



FOREWORD BY DICK BOLLES  
AUTHOR OF *WHAT COLOR IS YOUR PARACHUTE?*

# FIND YOUR FIT

→ A Practical Guide to ←  
.....  
Landing a Job You'll Love  
.....

**SUE KAIDEN**

— EDITOR —

# More Praise for This Book

“*Find Your Fit* has distilled some of the best career advice from expert coaches to help you land your desired job. Read this book if you want to successfully navigate the new employment landscape with confidence.”

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*New York Times* Bestselling Author, *Promote Yourself* and *Me 2.0*

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Executive Resume and Career Consultant  
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Vice President, Marketing and Communications, CareerSource Northeast Florida

“A valuable new resource that will help you maximize career satisfaction and success.”

—Michael Lee Stallard  
Author, *Connection Culture* and *Fired Up or Burned Out*

“There is a great deal of evidence linking career satisfaction and fulfillment with health. If these areas are important to you, no matter where you are in that journey, *Find Your Fit* belongs on your shelf.”

—Beverly Kaye  
Founder, Career Systems International  
Co-Author, *Love It Don’t Leave It* and *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*

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Sue Kaiden, Editor

Foreword by Dick Bolles

**atd**  
PRESS

*To all the volunteers at Joseph's People who continue to serve the unemployed and underemployed in the Philadelphia region with such compassion and grace, and all the members of Joseph's People whom I had the privilege to work with over the years. In particular, to Cheryl Spaulding, my steering committee (you know who you are), and the memory of my friend Phil DeMarra, who taught me what it means to never give up.*

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# Foreword

What should a career coach do for you? Well, according to *The Bolles Dictionary*—a mythical book if ever there was one—a career coach is one who helps people with three basic questions: what, where, and how. That is, what do I *want* to do with my life, *where* do I want to do it, and *how* do I find such work?

And if you want help figuring out these questions on a higher level—what skills would I most *love* to use, where would I most *love* to use those skills, and how do I identify such a *dream job* and actually get hired to do it—a career coach can help you with that too.

What makes talking to a career coach a better choice than, say, simply turning to your partner or best friend for help when you are trying to solve these questions? Well, career coaches have three resources that your best friend most likely doesn't have:

- *information* about careers, the labor market, “hot jobs,” and the like
- *knowledge*, such as a mastery of the job-hunting or career-changing field
- *wisdom*, gained from experience, about what to avoid, steps to take, and shortcuts that have worked for previous clients.

The use of a career coach was once optional—you could seek out one if you liked that sort of thing. But the need for one is becoming more and more essential to the art of living a productive and useful life. Why? For one simple reason: You are going to live longer than you think. A longer life means you will be working longer in a world that is changing. This will affect a lot of the decisions you will need to make.

This, of course, has been true since the dawn of history. But what is different now is the rapidness of that change. The world is beginning to reimagine itself year after year. The workplace is reimaging itself. Jobs are reimaging themselves. And this is all happening at an unprecedented speed, as Moore's Law has observed and projected with its numerous revisions and updates.

You will need a career coach's help to master a new vocabulary that includes *connections*, *disconnections*, *man and machine*, and *the endless dance*.

**Connections.** Things that never used to be connected are increasingly reimaged as connected, because of such technology as Wi-Fi, the Internet, centralized computer systems

or hubs, digital electronics, mobile computers, smartphones, artificial intelligence, integrated circuits, and sensors. Can the world connect cars on the road so they can communicate and exchange information with one another? Yes. Can the world connect our devices—our lights, security systems, fitness trackers, appliances—so they all communicate with one another? Yes. Can we connect robots so that they communicate with other robots, either directly or through a central hub? Yes, we can. Amazon already does—try typing “Amazon and robots” into YouTube.

You are going to have to make your decisions about what, where, and how in a world dominated by *The Internet of Things*—a term first coined in 1999 by Kevin Ashton—where all things, including every physical object, are connected, intelligent, programmable, and capable of interacting with humans. Experts predict that by 2020 between 34 billion and 50 billion devices will be connected. That’s only four years away.

**Disconnections.** Things that seemed always connected until now—at least in our imaginations—are starting to disconnect from one another. In this grand reimagining of the world, the idea of work may no longer be restricted to “a job.” The idea of income may no longer be “a salary.” And parts of the world will be reimagining money as disconnected from work. Think of UBI—a universal basic income—which involves an unconditional stipend to all people, regardless of whether they work or not. It already is being discussed in Ireland, Germany, Greece, Finland, Switzerland, Namibia, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and the United States. Its most prominent U.S. advocate is Robert Reich, former secretary of labor. You’ll need a career coach who is more in tune with the current state of the work world than you are.

