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How to ace job interviews when switching careers

Millions of people change careers every year. Whereas professionals may have once worked for the same company for the majority, if not the entirety, of their careers, nowadays it's not uncommon for men and women to change jobs several times before reaching retirement.

Changing jobs and changing careers are not necessarily the same thing. Professionals mulling a career change will have to consider a host of factors that men and women looking to change jobs may never have to contemplate. Such factors may include returning to school and lifestyle changes designed to make living on less income more feasible. Professionals changing careers may also need to develop a strategy for handling

job interviews. When changing jobs as opposed to careers, professionals can draw attention to their résumés, essentially letting their experience speak for itself. But while experience is often a feather in a job candidate's cap, professionals changing careers may need to focus more on their futures than their pasts when interviewing for a new career.

- Draw attention to those skills that will apply to your new career. All of your experience and skills likely won't transfer to your new career, but that does not mean you're going in with an empty briefcase. Make a list of your most transferable skills, and develop an interview strategy that highlights those skills and explains how they can be ap-



plied in both the near future and over the course of your new career.

- Use your contacts to your advantage. Even if much of your experience won't transfer to your new career, your professional network might still be valuable to a prospective employer. The longer you have been working the larger your profes-

sional network likely is, so highlight those contacts in your interview and illustrate how you can put them to good use should you be hired.

- Showcase how you have adapted in the past. Much of the business world moves at a breakneck pace. That pace has become even faster thanks to advancements in technology that routinely

affect how businesses operate. Even if you have never before changed careers, that does not mean you have not adapted to change. Make a list of the changes your employers have instituted throughout your career, highlighting how you adapted to those changes and benefited from them in their aftermath.

- Remain positive

throughout the interview. Even if you are changing careers because you're unhappy and/or unfulfilled in your present line of work, avoid badmouthing that industry and your past employers. Doing so will only reflect negatively on you and raise a red flag with prospective employers. Instead, explain your reasons for pursuing a new career path in terms that excite potential employers about your candidate.

The decision to change careers can induce both excitement and anxiety. Maintaining a positive attitude and employing various strategies when interviewing with prospective employers can help make the transition to a new career go smoothly.

Update your skills in a secure job industry

The last several years have seen a series of economic ups and downs. Managing careers amid such instability has been challenging for many individuals, but professionals looking for more security can take steps to find careers that promise more long-term stability. Focusing a job search on industries that have shown strong growth and the ability to ride out waves of economic turmoil can tip the odds in your favor. Certain industries have better long-term employment outlooks than others, and men and women looking for more stability should consider these industries when pondering their next career moves.

Accounting

Thanks to ever-changing financial policies and greater scrutiny placed on lending practices and bookkeeping, accounting jobs remain solid career choices. Jobs in accounting can range from entry-level to more advanced (and more lucrative) positions requiring certification or a secondary education.

Medicine

Financial health does not safeguard people against illness, and health services are needed regardless of the state of the economy. That makes medical careers some of the most coveted and stable around. Healthcare professions can be lucrative, and careers in medicine are not restricted to doctors or nurses.

Clinicians, medical imaging personnel and medical laboratory technicians also are needed. The United States Department of Labor lists services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, home healthcare services and other health practitioner positions among the fastest-growing career opportunities.

Computer Systems

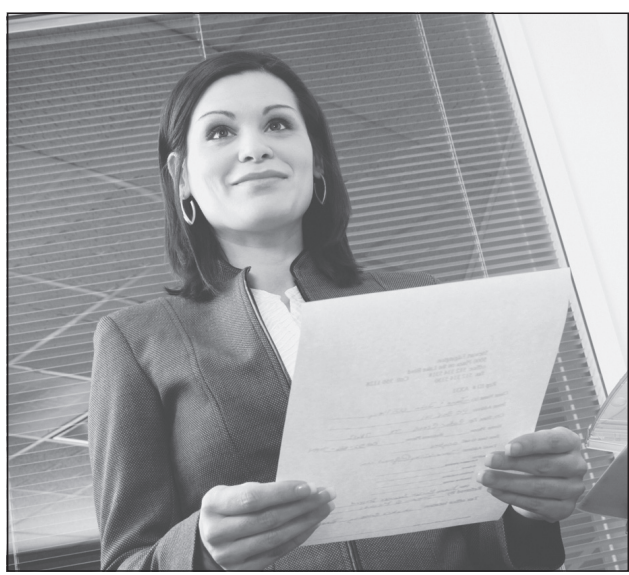
Computer systems analysts and programming experts are highly coveted in today's digital world. Many company operations are completely overseen by relatively autonomous computer systems. As technology keeps changing, employees who are able to stay abreast of the changes will only grow more valuable.

Builders

With more money injected into the economy, homes and businesses can once again resume growth. Laborers with skills in construction, masonry and residential building, and structure contractors can count on steady employment.

