

And Now for Something Completely Different: Mid-Career Change

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You've been at the same job for the past 10-15 years. It has been a great experience and you've learned a lot. You've been promoted and recognized, but you feel that God is leading you somewhere else. It's been a long time since you've had to a look for a new position, let alone one in which you have little direct experience. What do you do?

Sound familiar? Or perhaps your company is re-organizing and you are a prime candidate for being "surplused." Is it time to make complete career switch?

The thing to remember when making a mid-career transition is that **your experiences and your skills are valuable**. They are a proven track record of what you have done.

More important than your marketable skill set is determining where God wants you to go and what God wants you to do.

God's Calling

All Career Decision must be held to the litmus test of God's calling and that can only mean a time of reflection and prayer. For most of us, God's hand will not be writing on the wall, nor will an audible voice make your choice for you. However, His peace which passes all understanding will envelop you when your will is at one with His. "For God is not a god of disorder, but one of peace." 1 Cor 14:33. It's important not just to DO, but to listen quietly and discern.

Constantly Growing

Sarah had worked at a large, multinational corporation for 20 years. She had risen through the ranks and managed a team of 20 people and a budget of several million dollars. It was during a time of corporate restructuring that she first felt the stirrings of discontent. Instead of continuing as an Account Executive, she felt that God was calling her to utilize her gifts of encouragement and mercy.

As children of God, we are all growing and changing. As Isaiah 64:8 reminds us, God is the Potter and we are merely the clay being worked to His good purpose. As such, the gifts and skills we may have started our Careers with have changed and evolved: you may have outgrown your present job.

Value what you have. Trust where He sends you

A skills and gifts assessment may be a great tool at this time. We recommend books like *The Call* by Os Guinness or *What Color is your Parachute* by Dick Bolles.

- **Transferable Skills:** What skills have you developed in your present job? How will they be relevant in another position? Administrative skills, leadership skills, project management, customer service, research analysis and problem solving, experience hiring and training, as well as other abilities are all common transferable skills.
- **Organizational Saavy:** Use what you've learned about surviving and thriving within an organization and how to understand a corporate structure, sales organization, team workplace in order to succeed.

- **Experience:** Have you gone through a merger, a downsize, an expansion or a start-up? Depending on where you are applying, these experiences are extremely sought after by the hiring manager.
- **Job Environment:** All organizations have their seasons and their own cultures. However, if you've ever worked in a high pressure environment, those experiences are transferable to another industry. Did you thrive in a non-structured organization or a non-profit existing on a low budget, don't neglect the transferability of these types of experiences.

Employers aren't just looking at your skills

Employers are also looking at your experiences. Be certain of your reasons for wanting to change and be able to articulate them clearly. If you know why you want to make the change and what you are looking for employers will look upon you more favorably. However, if you are unsure or cannot articulate your reasons, employers may think that you cannot make a decision.

Starting Over

Sometimes switching careers will mean that you are starting as an entry level employee again. Be humble and learn from those who are already in that field. Be prepared to take a lower salary, but then leverage your experience to get ahead.

Network. Network. Network.

Although it is important to have a strong resume to market your skills, it is more important to develop a powerful network. Get active in your alumni clubs, church groups and other networking venues. Ask people about their jobs and how they got where they were going. You'll be surprised what you'll learn. You'll get more results from an "active" network than a "passive" internet job search.

Test Drive

Before completely committing to a career change, kick the tires and test drive it first. Temporary agencies can connect you with these opportunities or try it part-time for a period. Another great way is to volunteer. This way you can test your calling, list your experience on your resume and build a network within that field!