**Man and machine.** As the world reimagines itself, many believe that in the not-too-distant future, robots are going to take over all our work and our jobs are going to be eliminated by technology. But when you press the experts—as I have—on what percentage of jobs they think will be completely replaced by technology, they predict that only 5 percent, or at worst 19 percent, of current U.S. jobs will be replaced by robotics, technology, or computer programs. That said, while this new technology may not eliminate jobs, it will tackle certain tasks within jobs. This means that most jobs are going to involve a new kind of partnership.

MIT scientists call this partnership “human-machine symbiosis.” I prefer to call it a partnership between man and machine—a partnership between humans and our inventions. Every job will have to answer the question, “How much machine? How much man?”

**The endless dance.** It will be an endless dance between connected objects, sensors, computers, data capture, and redesigned user outcomes. A dance that also includes the turbulence that is created when our jobs, our workplace, and our world are all being reimagined.

There are four things you are going to need that a career coach can help you with now:

- An inventory of yourself. If you were hiking in the wilderness and found a strong running stream suddenly swirling around your feet, your first instinct

would be to find something solid to stand on. In similar fashion, taking an inventory of yourself gives you that “something solid to stand on” in the midst of all the change that is swirling around you. Knowing who you are, what you like and do best, what kindles your brain, and what enables you to do your best work has never been more important than in the reimagined workplace.

- A lesser fear of machines. You will need help to start thinking of machines as your friend with certain skills that supplement yours, not as an enemy that’s come to steal your job.
- Shadowing. If you did a self-inventory, you may now think you know which field you would like to pursue, or a job you would like to do. If so, get permission to “shadow” a worker for a day or two to see what that job or field actually involves. How much man? How much machine?
- Familiarity with robots and sensors. Become familiar with how robots and sensors are designed, manufactured, operated, maintained, and repaired. Maybe you will discover something that you really like to do; if so, figure out how to train for it.

All of this is assuming that the career coach you will increasingly need is a flesh-and-blood person—someone who is able to learn, grow, and keep up with the times. In the meantime, you have a book. This book. *Find Your Fit: A Practical Guide to Landing a Job You’ll Love* will bring you up to speed on what you need to know *now*.

The reimagined world will be built on the foundation of the world as it is today. This book will help you master this world. Read it, ponder it, master it. The life you save will be your own.

Dick Bolles  
 Author, *What Color Is Your Parachute? 2017: A Practical  
 Guide for Job-Hunters and Career Changers*



# Preface

In my capacity as a career coach and a volunteer for a large job search group in the Philadelphia area, I often found myself recommending books to job seekers and career changers. Because I wasn't comfortable recommending a book I hadn't read, over the years I read *a lot* of career books. Some were good, but many were clearly self-serving attempts to get the reader to hire the author to help implement the guidance in the book. As a result, I often turned to a handful of classics, including Dick Bolles's *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, for my book recommendations.

Still, I longed for a book that gave solid advice on finding a job that truly fit the job seeker. One that answered common questions I encountered as a career coach and provided step-by-step instructions for how to implement the suggestions. In 2014, when I accepted my current role with the Association for Talent Development (ATD), I learned that ATD was thinking about publishing just such a book! ATD had in mind a book that would complement the career coaching provided to ATD members at their annual conference and be relevant across all occupations.

We gathered 16 career coaches and job search experts and asked them to provide their best advice on a topic in which they had expertise. We asked them to include:

- carefully screened advice on the most common issues encountered by job seekers and career changers
- practical, step-by-step instructions
- free and low-cost resources for readers to turn to for further information.

*Find Your Fit* is the culmination of the efforts of those 16 coaches to provide detailed advice on how to find a job you'll love.

## What Is This Book About?

According to *The Career Counselor's Handbook*, by Howard Figler and Dick Bolles, you need to answer three questions when looking for a job or seeking to make a career change:

- What do you want to do?
- What are you doing about it?
- What is stopping you from doing it?

*Find Your Fit* is organized into sections that will help you to answer those three questions. In Part I, you'll create a self-inventory to help tackle the question, "What do you want to do?" We cover how to identify your personality traits, interests, and skills, and how they relate to job satisfaction. Then, we discuss how to identify a workplace environment that suits you best. Finally, we help you create a career goal and plan to find such a job.

In Part II, we cover the mechanics of job searching in the 21st century. That includes basics such as resumes, interviewing, and applying online, as well as personal branding, networking, and salary negotiation.

In Part III, we cover some of the challenges that may be keeping you from realizing your goal. It begins by helping you gauge your job satisfaction and the types of problems you may be having in your current situation. We then cover how to gain experience and move up, as well as how to decide if you need new training or a credential. We also explore the world of self-employment and even include a chapter on how to look for work overseas.

