



# Career Change Toolkit

## Activities & advice to help you explore career options & make it happen!



## Introduction

Have you ever considered what it would be like if you had taken a different career path? Maybe there is a field you have always longed to break into or an idea you have been mulling over. When you have been settled in a career it can seem risky to start over and difficult to know where to start. And how do you know when it's really time for a change or whether you are just going through a sticky patch? Often it's easier to wait and see what happens and hope career opportunities will open up. Engineering a career change or a shift in role is perfectly possible provided that you plan carefully and are prepared to put in time and effort.

### This interactive Toolkit will help you:

- Work out whether it's time for a career change
- Explore what it is you want to change
- Think through options which match your strengths, interests and values
- Consider alternatives to a complete career change
- Work out how feasible a change would be and what is involved
- Implement specific strategies to make it happen.

## Time for a change?



Knowing when it's time for a career change and when you just need a new challenge in your existing career can be a hard call to make.

Try our quiz to pinpoint what it is you really want to change.



## Time for a change quiz

		Strongly Agree	Partly Agree	Disagree	Key	Score
1	I feel I can apply my knowledge and skills fully at work				A B	
2	I am learning new things in my work				B	
3	I think my organisation is a good employer				C	
4	My work is interesting most of the time				A	
5	I agree with most of the decisions made by my managers				C	
6	When I think about my work schedule for the year ahead, I feel excited				B	
7	I enjoy the working environment				C	
8	When I hear a colleague is leaving or has been promoted, I feel genuinely pleased for them				B	
9	I feel confident that I can make progress in my career				B	
10	I am proud when I tell people what I do for a living				A	
11	I like working with the groups of people (students, colleagues etc.)				A C	
12	I feel valued at work				C	
13	If I had my time again, I would choose a similar area of work				A	
14	I share the values of my manager and co-workers				C	
15	I feel happy at the thought being in the same field of work in 10 years' time				A B	

Give yourself 3 points for every statement where you ticked 'Strongly Agree', 2 points for every statement where you ticked 'Partly Agree' and 1 point for every statement where you 'Disagree'. Write your scores for each question on the chart.

## Is it your career you wish to change – or just your job?

Have a look at how you answered the questions marked A in the Key. These indicate how satisfied you are with the work itself. If you scored over 12 it is likely that you are well suited to the kind of work you do, although you may want to consider changes to your specific job role or working environment. The fewer you scored here, the stronger the rationale for re-evaluating your career choice. Think about what drew you to this career in the first place and what might have changed since (sometimes the nature of the job has changed; other times it is us who have changed in what we are seeking from our working life).

Now look at your score for the B questions. If you scored highly on A but have a low score for B you may just be bored or feel frustrated at a lack of career prospects. In this case it is worth considering whether a change of employer or even a new role at your existing place of work would improve your motivation. Think about the career prospects within your field and consider where the career opportunities lie.

Finally, look at your scores for the questions marked C. If your scores are low, you may be feeling out of tune with your current manager or employer or there may be a mismatch between your values and those of your organisation. Finding a similar role in a new organisation or in a different team can be all that is needed to refresh your career.

Before looking at career options, try this quick exercise:

*If I could wave a magic wand and change my job I would want:*

More

Less

Which of the following do I want to change? Tick any that apply

Work content

Clients / User group

Work level

Location

Hours

Colleagues

Boss

Other ...

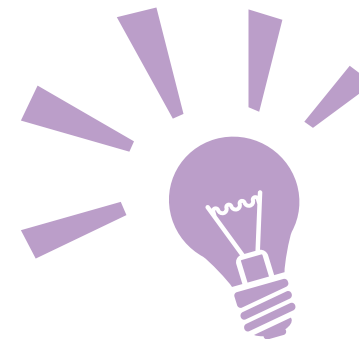
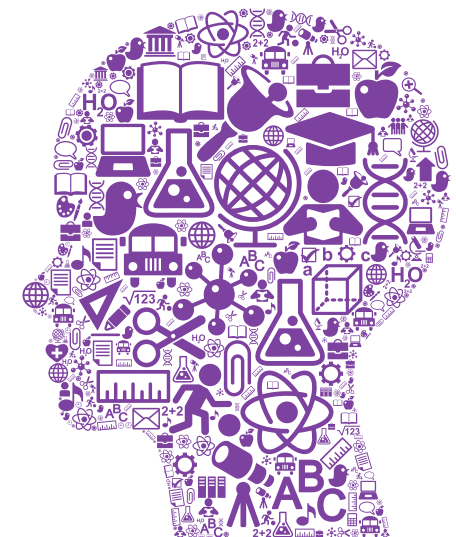
Physical Environment

### Deciding what you want

Making career decisions can be a long process – few people have a light bulb moment when everything becomes clear. For most people, embarking on a new career is a blend of:


- Reflecting on what makes you tick and what you value at work
- Finding out what different potential careers involve
- Testing out your suitability by gaining a bit of experience and
- Marketing yourself to potential employers.

