

# A New Year Awaits: Is a Career Change Right for You?

Verity International

2020 and 2021 have been years of actualization, realization, and realignment. It should come as no surprise that thousands of people across North America have been leaving their jobs for vastly different careers or endeavours. The Great Resignation is well underway in the U.S., and while [The Globe and Mail](#) reports that we are not seeing the same extremes here in Canada quite yet, we too are feeling a shift. Change is in the air, and after all that we have endured these past two years, perhaps you are also contemplating what the next steps in your career will be.

Sometimes, a career shift is prompted by an organizational change. More and more often, however, internal reflection and a desire for something new is the true catalyst. Without a doubt, the pandemic has created space for reflection. You may feel you have reached your growth potential within a profession. Or you are looking for a [deeper connection to purpose](#) and perhaps ways to make your passion project a reality. Whatever the reason for changing careers, it is a significant decision that requires careful thought and planning. You'll need to consider three things: why you want to make a change, whether you are ready, and how you'll approach the transition.

## Evaluating your personal “why”

Clarity is an essential ingredient for success, and your career is no different. It is paramount that you understand what is driving your desire to make a switch and what you are seeking as you go forward. Have you lost your sense of purpose? Perhaps you have a passion project that you would love to pursue, like [Jeff Bezos founding Amazon](#). Maybe you are feeling disconnected from the work you're doing. These are good reasons to consider a change, but it is essential to evaluate whether it is the organization you are working for, or the role itself, that you are feeling unfulfilled in.

Only a small number of us know exactly what we are looking for next. Often, we are only certain of only one thing – that we want a change. We're not as clear on what that change looks like. To ground your thinking, begin by considering three essentials: values, legacy, and life stages.



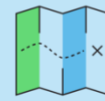
### Values

Do your values align with the current work you are doing?



### Legacy

Is the work you are doing what you want to be remembered for?



### Life Stages

Do you want to do this for the rest of your career?

A “no” on some of these questions can give you a sense of what change looks like – whether it is to create a long-term career path, align more closely to what you care about, or build a professional story that makes you proud.

## Assessing your readiness

In addition to considering your motivation behind a career change, you also need to ask yourself if you are prepared. As with all big life decisions, weighing the potential gains and losses is critical to understand the broader life impacts, both positive and negative. If you are truly ready you can afford to experience disruption in other parts of life, temporarily or even longer-term. Evaluate the below factors carefully:

### 1. Financial risks

Is financial ambiguity feasible, and, if so, for how long? What might you miss out on if your income changes? If you’re a primary contributor in your family, this is likely something you’ll want to discuss with your partner or others who will be directly affected. How will this change their lives as well?

2. **Setbacks in your career:** While you may be able to make a lateral jump to another role, starting in a more junior position is likely when moving into an entirely new career path. This might also mean going back to school and stepping away from working for months, or even years at a time.

3. **Possible regrets:** There may be aspects of your current profession that you will miss, such as work relationships, flexibility, or workplace culture. Consider if these things are too important for you to give up or if you can work in an environment where they may be different.
  
4. **Benefits:** While it is easy to get caught up in all that could go wrong, it's just as important to think of everything that could go right. How will changing careers help improve your long-term professional path, mental health, and lifestyle? [Brandon](#) left his stable career as a rising star at a well-known not-for-profit, for better work-life balance. While he was making a significant impact professionally, the 80-hour weeks were wrecking his home life. He found the courage to make a change and found himself spending more time with his daughter as a result. The right career change could lead to more time with family, less stress, or even more income.

After evaluating these areas individually, zoom out and look at the bigger picture. Are you coming up with more challenges or more opportunities? If the disruption is too risky at this stage, you may need to maintain your current course for the time being and make a plan to re-evaluate your career in the future. If you are ready to make a change now, here's how to get there.

## When dreams become plans

We recommend taking the following steps to translate your aspirations into an actionable plan:

### 1. Assess your interests and values

What parts of your current role do you enjoy the most? Perhaps it's problem-solving or helping others. Are there other interests outside of work that you'd like to explore more? The reality is, we invest a significant portion of our lives in our careers. If the work doesn't connect with your personal interests, true fulfillment is unlikely.

Making a list of your core values is highly important as well. As an example, if environmentalism is a core value that you can't compromise on, then an oil company may not be a good fit for you. Your core values define who you are and finding an organization or profession that supports those is key to finding job happiness.

## 2. Identify your areas of expertise and transferable skills

Next, think about your current skills and how they can transfer to your new career. Your core competencies reach beyond your technical expertise and lend well in many environments. For example, [the ability to think creatively](#) is one that's valued at many organizations and can easily help you land a new role.

## 3. Brainstorm and research potential career options

Once you know where your interests and transferable skills lie, it's time to narrow in and explore various pathways. Research different options that align to your aspirations. For example, if you think you'd like a role where you can create art, there are many different avenues: graphic designer, interior designer, and creative director, to mention a few; investigate each of these roles to see how they differ. One may end up being a much better fit for you than others.

Individual research is fantastic, but most career change doesn't happen at your desk. Connect with others, many of them. Ask past colleagues, customers, friends, and family where they believe your strengths lie, and where you make the biggest impact.

## 4. Network

You can't manage your career effectively if you are operating in a silo: simply put, you don't know what you don't know. [Networking is an essential skill for career management](#); you've spent years building up a strong network and there is no better time to leverage it. Find individuals in your network who are working in or have strong connections to the areas you are considering. Connect with them and gain deeper insights into aspects of the role that you may not have thought of. You never know where your next opportunity may come from.

## 5. Train, reskill, and upskill

You might find there are some skills that you are missing for your new career path. Take the time to learn what gaps need to be filled in your skillset and create a development plan; consider looking for a mentor in the profession or enrolling in classes or training so that you'll be on track when it comes time for the interview process.

## 6. Revitalize your brand

Finally, ensure your resume and LinkedIn profile are updated to fit the career you want. Don't forget that you have many transferable skills that can be carried over.

## Moving forward

Congratulations! You've taken the initial steps to determine whether or not a career switch may be for you. Remember to treat your consideration like any major life event: it's not something that you do quickly, it will take months of preparation. You must take the time to plan, research, and have conversations to assess how you'd enjoy and perform in your desired role.

If you do take the leap, remember that the first few months may feel like a rollercoaster and that it takes months, not days, to get settled into a brand-new endeavour. And if you decide to switch back to your previous career, don't see it as a failure, but as an opportunity you gave yourself to try something new.

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*Are you looking to make a career change? Engaging a career coach in your transition can make your decision-making process much less stressful, so you can explore the path that is right for you.*

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