## How to Use This Book

*Find Your Fit* was written so you can read it from cover to cover or focus on the individual topics that are most important to you. The chapters also include cross-references to beneficial material in other chapters, in case you're not reading the book in order.

If you are in transition or want to make a change, I would advise you to start with Part I to make sure you are clear about what you want to do. One of the most common mistakes made by job seekers is that they don't know what type of job they're looking for—that's akin to going on a vacation without a destination in mind! So, before you jump straight to the chapter on resumes, complete the exercises in Part I to be sure you know where you're going before setting out on your journey.

If you have a job now and are not sure if it is a good fit, I suggest starting with chapter 12, "Should I Stay or Go?" It contains a quiz that helps you to diagnose the problems you are having, and directs you to the chapters that will be most relevant to the changes you might need to make.

## Who Should Read This Book?

This book is written for working professionals looking to improve their job and career satisfaction. It is not only for people who are "in transition," but also for those who are looking to advance their careers, make a career change, or find a job that is a better fit than their current situation. Our hope is that you'll use the tools and methods in *Find Your Fit* to help you increase your happiness at work and grow your career in the direction you want it to go.

## Is It Realistic to Find a Job That Fits?

If you're ready to identify a job and a company that is a good fit for you, and develop a plan for how to land such a job, go to chapter 1 and get started! However, if you're skeptical about this being a realistic goal, stay with me for a moment. Based on the experience and knowledge of the 16 career coaches featured in this book, it is both realistic and imperative that you take this approach. Employees who are a good fit for their jobs and the company culture are much more likely to succeed and thrive. Staying in a situation that is a poor fit makes you not only unhappy, but also less likely to succeed. So why not try to improve your chances for success and happiness?

## Summary

The advice provided in this book will not go out of style. While technology has changed the nature of the job search in many ways, it hasn't changed the fact that *people hire people*. So, while a machine may screen your resume, always remember that there are still people on the other side who want to find the right person for the job. This book will help you ferret out those companies and people who are a great match, and present yourself as a "prescreened" candidate who is an ideal choice for both the job and the company. Find them—I assure you that they will be happy to hear from you.

## Acknowledgments

My deepest appreciation to all 16 authors for their hard work and dedication to making this book a reality and to Dick Bolles for being gracious enough to write the foreword. Many thanks to our gifted editors Kathryn Stafford and Melissa Jones, who worked painstakingly to bring this book to fruition. Thank you also to Jennifer Homer, who had the idea for this book, and all the career coaches who have helped us over the years and provided some of the examples contained in this book. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my husband, Tom, and children, Andy and Claire, for supporting my efforts over the past year to make this book a reality.

Sue Kaiden  
Career Development Community of Practice Manager, ATD

# Should I Stay or Go: Managing a Successful Career Transition

Marilyn A. Feldstein

If you are feeling uncertain about how to make a smooth career transition, you are not alone. A generation ago, we were expected to select one career or job after college that we would remain in for the rest of our working lives, until we received the gold watch by which we would observe the remaining time in our lives tick down. This is no longer the case. You should view your career as a journey, not as a destination. And often, as with most journeys, you will need to make changes. So, how do you know when it's time for a change? Here are some clues that you may be ready to make a move:

- You wake up each weekday dreading going to work.
- You are bored because your skills are underused.
- Your values conflict with your manager's or the company's.
- You have not had a raise in a while, and your salary has not kept up with inflation.
- You didn't receive the promotion you thought you would.
- Your company recently hired someone whom you now report to, and you have to train her. You believe that you should have been selected for this position.
- Your company is going through a merger, acquisition, or downsizing, and is offering a severance package to help you make a smooth transition.
- You feel trapped. You can't imagine being in this position or career one year, two years, or five years from now.

Before you jump ship, make sure you know why you're leaving. This will help guide your conversations with your managers and leaders to see if there is another position in which your skills are better served. Sometimes new energy and interest can be gained by simply transferring your skills into a new position at your current company. However, if you do decide to leave, at least you will know why, which should make your next career move a more rewarding one.

## What Is Your Level of Job Satisfaction?

To help you decide if it's time for a change, take the quiz in Figure 12-1. Answer yes if the statement is true for you most of the time.