The place to start is by reflecting on and clarifying what exactly you are looking for in your job at this point of your life.




## Career satisfaction questionnaire

The best bit of my job is:



I was originally attracted to my current career because:




My colleagues say I'm good at:



A great day at work for me would include:




Whose job in my organisation do I most envy?



Why?

And which of my friends' jobs do I most envy?



Why?



What do I choose to do outside work?

What skills and interests does this use?

Now consider your values at work



## Values list

Which of the following are important to me at work and in my life generally?

Tick all that apply

Salary

Freedom

Camaraderie

Intellectual

Challenge

Security

Helping the  
Community

Work

Life

Balance

Status

Family

Quality

Autonomy

Social  
Interaction

Helping  
Others

What else is important to you?

Choose the 6 values which are most important to you  
and put them in priority order

1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

6.

Can you see any links between your values? Are there any which seem in tension with each other? Are there any clues here as to why your present role and employer may no longer be a good fit?

The answers to these questions will give you some clues to your:

- Strengths
- Interests
- Values

### Which do you want to use in your new career?

To help you reflect further on these you can:

- Review previous personality assessments you may have done (such as MBTI) as well as other feedback you have received at work (such as performance appraisals or 360 degree feedback)
- Complete some online self-assessment exercises such as the free Skills Sort exercise on the windmills website or the 'What jobs would suit me?' quiz at Prospects. You can also complete the Strengths profile assessment tool at Realise2 (there is a small charge for this.)

If you already have some ideas for a career change, now is the time to take a long hard look at your potential new career. How good a fit is it with your core strengths, interests and values? Don't be tempted to make a particular career move just because it seems easy, because the new career is seen as higher status or represents a well-trodden route for people with your background.

You should now have a clearer 'shopping list' of what you are looking for in your new career. The next step is to investigate which careers might offer what you seek, and which are most accessible for those from your professional background.

## What do you have to offer?

In general, any career move is attainable provided you devote enough time, effort and money to the process. However, the closer the link between your target career and your current expertise, skills and qualifications the easier, quicker and more practical that move will be. And the higher the level you are likely to be able to enter your new field.

For example:

Carl used to be a junior lecturer in the maths department of a research led University. He became frustrated at the lack of opportunities for senior lecturing posts and found he was enjoying the teaching more than the research. After noticing how much first year engineering and science students were struggling with compulsory maths modules he decided to launch an online maths tutoring business for undergraduates, recruiting PhD students to help deliver the tuition. Carl had successfully combined his subject and sector knowledge in a way which better suited his career motivators.



Anneka had worked as a manager in higher education for twenty years and was now at registrar level. She enjoyed the money and status but wanted more freedom to implement new ideas and more flexibility of hours. She also felt increasingly out of synch with the values of her organisation and exhausted at the constant reorganisations. After some career coaching, Anneka decided to use her experience of managing change in higher education to work as a consultant at a major education consultancy. The hours were long at times but she felt more control over her career, the salary was better and there was flexibility to take extended leave in between projects.



Bharvit had spent five years building his career in biological research and was on his second fixed term post-doctoral post. He enjoyed the research process but longed to spend more time outside the laboratory. He did not want to leave scientific research completely however as he wanted to use his PhD. He also wanted more job security as he aimed to get a mortgage. Bharvit built on his research skills, his subject knowledge and his networks to apply for a permanent office-based role as a research project manager with a medical charity which had close links with his academic department.



## What can you bring to a new career?

### Ask yourself:

What specific expertise do you have in terms of:

➤ Work function



➤ Subject knowledge




➤ Sector



➤ Client group



 What qualifications do you have?

 What transferable skills do you have from your career to date?

 What achievements do you have on your CV? What have you delivered?

 Any experience you have outside work that might be relevant to a new career area?

