

Making a Radical Career Change: Difficulties and Recommendations

1 WHO ARE THE WORST PEOPLE YOU CAN APPROACH WHEN MAKING A RADICAL CAREER CHANGE?

1.1 Worst person #1: HR (Human Resources Manager) (often she/he is actually a Personnel or Payroll Manager calling themselves HR)

- 1st recommendation: Avoid them whenever possible and if you must go through them, tell them that you are still in an exploratory phase and will approach them when you have done all your research and preparation (so that you won't bother them unnecessarily).
- 2nd recommendation: Skip them altogether. It is easier and often more efficient to ask for "forgiveness" than to ask for "permission".

1.2 Worst person #2: A person with no vision, or very traditional or very left brained

- 1st recommendation: Tell your story. Keep it short and explain to them that you are in the information gathering phase.
- 2nd recommendation: Pretend you are doing a short survey for a presentation you have to make at your school or alumni/professional club.

2 WHAT ARE THE WORST THINGS YOU CAN SAY WHEN MAKING A RADICAL CAREER CHANGE?

2.1 I want to make a change because I don't like my current job

- 1st recommendation: Define your real justification and the reason you are making a radical career change (i.e. "I have developed a passion for this industry...").
- 2nd recommendation: Be positive about your past experience and show what you have learned and how your skills you can transferred and utilized in this new job.

2.2 I know nothing about this industry and job - I have no experience

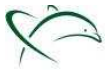
- 1st recommendation: Get information on the industry, field, and position through networking, seminars, peers. Understand the challenges of the industry.
- 2nd recommendation: Identify the skills from your past experience that are transferable

2.3 I don't know if I can do it/I don't have the competence/I am not sure about the skills required in this industry/I don't know how I can contribute

- 1st recommendation: Show your flexibility and ability to learn and adapt.
- 2nd recommendation: Show that you can bring a new point of view and fresh perspectives without preconceived ideas.

2.4 I just want to try something new

- 1st recommendation: Show better preparation/awareness/commitment.
- 2nd recommendation: Build on past experience and show your logical progression to this next phase.



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2.5 I know very little about your industry, but...

- 1st recommendation: Inform yourself/build prior knowledge and understanding.
- 2nd recommendation: Show that you understand the nature and challenges of the industry by linking each one to a core skill.

2.6 I don't like what I'm doing now

- 1st recommendation: Capitalize on the positives ("I love what I'm doing, even if...").
- 2nd recommendation: Highlight your transferable skills.

2.7 I do not appreciate my current employer

- 1st Recommendation: Be positive about previous experience, but explain what was "missing" for you that you hope to find in the new job.
- 2nd Recommendation: Avoid judging your former employers. Talk about what was interesting/helpful. When possible, remain neutral.

2.8 I am at a plateau and am not learning in my current job

- 1st recommendation: Identify and explain your transferable skills - and how they will be relevant in the new position.

2.9 I'm looking for something where I can use my skills, be recognized and thrive

- 1st recommendation: Ensure that you have completed the "I" Phase in "P.I.E." - Having spoken with at least 3 different people doing the job you want - to gain a thorough understanding of which of your skills you should highlight as relevant.

2.10 I decided to leave my former job because I was bored.

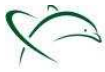
- 1st recommendation: Show them that "I'm excited to move into a career that allows me to leverage my past experience to successfully face welcomed new challenges".
- 2nd recommendation: Tell them "I'm grateful for the broad experience that my former job gave me which has now prepared me to take on new challenges".

2.11 I decided to leave my former job because I would like to work less.

- 1st recommendation: Show that you are excited to move into a career that acknowledges the importance of an optimal work-life balance.
- 2nd recommendation: Talk about wanting a career that provides flexibility to perform better in life, both professionally and personally.

2.12 I decided to leave my former job because I would like to make more money.

- 1st recommendation: Research salaries so you can ask for pay that is tied to the quality of your performance.
- 2nd recommendation: Talk about wanting a career where hard work is appropriately rewarded.



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3 WHAT ARE THE WORST THINGS YOU CAN DO WHEN MAKING A RADICAL CAREER CHANGE?

3.1 Divulge too much or irrelevant information with incorrect timing

- 1st recommendation: Focus on skill based attributes that are transferable.
- 2nd recommendation: Manage the timing and amount of information you give and continuously refine the process.