Figure 12-1. Job Satisfaction Quiz

1. Do you enjoy most of the tasks and activities that you perform on a daily basis?	Yes	No
2. Do you feel reasonably challenged by the tasks required by your job?	Yes	No
3. Do you like working with the people at your organization?	Yes	No
4. Do you feel that you fit in with the culture at your company?	Yes	No
5. Do you get clear direction and support from your boss most of the time?	Yes	No
6. Do you respect and trust your boss?	Yes	No
7. Are you proud of the products and services your company provides?	Yes	No
8. Is your company on solid financial ground and moving in the right direction?	Yes	No
9. Is your work environment safe and conducive to getting your work done?	Yes	No
10. Do you feel that your work life and personal life are reasonably in balance?	Yes	No
11. Do you receive reasonable compensation for your work, including benefits?	Yes	No
12. Do you think there are growth opportunities for you at your company?	Yes	No

Count up the number of yes answers to get your score and review your results below.

### Score:

10-12: You are in a good situation if you answered yes to most of the questions. Review your no answers and work on making changes at your current organization that will address the issues you uncovered.

7-9: You answered yes to a majority of the questions, so you still may be able to salvage the situation.

Continue reading to determine if you can resolve the problems.

0-6: You answered no to at least half the questions, so a change is probably in order. Read on to determine how to address some of your concerns.

### If you answered no to question number:

- 1 or 2, you may have a skills gap
- 3 or 4, you may have a culture clash
- 5 or 6, you probably have a manager mismatch
- 7 or 8, you may be in a values bind
- 9 or 10, your work environment may be the problem
- 11 or 12, you are experiencing a failure to thrive.

## Skills Gap

One of the most common reasons people leave their jobs is that they dislike or don't feel challenged by the daily tasks they have to perform at work. If you answered no to questions 1 or 2 of the quiz, you may be experiencing a skills gap. If you dislike your daily tasks, ask yourself why:

- Do you feel incompetent at work? If you feel incompetent at work, it may be that your natural skill set is simply not a good fit for the job. Consider whether additional training could solve the problem or if the tasks just feel beyond you. There are many ways in which you might gain additional experience or training that could help you resolve the problem. Review chapters 13 and 14 for more guidance on this issue.
- Do you think you are the wrong person for the job? Examples include introverted people in jobs that require a great deal of people interaction or extroverted people in jobs that require them to be chained to a computer all day. If this sounds like you, you may be experiencing a personality mismatch. Explore the exercises in chapter 1 on personality and interests to help you identify the root cause of the problem.
- Do you find the tasks boring? If your work doesn't interest you, you are not doing yourself or your company any favors by staying in the position. As a next step, determine what skills you most enjoy using the exercises in chapter 2. Then explore whether there are any opportunities that you could pursue at your own company.
- Do you feel underutilized or underemployed? If your daily tasks don't challenge you or require little of your experience or training, you may have outgrown your job. If you like your company, talk with your manager about stretch assignments or look into opportunities to move up or make a lateral move to gain skills. Chapters 13 and 14 provide guidance on moving up and managing your own professional development.

## Culture Clash

Another common reason people leave their jobs is that they think they don't fit in with the people or corporate culture at work. If you answered no to questions 3 or 4, you may be experiencing a culture clash. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you dislike most of the people at your company or just a few? If you dislike most of the people at your company, then moving to another department or area won't help. If you don't get along with those in your department, but there are other departments with people you do like, consider exploring a transfer.

- Are many of the people you work with abrasive or abusive? If the management team allows this sort of behavior to flourish at your company, it's probably time for a change. If this type of behavior is more of an exception, you should speak with the HR department or take advantage of Employee Assistance Program services if your company offers them.
- Do you believe that you don't fit in at the company because of your age, race, or ethnicity? Are there few employees "like you" at your company? In this case, finding a more diverse company might be the solution (see the annual Top 50 Companies for Diversity at [www.diversityinc.com](http://www.diversityinc.com) for ideas). Another solution is to work on building relationships with people at your company so that you get to know them on a more personal level. Or you may be able to start or join an employee affinity group within your company to begin gathering a group of peers with whom to network.
- Do you think that your personality doesn't fit with many of the people at your company? In this case, you may have a different style from those around you; for example, a highly creative person with a flamboyant personality working for a conservative firm where most people wear suits. While this situation can be comfortable if your company embraces different personalities and work styles, you may find that you can't be yourself at work. Chapter 1 provides guidance on personality type and chapter 3 explores finding the right workplace for you.

## Manager Mismatch

Having a bad boss is one of the most common reasons people leave their jobs. If you answered no to questions 5 or 6 of the quiz, the problem may be a manager mismatch. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is your manager open to feedback about your working relationship? If you generally like and trust your boss and your skills are valued, she may not realize that you prefer a different style of supervision. Schedule a time to talk that is not during a performance review or other charged situation. Explain what you like and don't like about how you work together. Most people will accept feedback if it is provided in a professional and collaborative manner.
- Have you examined your part in the working relationship? It's important to be honest with yourself about your relationship with your boss. Are you contributing to a dysfunctional relationship or giving your boss a reason to feel you can't be trusted? If he is micromanaging you, it may mean that he thinks your work has been sloppy or not on target. Before meeting with your boss, take some time to consider what you might do to improve your relationship.
- Are there other departments or areas in the company with better leaders? If you believe there are other leaders within the company who would be a better

fit for you and they have a need for your skill set, you may be able to approach them about a transfer. Your HR department, if you have one, may be helpful in this regard. You can also seek a mentor who may provide some insight on other departments. Chapter 13 includes guidance on finding a mentor.