Environment

Clean-energy and other environmental jobs may currently make up a small percentage of employment, but reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate jobs in this sector are growing much faster than other fields, including healthcare. Workers ready to get in on the ground level may benefit from opportunities for advancement and the stability



of working in a field that figures to grow considerably over the next several decades. Green jobs include work that is primarily involved in the production of green goods and services, such as renewable energy, pollution reduction and recycling. Green jobs also are those that involve education and training

related to environmental compliance. Entering the job market for the first time or reentering it with a new career direction can be intimidating. Focusing education and skills on careers that are proven winners can be the security and confidence boost professionals need.

Change jobs without burning bridges

A new year invites people to reflect on the past and make changes or set goals for the months ahead. Many people list advancing their careers among their goals at the dawn of a new year. For some, that might require getting a new job.

People look for new jobs for a variety of different reasons. One of the primary motivators to look for a new job is to earn more money. Others are interested in trying a new field.

The employment recruiting and networking resource The Balance: Careers indicates that the average person now changes jobs 10 to 15 times in their professional lives. The Bureau of Labor Statistics says that most people now spend 4.2 years in a current job, which is down from 4.6 years in 2014.

Although some people may be tempted to leave a job with a bang, they should exit with class and professionalism. No one knows what the future brings, and it's best to leave a job on solid terms. With this in mind, here's how a person can change jobs successfully.

- Draft a letter of resignation. Clearly communicate your decision to leave the organization. Follow the proper chain of command and show respect by addressing the person to whom you directly report. Clearly communicate your intent and future



plans, highlighting when changes are expected to take place.

- Choose the right time. Timing is everything, and some times are better for leaving a job than others. Project Management, a consultant group, says to wait until important projects are finished, rather than bailing out in the middle of crucial work.

- Keep an open mind. Some employers may be blindsided by an employee's desire to leave, particularly in cases when said employee never communicated with a supervisor about the desire for more responsibility or to discuss something that may not be

working. A boss who respects your work and values you as an asset may make a counter-offer. Hear him or her out and weigh your options.

- Give plenty of notice. While two weeks' notice is the norm, leaving more time for an employer to find your replacement, and helping to train this individual, is a sure sign of respect for your current employer.

Changing jobs can be stressful and awkward, but it can be done in a way to ensure good relations with an existing employer for years to come.

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Deciding if a career change is for you

While losing weight and quitting smoking remain among the most popular New Year's resolutions each year, many more people resolve to change careers at the dawn of a new year.

Changing careers is a significant step, especially for men and women who are firmly established in their fields. A career change can be just as rewarding and life-changing as losing weight or quitting smoking, and there are some things professionals might want to consider before resolving to change careers in the new year.

Changing careers vs. switching jobs

Changing careers and switching jobs are not the same thing, and some people may want

the former while others may only be in need of the latter. A full-fledged career change may require returning to school and a willingness to start from the bottom. A job change typically allows professionals to stay in their fields and move on to another position, whether it's with their existing employer or with another company.

Career trajectory
The direction of a person's career may also influence whether or not they want to make a career change. Established professionals mulling a career change should consider their willingness to start anew.

Many mid-career professionals have worked for years to establish themselves in their fields and within their companies.



Switching careers does not mean that experience and reputation is invaluable, but neither attribute may carry as much weight in a different line of work, and that can affect career trajectory and future

earnings.

Effects on others
Established professionals must also consider the effect that a career change may have on their families. Married mid-career professionals should discuss

changing careers with their spouse, and even their children if the kids are old enough to understand. Discuss the pros and cons of changing careers and the impact that making such a change may have on your family's daily life. Will the family have to move? Will the family lifestyle change dramatically, if at all? Spouses and children may feel better about the change knowing they were involved in the decision, and talking things through with family may help working professionals determine if changing careers is the best decision for them.

Long-term goals
Long-term goals are another thing to consider before making a career change. That's especially true for mid- or

late-career professionals who may already have made significant progress toward achieving their long-term goals. Discuss long-term goals with your spouse or significant other and how changing careers might affect those goals. Long-term goals can change, and while the ability to realize those goals might not weigh heavily in your decision regarding a career change, understanding how such a change might affect your retirement or other late-life plans can only help you make the most informed decision possible.

Many people resolve to change careers at the dawn of a new year. But such a decision requires the careful consideration of a host of factors.

The right ways to update a résumé

The job market can be competitive, as new graduates flood the field each and every year. But graduation season is not the only time of year when the competition to find work gets heated.

The start of the new year tends to be one of the busiest times of year for new hires. According to the employment resource Simply Hired, the first Monday after New Year's Day tends to be the busiest day for job search activity. Companies are returning to full production after the holidays, and as a result there is a flurry of new activity. This means applicants can use the last quarter of the year to prepare for job searches they will institute once the calendar turns.

Many job seekers may benefit from revamping their résumés before beginning their search. It's not uncommon for

recruiters to receive thousands of résumés for each job opening they post, and the sheer volume of applicants can make it difficult for job seekers to get their résumés seen. In such instances, job seekers must take steps to tip the odds in their favor. By following these guidelines, job seekers may have a better chance of getting their résumés into the right hands.

