

## HOW CAN I TRANSITION FROM A GOVERNMENT CAREER TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR?



**Question:** I'm a 43-year-old U.S. Foreign Service Officer who has worked as a diplomat for 18 years. I have a broad range of experience in international economics, ranging from agricultural trade negotiations to macroeconomic forecasting to banking regulation, and I've lived in Europe, South America and Canada. I have a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University, and a relatively recent master's in economics from Stanford. I speak fluent Spanish and Portuguese. I feel I've neared the top of my government career, and I'm now interested in joining the private sector. I want to pursue a more productive activity than government paper-pushing, and I don't really want to live overseas anymore, which will be required in my present job. I'm daunted by the idea of finding a new career at my age, but I feel that my experience, education and economic and language skills might be worth something to someone. Do you have any suggestions on how to pursue my goal of finding private-sector employment?

— Bob, Washington, D.C.

**Bob:** Your impressive education and experience will make you a prized catch in the private sector. But your first goal shouldn't be finding a company willing to hire you. Instead, you must **decide what type of job best fits your personality and abilities**. After all, you don't want to spend the rest of your career chasing challenge and fulfillment from one position to another. Economics certainly is a broad discipline, which allows you to explore a range of functions that reside within most large companies. You can also investigate smaller companies that are tackling markets where your expertise is greatest. Start by completing assessment exercises that will help you set a direction. Then, you can create a target list of potential employers. Once you understand the type of job you should seek, I'm sure you can use networking and answering ads to land such a position.