- Do you believe the relationship cannot be repaired? If you think the relationship is beyond repair and few other options exist within your company, it is probably time for a change. When looking for a new position, make sure that you thoroughly explore the type of manager that is right for you. Networking with colleagues in your industry can help you identify companies that have good management teams.

## Values Bind

People often leave their jobs because they are concerned about the company's future or feel that the company is on the wrong track. If you answered no to questions 7 or 8, you may be in a values bind. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you comfortable with the mission of the company? If you don't believe in the company's mission, or are opposed to it, you may be experiencing a values bind. For example, if you are asked to take over a department that sells tobacco products, but you are opposed to smoking, you may become conflicted. Most of the time, the situation is more nuanced, but lack of alignment with your company's purpose makes it difficult to stay committed to your job. If this sounds like you, a change to another company or industry is in order. Review chapters 3 and 4 to help you identify companies that may be a better fit.
- Do you believe in the products and services that the company provides? If you don't believe in the company's products and services, it is difficult to do a good job unless you can influence change. If you have tried and failed to make improvements, target companies in your industry with a reputation for excellence.
- Are you concerned about the financial health or direction of the company? If you are worried about the financial health of your company or strongly feel that it is headed in the wrong direction, you owe it to yourself to look for a new position. Many people stick their heads in the sand when signs of financial distress appear. Instead, be proactive and look for a company that is in a stronger position. Chapter 10 provides guidance on evaluating companies before you accept a position.
- Have you been asked to do something that goes against your personal ethics? Another situation that can arise is when an employee is asked to do something that feels unethical or sleazy. If you find that this happens more than once, it could be a pattern. Be wary of staying at a company that is willing to put its (and your) reputation at risk.

## Work Environment Issues

People often leave their jobs if they find the environment to be a poor fit with the way they work. This can include everything from the physical work environment, their commute, or the sheer amount of work they are expected to complete on a daily basis. If you answered no to questions 9 or 10, you may have a work environment issue. Ask yourself the following questions before exiting:

- Does the job and workplace support my desired lifestyle? If you find that your job is significantly interfering with the life you want to lead, think about what is causing you the most distress. Is it the number of hours you are expected to work? Your commute? Lack of flexibility in your schedule? You may be able to negotiate some of these issues with your employer. Before leaving a job or company you otherwise like, try discussing your concerns with your boss or an HR representative.
- Does the physical environment help me to do my best work? If there are aspects of the physical environment that are interfering with your work, discuss them with your boss before looking for a new position. For example, if you are introverted by nature, you might have a difficult time working in an office with an open floor plan. By explaining the problem, you may be able to negotiate some work-at-home days or quiet time in a conference room when working on intensive projects. Chapters 3 and 4 provide guidance on identifying your workplace preferences.
- Is the physical environment unsafe or unhealthy? If your work environment is putting your health at risk and you are not in a position to improve the situation, it's time to make a change. Look for companies with a better safety record ([www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)) or a reputation for a healthy work environment (search "Best Places to Work").

## Failure to Thrive

Employees commonly leave their jobs when they believe they are not being compensated enough or there are few opportunities for them to grow. If you answered no to questions 11 or 12, you may be experiencing a failure to thrive. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you know your fair market value or what comparable companies are paying people in your field? If you are a high performer, but believe you are being paid below your fair market value, it helps to share those data with your boss when discussing the possibility of a raise. Chapter 11 provides guidance on negotiating your salary and includes some sources for finding salary data.
- Does your company have a career or leadership development program? More companies are creating career development programs to help retain and engage

employees. Ask to be included in the program and take advantage of the growth opportunities that are provided.

- Are there other opportunities at your company that might be a fit? If you like your company but are worried that your job is a dead end, talk with your boss about stretch assignments or determine if there are other opportunities at your current company that will help you gain skills. Chapters 13 and 14 provide guidance on moving up and managing your own professional development.
- Have you been passed over for promotion or given only small increases, despite high performance? In this situation, you may need to move to another company to get the compensation you desire. You may have started at a lower salary, and your company's pay structure may be inflexible. In other cases, you may have been pigeonholed and simply need a fresh start elsewhere. To be sure you are moving to a company with a better compensation structure, network with colleagues and review [Glassdoor.com](https://www.glassdoor.com) and [Payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com) to find companies that pay well.