## Now consider:



Which of these areas of expertise, qualifications and interests do you most want to use in future? Consider your Strengths, Values and Interests here:



Which of these areas really differentiate you from others?



Which do you think are most in demand from employers?

The answers to these questions will give you strong pointers to the kind of new career which will be most feasible and most satisfying.

## Generating career ideas

With details of your Strengths, Values, Interests and What you have to offer in front of you, spend no more than three minutes initially jotting down on the Career Ideas Generator on the next page:

- Careers you like the sound of
- Career areas you think might use your strengths and expertise



Write down *everything* you can think of no matter how daft or unobtainable it seems. Print out more pages if you need them. Don't censor yourself – you can think about how practical the ideas are later.







**Career ideas**

Take a quick break and then go back to your chart. Add in anything else which occurs to you. You might want to continue to work on your chart over a period of a few days.

Look at each of your career ideas in turn.

Give each a score between 1 (low) to 10 (high) for how much each career idea **excites you**. Eliminate any ideas which you scored lower than 7. Career change requires real dedication and if you are not genuinely motivated to move then, however practical your decision, it is unlikely that you will be successful in making the transition or fulfilled in your new career.

Now give each career idea a separate score between 1 and 10 for how **feasible** you think each is. You might want to consider some of the issues in the next section when determining this.

**Add the two scores together** to give a score out of 20.

Write down the **3 career ideas** which have the highest scores. These are the ones you might want to start investigating first.



## Doing your research

You now have some definite ideas to explore. At this stage you may have little idea of what these careers really entail, or how feasible it would really be for you to move into them. Don't worry as you will be finding this out in the next stage.

Some of the questions you might have at this stage might include:

- Would you need to retrain? If so, are you required to retrain before entering the field or once in it? What are the costs and logistics of training? What funding is available?
- What level would you be likely to start at? If a move would mean taking a lower status or lower paying position for a time, how would you feel about that?
- How easy is it to secure jobs in this field? What is the competition? Where is the demand?
- What are the career development and earnings potential in this field?
- What kind of lifestyle does this career offer?
- What other careers are there related to this area?

Write any other questions you have here:



One of the great things about exploring ideas for a new career is that as you begin to take steps to investigate your ideas, you will increasingly find opportunities to talk to potential employers and you begin sending out strong signals of interest which may lead to getting hired. Here are six ways you can move the process along.

## 6 Ways to explore a career

### 1. Research online

Look at jobs.ac.uk's Job Profiles section, a website like Prospects or relevant professional associations, which often have careers sections, to find out what the job involves day to day and entry requirements



#### Task

Find up to 5 key websites where you can research this career area



### 2. Look at job ads

Start searching the jobs sections of relevant jobs and employer websites to find jobs at the right level. Consider the range of qualifications and experience they ask for. Look at how many jobs are advertised; if few this might indicate a sector with few current prospects – or it could just mean that jobs in this sector tend to be filled through more informal methods.



#### Task

Print out two or three job ads which appeal to you and write a person specification for each: What qualifications, skills, experience and personal qualities do these employers seek? How do you match up?

### 3. Identify people already working in the field

You may already know at least one person who works in your target area. Think hard. Which of your friends, family, colleagues, ex-colleagues, people you used to know might know someone working in this field? Start asking around and you may be surprised at how quickly a name is mentioned. Look at your LinkedIn contacts, and your contacts' contacts. Alumni associations of previous Universities and professional bodies can also be helpful. Talking to real people helps you understand much better how good a fit your new career might be. You can also ask advice on how you might get in, and how future employers might view your experience.



#### Task

Find the contact details of one or two people who work in your target career. Send them a short friendly email asking if you can pick their brains about the work they do. Ask them to suggest a convenient time for a short phone call or, if local, ask them if you can buy them a coffee. Research online to find out more about their role and background and start preparing questions to ask them.



### 4. Identify potential employers

Using your online research and personal networks, start researching organisations – or managers in your existing organisation - who might potentially hire you. When you are ready, these are the employers you might approach with a speculative enquiry. Better still; ask your contacts who they know who works in these companies or departments and set up an exploratory meeting.



#### Task

Draw up a shortlist of employers who recruit in your target area. Keep a close eye on vacancies on these employers' websites. Start asking people you meet who they know who works in those organisations. Investigate if anyone in your LinkedIn network has contacts in these organisations.



