

Making a radical career change* can be challenging and, some say, risky. But, our experience of working with hundreds of would-be career changers has shown you can be successful if you observe at least some of the following ten rules.

*A radical career change involves changing both function (activity/title) and field (industry /sector) at the same time.

Rule # 1: Define what would make for a 'fulfilling job'

Define the criteria for what, for you, would be a 'fulfilling job'. Note we say 'fulfilling job' not 'dream job' – which may be beyond your reach. A fulfilling job is a function (title or activity) which inspires you, in a specific field (industry) which attracts you, e.g. project manager in a food relief organisation or CEO of a philharmonic orchestra. You may have more than one target job.

Rule # 2: Identify those with the power to hire

Identify five to 15 organisations for each of your target jobs – and make sure you know the names and titles of specific people with the power to hire.

Rule # 3: Validate each target job

For each of your fulfilling target jobs, approach three to five people who do this job. Use your network and avoid 'cold calls'. Ask them about their key tasks and skills, how they got their job, what they like most and least, and ask for the names of other people who do – and love doing – this job. Do not ask for a job, leads or openings. Your goal is to gather information.

Rule # 4: Make sure your desire to win exceeds your fear to lose

Meeting these people may make you realise that these jobs are not for you – or it may increase your desire to go ahead. This is a key success factor: *your desire to win has to exceed your fear to lose*.

Rule # 5: Master the right vocabulary

Remember that companies never hire 'strangers'; at most they hire 'half strangers'. Learn the ten or 30 words specific to the field so as to speak your recruiter's language. You will find those words through the internet, conferences, face to face meetings, professional organisations and trade fairs or in magazines and newspapers,

Rule # 6: Enforce a 'no return' strategy

Announce and spread your decision to make a radical career change. Tell your friends. Define your target job in your letters and CV.

Rule # 7: Approach the right person

The person you will negotiate with is key. You will lose time and, even worse, hamper or destroy your chances if the person you approach does not have the power to make strategic decisions, the ability to take risks and the vision to perceive, appraise and value the outstanding potential outcomes that you offer.

Rule # 8: Identify your 'relative skill or talent'

Very often a skill which is common in your current field is unique in your target field (i.e. the concept of yield is common in the airline and hotel industries but new in continuing education). This is your 'relative skill or talent'. A unique 'plus' that radical career changers have over traditional job hunters wanting to remain in the same field. It is important to promote your relative skill or talent when facing the person you negotiate with. Make sure you quantify its impact in terms of financial contribution.

Rule # 9: Show you are committed

Make sure your anxiety and uncertainty is not revealed by the words you use or attitudes you adopt. Make sure you do not write or say "*I'm contemplating...*" or "*I wish to*", but rather "*I have decided to*". If applicable, do mention any interest that your interviewer's competitors have shown in your application.

Rule # 10: Use non-traditional job search methods

You are doing something which is non traditional, so use an approach, a methodology, or tools which are non-traditional. Take a different search route to find your job. Avoid résumés which make you highly comparable, invest your efforts in the hidden market (networking and unsolicited approaches) and not the open one (answering ads or using search firms).

Some people (80% of us) need a safety net – or plan B – to operate at their full potential. Others do not; they feel that this prevents them from moving ahead. Know what sort of person you are and choose your strategy ... and proceed to your fulfilling job. Once there ... you will enjoy what you do for the rest of your life and you will be paid for it!

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