## What's Holding You Back?

If, based on these scenarios, you believe you need to make a change, what is stopping you? There are many fears, myths, and false career beliefs that can hold us back from making a change. Here are some of the most common ones:

- **It's safer to stay where I am.** If you are unhappy at work, it is probably affecting your performance. As much as you try, it is hard to stay committed when you mentally have one foot out the door. Remember that you are not doing yourself or your employer any favors by staying where you are if you are highly dissatisfied.
- **No one wants to hire someone older than 35, 40, 50, and so forth.** You're never too old, unless you think you are. You're much more valuable when you're older and can command a higher salary because of your experience. Look at annual reports, and you'll see that leadership teams are usually composed of men and women who are 50 and older. Why? Because they have the skills, experience, and talent. Is there age discrimination in the workforce? Yes. We all have biases, and as long as people hire people, these biases will exist. However, it's important to remember that as you age, your experiences and knowledge increase, and so does your potential value to employers.
- **No one is hiring, there aren't any jobs, and the economy is still bad.** Here's the challenge with this myth: Finding your next position has nothing to do with whether the economy is bad or good, or what unemployment rates are. There always will be open positions despite how well or poorly the economy is doing.

People are moving around every day, and here's why:

- Employees accept promotions or lateral moves internally and externally.
- Companies merge or acquire other companies and may hire and downsize simultaneously.
- Women take maternity leave and may not return to their positions.
- People move to other cities, states, and countries.
- Companies expand and add new positions.
- Entrepreneurs create new companies for which they will be hiring.
- People retire.
- And, unfortunately, people die.

These movements occur in every organization, leaving openings for you.

Whenever you hear that there aren't any jobs, read this list again. You need only one position. The best time to look is when you are ready. So what's stopping you?

- **What if it's worse at the new job?** This is why doing a thorough self-inventory is critical. Researching companies before you take the leap will also help you avoid making an ill-advised move. Chapters 1-4 and 10 provide more guidance on these topics.
- **I'm afraid I will look like a job hopper.** Having short tenure at many jobs can raise concerns for potential employers. However, job mobility has increased substantially in the past 10 years, so "job hopping" has less of a stigma. If anything, someone who stays too long at a company in the same position is now often viewed as having a lack of ambition or flexibility. So, while you should definitely "look before you leap" and try to resolve issues before moving to a new company, just keep in mind that staying too long in a bad situation can hurt you too.
- **My education is outdated.** The wonderful thing about education is that once you've earned it, it's yours, and it does not age. Even though you may retain only a fraction of what you learned, you still have many opportunities to continue learning: on the job, by attending conferences and seminars, through reading, working with others, taking on stretch assignments, and leading projects. Chapters 13 and 14 provide guidance to help you decide if you need more training or certification before making a change.
- **I'll have to start over.** Starting over connotes for most taking an entry-level position. However, many people make career changes without having to totally start over. Use your transferable skills to market yourself differently on your resume and in your branding statements. Employers are looking at you based on how you can add value and make a difference with your skill set.

Now that we've refuted many of the common excuses for not making a change, how do you get unstuck? How do you turn the truth about change into the swift kick you need?

If you've decided you need a change but staying at your company is a viable option, look at open positions within your organization, talk with HR, and network within your organization to ferret out departments and positions that might be a good fit (see chapter 13 for additional suggestions). On the other hand, if you've decided to leave your current company, start by looking at open positions at other organizations to see what skills employers want. Resist the urge to apply! Treat this as research to determine the types of companies and positions that might be a good fit for you.

The website Indeed.com, which acts as a spider and searches for posted positions across the web, is a great resource. When you search on the website, the first thing you see is two boxes asking you *What?* and *Where?* Be creative. Don't limit your possibilities to titles like instructional designer. Use transferable skills, such as curriculum design, program planning, project management, or developing training programs. If you have a current certification or training that is in demand, enter that in the what box to see which employers value your credential. Enter specific cities where you want to work or leave the where field blank, so you can see all the open positions. This will give you a much broader picture of the types of positions available, along with the skills and experience typically required by employers.

Next, fill out a transferable skills worksheet for the types of positions to which you could apply (Table 12-1 shows a few sample jobs). Compare your skills and qualifications to typical employer requirements to determine if this type of position might be a good fit for you.