- Put a professional purpose. Modern standards may suggest that listing a career "objective" is old fashioned. However, it is helpful to customize your résumé so that it is geared toward the position for which you are applying. A career objective may reflect how you are a strong candidate for each specific job you apply for. Use some specifics that tie into the

particular job or company and you may catch the hiring manager's attention in the process.

- Embrace keywords. Many employers now use application tracking software to sift through the scores of résumés that are submitted for each opening they post. Keywords make it easy for employers to sort through thousands of résumés. The right keywords will flag your résumé and increase your "relevancy score" in the main HR/recruiting software programs available. Adapt your résumé for each application you submit. Use some of the words listed in the initial job posting and description. In addition, look at similar job postings and incorporate some keywords listed in those ads so that you have all the bases covered.
- Trim the fat. Less is

often more regarding résumés. List all of the pertinent information, then go over the résumé again and again and cut out any irrelevant information to remove clutter. Only include information that is relevant to your career goals.

- Highlight what you have done. Rather than listing every job responsibility and position in chronological order, use a résumé to highlight specific career accomplishments. This is a time to be your biggest fan and tell the world all of the great things you have accomplished. Remember to include evidence to back up the claims. According to a 2015 survey by CareerBuilder, employers say that résumés that include links to a candidate's portfolio, website or blog garner more attention than résumés



without such links.

- Put your own voice in the résumé. Rather than using standard verbiage on your résumé, personalize what you want to say. Hiring managers want to hire a human, not a machine. When speaking about yourself, be sure to use strong action words that define your skills even further.

HR professionals cite terms like "managed," "achieved" and "improved" as examples of positive, assertive words. Updating a résumé with the goal of standing out among a crowded pool of applicants is a great way for job seekers to land a new job.

Learn how to be more assertive in the workplace

Gender equality in the professional arena has come a long way in the 21st century. But while great strides have been made over the last two decades, women still face challenges unique to females as they look to establish themselves professionally and advance their careers.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women still earn roughly 80 percent of what men are paid in the same positions. Professional women often must walk the thin line between being too nice or too aggressive, a pressure not often faced by men. Assertiveness is an art for both genders, and women can take steps to be more assertive

without giving the impression they're ruffling feathers.

- Be confident in your speech. It is easy to fall into "weaker language" habits when advocating for an idea. If unsure about the reaction to a proposal, you might say, "I think this is a good idea" or "I believe this will impart change." More assertive language is to simply stand behind the point: "This is a good idea." Confidence can go a long way.
- Allow people to disagree. It is acceptable for others to disagree with you. This can lead to discussion and an opportunity to present evidence why something should be done in a certain way. It also enables

you to point out the strong points in their argument. Listening to all ideas can sway people in your favor, even if they don't necessarily agree with all you believe in.

- Be proactive and future-oriented. This is especially pertinent when asking for raises or promotions. Explain to a boss how you respect yourself and that your work merits the right compensation. Point out clearly defined future goals and successes you've had that warrant consideration for higher pay.
- Don't fear conflict. Conflict doesn't have to be confrontational, especially when respectful language is used and everyone is allowed



to voice their opinions. Conflict can inspire great change. And remember, while you need to have solid relation-

ships with coworkers, they do not have to be your best friends. Assertiveness in the workplace can help

female professionals achieve their goals and showcase their value.

The traits of good leaders and how you can gain skills for success on the job

Successful leaders have the skills to guide organizations on the right path. Such men and women are often the first up for promotions, and routinely relied on for critical projects. Solidifying your own leadership qualities can be just what you need to land a great job and start climbing the corporate ladder.

Good leaders often share a key array of skills. Below are some of the qualities that make strong workplace leaders.

Communication

Being able to communicate effectively with all of the people in your work environment and beyond is one of the most essential leadership skills you can possess. Honest communication can



build trust and being open to feedback can ensure that everyone is working toward a common goal. Effectively communicating means knowing when to speak and when to listen.

Self-management
It can be challenging to manage or oversee others if you can't effectively take charge of your own tasks. Being able to self-manage involves gaining control and prioritizing goals

and actions. However, it also extends to being able to manage emotions, recognize weaknesses and strengths and focus attention where it's needed.

Integrity

Great leaders are trusted by others. Consistently acting with decorum and respect and delivering on your promises will inspire others to trust you. Stick to your core beliefs and values.

Confidence

Effective leaders have the confidence to make decisions and stand by them. Note that there is a fine line between assertive confidence and being boastful or cocky. It may take a little while to develop the right balance that encourages others to support your efforts.

Delegation

Delegating tasks is not a sign of weakness. In fact, it is a quality consistently found in strong leaders. Being able to delegate means you have the

confidence in others to share responsibilities based on their skill sets. Delegating also promotes teamwork and lets others know you're not afraid to share success.

Accountability

Leaders make mistakes just like everyone else. Owning your mistakes like you own accomplishments is a good trait to have. Placing blame elsewhere when it's not warranted can diminish others' trust in you, while taking blame when it's due will only increase that trust in you. Leadership skills are valued in all walks of life. Honing such skills can benefit professionals as they look to accomplish their goals and advance their careers.

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