

SHOULD I CHANGE CAREERS?



Dear Genie,

Like most college graduates, I wasn't sure what I wanted to be and ended up majoring in political science. Shortly after graduation, I landed a good job in federal law enforcement and have remained in the same position for nearly 13 years. In the last 13 years I have transferred 3 times. The pay is excellent but I am not feeling fulfilled. I think my chosen career is not a very good fit but I have been too busy paying the bills and raising a family to really do anything about it. Lately I'm really feeling a need to change careers. I don't know of many professions that pay the kind of money I make and starting over salary wise could be detrimental. I'm not sure what I could do but I would like to be able to see the end result of my work and have better control over the decision making process of whatever I do. I'm thinking of possibly going into business for myself in a totally unrelated field. What do you think? Any encouragement?

Needs More

Dear Unfulfilled,

I often (but never too often) state "If you can describe a job, you can get that job" and "If you have met someone who has a job you would like, you can get a similar job." Well, it seems as if you may not be able to do the first, nor the second. I encourage you to find someone, anyone, who is running "a business" you would like to be a part of. Role models, mentors, and potential employers are what you should be looking for.

Entrepreneurship is a wonderful personality quality, but not a good job description. What kind of business? What would you be doing? Does it require additional education? Could you be trained using a "one course at a time" strategy? Would graduate business studies help?

I would like to be more helpful, but I would need to know your fields of interest. Look forward to hearing from you soon. Also, someone associated with your university, a faculty member, career counselor, etc. should be able to assist. Let's work together to identify them and, more importantly, act upon options. Get focused and go for it!

If possible, when you meet someone in the field (in person, by phone, by fax, or via email) generate discussions on particular job capabilities, most likely addressing how your studies provided skills-building experiences. Anyone can overcome a lack of experience with increased knowledge and increased focus. Know as much as possible about your field(s) of interest, meet as many people as you can within those fields (information), and offer to help with as many projects as you can over the length of your job search. The key to unlocking your dilemma is a sense of focus. What do you want to do? Those seeking Anything, often find Nothing. You must identify and prioritize areas of interests. The ideal progression from your stage of uncertainty to focus includes:

- Self-assessment (identification of Values, Interests, Personality, and Skills),
- Research (paper and pencil then people to people research pertaining career fields and job functions);
- Exploration by Experience (information conversations, shadowing, externships and internships),
- Then Job Search, Undergraduate or Graduate Study.

Progression through these four stages, facilitated by workshops, individual counseling, or group activities can be achieved through various experiences. Examine which are readily accessible to you.

You may not need to "start over." Sometimes people find that by "teaching, rather than doing," that they become re-energized. Can you become a recruiter or trainer? Can you become a specialized third party recruiter (head hunter) for your field? Can you sell products or services used by persons in your field? Can you become a "consultant?"

Get focused and go for it!