Table 12-1. Transferable Skills Worksheet

Job Title	Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills	My Skills and Qualifications
Corporate Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing sales and leadership classes</li> <li>• Creating agendas</li> <li>• Developing course materials</li> <li>• Creating student plans</li> <li>• Delivering presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent grammar</li> <li>• Verbal and telephone skills</li> <li>• High energy</li> <li>• Multitasking</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Work well with all levels of employees and vendors</li> </ul>	
E-Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis</li> <li>• Design</li> <li>• Development</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Graphic design</li> <li>• Blended learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with others</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Organized</li> <li>• Detail-oriented</li> </ul>	

Once you have homed in on the types of positions that would suit you best, revisit chapter 4 to clarify your career goals and preferences, and start identifying your target companies.

## Should I Move Into a Different Career or Industry?

If, based on your analysis of your situation, you believe you want to move into a new field or industry, you will need to do some additional work. Moving into a new field or industry is more challenging than finding a new job in your current field. But it can be done!

The first thing you'll want to do is make a thorough assessment of skills you most enjoy using and compare those skills to careers that interest you (chapter 2). It is important to understand how your transferable skills are used in the new career or industry you are targeting. Once you have identified a few possibilities, you'll need to do some field research. Two of your best tools for learning more about a career or industry are informational interviews and job shadowing.

Similar to the networking meetings that were discussed in chapter 7, informational interviews are generally 15-30 minutes long and their purpose is to gather information. Most people love to help others. If you explain that you are seeking advice and information about their chosen career, most people will be more than happy to give it. Why? By asking for advice, you're implying they are an expert and you value what they have to say. Chapter 7 goes into more detail about arranging for and following up on this type of meeting. Bring a list of questions to your meeting to ask, such as:

- I'd like to hear more about your career journey. How did you get into your position or profession?
- What parts of your job are the most challenging or interesting to you? Why?
- What would make someone successful in this field?
- What skills, qualifications, or training are required?
- Would my current skills and training be valued in this industry or field?  
What else do I need to do to be marketable in this field?
- What resources do you recommend I read or obtain to learn more about the field or industry?
- What are the educational or licensing requirements?
- What is a typical career progression?
- Can you recommend two to three other people I can talk to? May I say that you referred me?

After you have done several informational interviews, you should have a sense as to whether the field holds promise for you. The next step is to arrange a job shadowing experience. Observing the day-to-day activities of someone in a potential new career provides

invaluable information with which to make a sound decision before committing to a new path. More information about how to arrange for and benefit from a job shadowing experience can be found in the article “Research Companies and Careers Through Job Shadowing” by Katherine P. Hansen.

Once you have chosen a new direction, you’ll need to revise your resume to highlight your transferable skills using the terminology that is used in your new field or industry. Chapter 5 has tips for formatting a resume if you’re trying to transition careers. Don’t start looking for a job until you can explain how your transferable skills apply in your new industry. This is a common problem for ex-military job seekers because they have difficulty translating their military experience into civilian terms (so much so that the federal government has created a skills crosswalk for those leaving the military, [www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC](http://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC)). To be sure your skills and terminology match your new industry, compare job postings and job descriptions from your targeted field with what you’ve entered on your transferable skills worksheet (Table 12-1).

## How Can I Make a Successful Career Change and a Smart Financial Decision?

We often spend more time planning our vacation than we do planning our career and managing our finances. It’s imperative that you have a plan so you can be prepared for any bumps in the road. Going through a downsizing or losing your job may be the swift kick you need to make your next career move. Following the tips below will help you protect your finances while you make the transition:

- **Have a financial cushion:** Living paycheck to paycheck adds a lot of stress and affects how you make career decisions. A financial cushion allows you to manage your career from a rational point of view rather than an emotional, irrational one. Financial advisers will tell you to save three to six months’ salary, but in my experience it is wise to have at least a year’s worth. This allows you to pay your bills while you make a successful career change. Appendix I provides a monthly expense worksheet to help you develop a budget.
- **Negotiate salary:** Make sure to negotiate your salary when you get a promotion or take a new position. See chapter 11 for advice on how to do this successfully.
- **Invest:** As soon as you’re eligible, invest in your 401(k), 403(b), or other retirement and pension account. Prepare for your future so that when you’re ready, you can leave the workforce early or retire.

You may not think you’ll get a new boss with whom you disagree, lose your position, or be in a company that closes or merges, but these things happen daily. Prepare for them by having a sound financial plan so that you are not desperate to secure a job if you find yourself “in transition.”

## Real-Life Career Change Success Stories

Making a job or career change can be daunting—whether it’s within your current company or in an entirely new field. To help you envision your own change, here are four true stories of successful transitions to fuel your imagination. The names have been changed.