### 5. Attend open days and networking events

If your target career area requires retraining, then approach training providers for details of open days and course information. There may be exam papers, archived lectures and other materials available to help you get a flavour of the subject matter covered.

For other areas of work, consider attending relevant conferences, professional training events or meetings of local professional groups, this can often be done as a visitor or as a guest of another member.



#### Task

Contact at least one training provider or professional association for your target career area to investigate events you can attend.



### 6. Volunteer

Consider opportunities for part time volunteering as a way of exploring how suited you are to your new career area and as a way of boosting your CV. Some areas of work lend themselves more easily to volunteering than others. Someone investigating teaching or social care as a career will find no shortage of opportunities. But almost every field has some kind of voluntary opportunity. Think laterally. Could you get some kind of experience with that client group? Could you develop some of the skills required in your new career elsewhere? If you want to switch to a marketing career, you could help with charity fundraising. A would-be management consultant can do some consulting for small organisations for free.

Consider asking your contacts already working in your chosen field if you can attend their place of work for a short period of work shadowing.



#### Task

List voluntary activities which might link with your target career area and organisations which offer this kind of opportunity.

## Building up experience

As well as volunteering, you may be able to build up experience in your chosen field by:

### Developing your existing role

Taking on a new project at work, attending training courses or applying for an internal secondment can help you build up experience prior to a career move. An administrator who wants to work as a coach might offer to mentor more junior members of staff; an accountant who wants to move into IT might offer to review the department's financial systems.

### Develop your interests outside work

You can build up relevant experience simply by investing time in unpaid activities. A researcher who wants to become a journalist might blog about their research; a lecturer wanting to move into banking might set up a virtual shares portfolio. These are powerful indicators of interest and career focus on your CV.

### Take on a part time job

Consider whether you could take on extra paid work related to your target career, either in an employed capacity or as a freelancer. The networking contacts you make in order to explore your career ideas can often be a source of this work. You may need to run this past your current employer's HR department to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

### Start your own business

You may be able to run a small business related to your new career whilst still employed. This is a great way of building your business network and establishing credibility in your field, as well as piloting an idea which you could develop into a full time job later on. See businesslink for more information and help in setting up a small business.




## Marketing yourself

Whether you are writing a CV, filling out a formal application for your new role or simply preparing to meet a new contact, you will need to be able to pitch yourself.

It is important that you are aware of why an employer might hire you: your Unique Selling Points. Ask yourself: Why might an employer hire me rather than someone else? What is valuable about the particular blend of experience, skills, qualifications and interests I bring?

Jot down some thoughts here



**Your USPs**

Armed with your USPs, you can now begin to:

- Tailor your CV and online profiles in ways that will interest potential employers
- Reflect on how you are going to introduce yourself to new work contacts.

Decide how you are going to explain your motivation to change career in ways that are convincing to a new employer. Stress the positives about what you hope to gain, rather than what you don't like about your present job.

## Making it happen

You have now:

- Decided what it is you want to change about your career
- Clarified the criteria your new career must meet in order to link to your strengths, values and interests
- Reflected on how to exploit your existing skills and expertise
- Generated some career change ideas which really enthuse you and which are feasible
- Begun to research your top career ideas in more detail and
- Considered how best to break into your new field

The future is now in your hands. Only you can decide if the time is right to make your career change a reality.

Here is an Action Plan to help you prioritise your time and keep track of your progress.

## CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN

### CAREER IDEA 1



Things I need to find out



Places I am going to research



People I am going to talk to



Possible ideas to break into this field



Issues I need to resolve

CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN

## CAREER IDEA 2



Things I need to find out



Places I am going to research

CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN





People I am going to talk to



Possible ideas to break into this field



Issues I need to resolve

CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN

### CAREER IDEA 3



Things I need to find out



Places I am going to research

CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN



People I am going to talk to



Possible ideas to break into this field



Issues I need to resolve

CAREER CHANGE ACTION PLAN

And remember...

***Destiny is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice: it is not to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.***

- William Jennings Bryan

## About the author

Lisa Carr is a careers consultant who works with a range of public and private organisations including the University of Warwick and Warwick Business School, where she coaches MBAs. She began her career as an HR manager in the energy industry and spent a number of years lecturing for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. She has qualifications in both Careers Guidance and Coaching and has worked with a wide range of clients from undergraduates through to senior academics and company directors.





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