pursue. Maybe that won't be immediately clear. You will likely need to do some soul searching, or take some online aptitude or career tests.

You should also reach out to people who can help, experts say. Do you know others who have changed careers? Can you connect with people who are doing what you would like to do? Talk to them and pick their brains.

Doing informational interviews can be a tool for fact-finding and research. Analyze your interests and what you have done well in the past.

"I think it takes some creativity and it takes some strategy. You're not going to figure it out in three hours," Marver said. "For most people it's something that kind of happens gradually."

Seeking a second career or a job change is not limited to older workers, and it may not always result in a new career.

Some people might decide to stay in their current job, Marver said, if they shift their thinking and focus on what's working well. Others might be more energized to make big changes.

## Start networking

Getting active and showing up in person can pay off.

"They can't just sit at home and work on the computer and think that the jobs will come in," said Stan Rosen, owner of Career Lifestyles. "One of the biggest things is networking. The way to network is to show up all over the place."

Doing volunteer work can be one way of networking.

"Some volunteer positions might turn into new careers," Rosen said. Getting extra training or education can also lead to new connections and open up opportunities.

LinkedIn can be a source of networking groups and to make connections that lead to in-person interactions.

Career coach Tom Colosimo volunteers for Crossroads Career Network, a networking job support group, and serves as treasurer for the Minnesota Career Development Association.

"Looking for a job or a career change is like project management," Colosimo said.

## Upgrade interview skills

Colosimo, 70, calls himself a "career architect."

"I'm a career changer myself," he said. "In my case it was getting burned out on accounting."

Many different factors can prompt someone to seek a career change. Some people are laid off, others have reached a point of financial security and want to leave corporate life. Others can get worn out on companies consistently restructuring or changing priorities.

Colosimo conducts mock interviews with job-seekers as practice. He encourages people to be organized, ask direct and succinct questions and to know the business to which they're applying.

"You've got to be a believer in where you want to go," Colosimo said.

## Focus on your expertise

Career coach Nancy Fraasch starts by doing both personality and value assessments of people looking to make a career change.

"The easiest and fastest way to get a job is using the skills that you have," Fraasch said.

Some people can move into consulting. Others may want to change schedules and work part time. Some may be working their way toward retirement.

"I see people flounder for a long time trying to figure it out," Fraasch said. "Take it a step at a time."

In a blog post last year, Fraasch posed the question: "Do You Need a 'Career Pivot?'"

"A pivot could be changing industries, product line, company size, job role or other small changes to best utilize your skills/expertise that you enjoy using," she wrote. "What are your skills and expertise that you enjoy using that you want to take with you to your next role?"

Fraasch said many workers have similar reasons for wanting to make a career change.

"Maybe they want more free time, maybe they want more independence," Fraasch said. "Our values change as we go through life."

## 'Take a leap'

Prime Digital Academy, based in the Grain Exchange Building in downtown Minneapolis, offers training for people looking to transition to technology.

"We are designed to support career changers," said Christy Larsen, director of employer partnerships at the academy.

Larsen said that people come from a wide variety of backgrounds to learn full-stack engineering or user experience design. Since 2015 more than 2,000 people have graduated from Prime Digital Academy.

One of those graduates, Anaïs Wittrock-Roske, worked as a nurse for five years in intensive care, then sports medicine.

"At about the five-year mark I decided to take a leap," she said. "After 2020 I just felt really burned out from being in medicine."

Wittrock-Roske changed gears to tech after taking Prime Digital Academy's user experience design course in 2021.

After completing her tech training, Wittrock-Roske initially worked for a startup and joined Optum in 2022.

"It's been life-changing," she said. "It's been really positive."

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