### Same Industry and Function in a Different Company

John had been in sales with the same company for 15 years. He joined right out of college. He had always done well, but over the years the company had decided to change the compensation and commission plans. As a result, even though John was working harder, increasing revenue, and breaking sales records, his commissions and total compensation were going down each year. He was also frustrated that when he gave a sales lead to a colleague in a different territory, his company didn’t reward his efforts. In addition, because the company was having trouble retaining sales managers, he had had numerous new bosses in the past several years and was not impressed with their leadership abilities.

One day as he was expressing his frustrations to a new boss, she replied, “You should be happy that you have a job.” At that moment John decided to stop vacillating and pursue external positions. A colleague had gone to a competitor the year before and had been trying to get him to consider joining him, but John hadn’t been ready until now. He called his friend, and interviews were set up. John did all his homework and was made a very lucrative offer, which he accepted.

Final Result: John has been in this new position for several years now and is very happy he found a company that shares his values and he is financially rewarded. He is also pleased with the company’s leaders, who understand the business and take care of its top performers.

### Industry Change With Same Functions

Harry had worked at the same helicopter company in the Northeast for 25 years. For a long time, he and his wife talked about moving to Florida to be closer to his in-laws; then they finally made the move. His wife was a nurse and quickly landed a position in a hospital. However, Harry felt trapped. There were only two companies that manufactured aircraft, and he wasn’t having any luck talking with either, despite having “supervisor with 25 years’ experience in helicopter manufacturing” on his resume. After he completed some assessments with his career coach, it became clear what Harry’s transferable skills were, and he repackaged his resume and branding statements.

At the time, the housing business was booming in Florida. Harry was also building his own home then, and he started talking with the superintendent who was overseeing the construction. Harry conducted an informational interview with the superintendent and felt confident that his project management, supervisory, inventory control, and operations

skills would transfer well to the construction industry. After reaching out to several other home-building companies, Harry was offered a position.

Harry, however, was more interested in another company because it had a six-week training program, which he thought would be beneficial to gain more confidence in this new industry. After successfully selling himself in the interview with this second company, he received an excellent offer that has served him well for many years.

**Final Result:** Only after Harry understood that his skill set was transferable was he able to consider working in a different industry.

## Career Change

Denise earned a master's degree in library and information studies and had been a librarian for 14 years. She began her career setting up a new library for a law school and then worked for 12 years in the public school system as a librarian. However, Denise was ready to pursue other careers after she injured her back and realized that she could no longer lift hundreds of books each year and that she was feeling stymied in her job.

But she had no idea what to do next. To get a better idea, she took some assessments with her career coach and learned that she was very good with technology and enjoyed conducting research and teaching others. Denise enrolled in an instructional design certificate course at the local university. She also approached the co-owners of a new e-learning business and asked if she could apprentice with them to learn more about their business and to help with some projects. They were delighted to assist her because they had also re-branded themselves and wanted to help others.

Denise was very excited about acquiring new skills that were a good fit, and she made the critical decision to change careers. She also reached out to her friends to let them know of her new interests. One of her friends managed a staffing company and was able to hire her immediately to fill some part-time training positions at several major companies while she continued to look for a full-time position.

After a few months, Denise was offered an open position for a learning technology specialist at a local hospital, where she would be responsible for the learning management systems and training staff members.

**Final Result:** This position turned out to be the perfect skills and industry match and instantly doubled her salary. Denise has thoroughly enjoyed continuing to learn and acquire new skills and is actively involved in her local professional association.

## Transition From a Corporate to Nonprofit Environment

Ginger had worked for two major corporations for 27 years in manager- and director-level positions. When she was downsized the second time, she decided that what she really wanted to do was transition to a nonprofit position. She had volunteered for many years and really enjoyed being on boards and making a difference in the community.

After learning of a perfect position as a program manager for a social services agency, she updated her resume to brand herself for a nonprofit position. Ginger thought that the biggest hurdle would be convincing the executive director that she could transition from a very large corporation to a small nonprofit with limited resources. However, that wasn't an issue because Ginger had worked in small departments with limited resources before and understood the challenges. She was among numerous candidates who interviewed for the position, most of them coming from other nonprofit organizations, but because she was able to convince the executive director and HR manager of her transferable skills, she landed the position.

**Final Result:** Ginger successfully transitioned from a corporate to a nonprofit position. Her main goal was to work in an environment where she knew that she was contributing to society, and she also enjoys having some flexibility to work from home, which she didn't have before. She has been happily employed for four years.

## Summary

Uncertainty and change are inevitable. In fact, the only certainty is change itself. By thoroughly understanding your skills and preferences, as well as why you are making the change, you can take control of your own career journey. Be alert to the warning signs that it is time to leave and be proactive, rather than wait until the change is made for you.

Whatever the reason for your change, think of the situations described in this chapter as your swift kick to get moving toward a job you'll love.

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