3.2 Not knowing what you the precise change you desire

- 1st recommendation: Don't focus on limitations - be open during your research phase.
- 2nd recommendation: Network within the industry and use the PIE method to narrow down the changes you want.
- 3rd recommendation: Identify and then network with the people who made drastic transitions in your chosen industry.

3.3 Rush and try to be too proactive (leaping before you have done your homework)

- 1st recommendation: Take a determined approach to find the right direction and all the pertinent information that would enable a good decision and allow you to form a plan.
- 2nd recommendation: Make a plan/strategy for the process and stick to it.

3.4 Use high-salary as an identifying filter

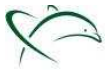
- 1st recommendation: Focus on growth and opportunity, both in the industry and for the chosen career.
- 2nd recommendation: Map your unique transferrable skills and make them relevant for the job/industry/opportunity.

3.5 Try to use a traditional job search process. (ex: ads, HR, CVs....)

- 1st recommendation: Find out who the "vision" person is and approach them.
- 2nd recommendation: Identify the business issues you can solve by mapping your unique skills.

3.6 Refer back to the standard of your old industry

- 1st recommendation: Contextualize your past experience and achievements that apply to the new industry.
- 2nd recommendation: Gather the industry terminology through informal interviews with inside people.



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4 WHAT ARE THE WORST TOOLS AND/OR STRATEGIES TO USE WHEN MAKING A RADICAL CAREER CHANGE?

4.1 Seeking advice from someone who had a stake in obtaining/maintaining your current role. For example, a manager, coach, mentor or sponsor

- 1st recommendation: Select your advisors carefully - look for impartiality.
- 2nd recommendation: Avoid creating negative relationships in your current role.

4.2 Assuming that what has worked in the past will work in the future

- 1st recommendation: Determine why a previous strategy was successful and then see if it is adaptable to your new plan (root cause analysis).
- 2nd recommendation: Ascertain what is relevant/key to success in the new career/job.

4.3 Assuming that your skills matches your ideal job

- 1st recommendation: Do a current analysis of your skills to make sure they match what is required in the new job.
- 2nd recommendation: Find any gaps that exist in your skill sets and the new job and then make a plan to acquire them or show how your other skills make up for the lack.

4.4 Leaving your current job to fully dedicate yourself to the search for a new job.

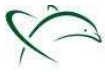
- 1st recommendation: Discipline yourself and dedicate some time of every day (lunch, evenings, weekends, vacation) to the search while you continue to work.
- 2nd recommendation: Use phone calls or Skype for interviews in distant locations to save on time needed to travel (and miss work).

4.5 Contact HR employees from the targeted company to learn about potential positions.

- 1st Recommendation: Use your already established network (INSEAD alumni, LinkedIn, etc);
- 2nd Recommendation: Find people in/from the targeted company (former or current employees but not HR), or professionals from similar positions in other companies to gather information.

4.6 Refer only to your professional achievements in your current/previous positions.

- 1st Recommendation: When making a radical change, achievements from your current/previous professional sphere may not help. What you must do is show how the transferrable skills or complementary skills used in those jobs can translate to a new/different position (i.e. a singer who wants to become lawyer shows how she uses her voice as an advantage for talking with clients over the phone).



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5 WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO MAKE A RADICAL CAREER CHANGE?

5.1 Making short-term compromises in order to start fresh in new job/industry/function

- 1st recommendation: Use the PIE method and leverage your network to shorten time needed to acquire information.

5.2 Moving from a high level interest in X industry to a specific job.

- 1st recommendation: Do your homework to find transferable skills applicable to the new job.

5.3 No credible history, experience, success stories for the new job/function/industry

- 1st recommendation: Do the "I" phase of the PIE method and find people who actually made the change you anticipate making. Ask them the reasons for their success.

5.4 Building up a network in the new field

- 1st recommendation: Widen your network as soon as you anticipate making any transition.
- 2nd recommendation: Use the Insead/Alumni network.

5.5 Building up a reputation in the new field

- 1st recommendation: Learn the "industry/job" language.
- 2nd recommendation: Study for an EMBA which is related to the new field.

5.6 Encountering financial difficulties

- 1st recommendation: Anticipate and set aside money for the time you will need to make the change.
- 2nd recommendation: Avoid loans when possible.

5.7 Explaining the radical change

- 1st recommendation: Use your EMBA project as a spark to get make the move.
- 2nd recommendation: Relate the new field to a long term hobby.