

10 CAREER CHANGE MYTHS

Career Myth #1: You can't make a living doing something you really, truly love This is the grand-daddy of career myths, the belief that you can't have a "practical" career doing something that you were passionate about. It has to be one or the other. This myth is rooted in fear. Fear that we have to sacrifice our happiness to make a living. Don't buy the myth that you can't earn a living by doing what you love. When I first started coaching, I heard from plenty of people that it would be very difficult to make a living doing this work. I just decided to find coaches who were successful, and to learn from them (simple, eh?). If you find yourself buying into this myth, consider this question - As you look back on your life, what will you regret more? Following your passion or following your fears? **Career Myth #2: It's a tough job market/economy** Even when the newspapers and other news sources say that unemployment numbers remain steady, that job growth is at a standstill, or that we're experiencing slow economic recovery, not to mention downsizing and outsourcing, don't believe it. It's a myth because it doesn't reflect the whole story, the fact that that it's a different job market today. It's a changing economy. How we transition from job-to-job is different. Hiring practices have shifted. So the job market has changed, but that doesn't necessarily make it tougher. What makes it tougher is that we've been slower to change. We've held on to old practices and old behaviors. That's not to say that old ways still don't work, but they're just not as effective. So I challenge you to just believe that it's a perfect job market for you to find work. I've had my college students try this, just for a week, and, more times than not, several of them find job leads or make important connections during the week. **Career Myth #3: Changing careers is risky** What's riskier than leaving what you know to pursue the unknown? Changing careers means leaving behind a piece of your identity - your "I'm a lawyer" response to the "what-do-you-do?" question. It might mean admitting to yourself that you made a mistake with an initial career choice. Or it might mean acknowledging that you're unsure of what's next. And smart people always know what's next, right? Nope. Successful career changers often don't have a plan. In *Working Identity: How Successful Career Changers Turn Fantasy into Reality* by Herminia Ibarra, she provided evidence that waiting until you have a plan is actually riskier than just doing and experimenting. Nothing, absolutely nothing, is riskier than not changing careers if you're longing to do so. Here's why: The longing won't go away. It will always be there, under the surface, waiting for you to do something about it. **Career Myth #4: Always have a back-up plan** Sometimes having a back-up plan is the smart and prudent course of action. Back-up plans are so grown-up and responsible. But what happens when you're standing with one foot in and one foot out? In my experience, we usually close the door and retreat. We are reluctant to commit to ourselves, and we end up denying ourselves the satisfaction of playing full-out, getting dirty and sweaty. We end up with feelings of regret and the nagging "What if?" question. Back-up plans diffuse our energy. Diffused energy equals diffused results. Give all that you've got to your dream/passion/risk and you've got a better chance of being successful. **Career Myth #5: There's a perfect job out there for everyone** How long have you been searching for yours? You just know, deep inside, that there's an ideal job that's perfect for you out there. It matches your personality, skills, and interests to a tee. And it pays well. If only you could figure it out. If only you knew what it was. Is there a perfect job out there for you? No. And here's the good news - there are more jobs than you can imagine that would be "perfect" for you. Chances are you've even come very, very close to a few of those perfect jobs already. So what happened? And how do you recognize one of these so-called "perfect jobs"? Ever see the perfect gift for someone, but it was months till his or her birthday? Then when you go to find the item later, you can't. Another lost opportunity and you, once again, berate yourself for not buying it when you first saw it. So maybe you've run into a perfect job in the past, but because of the timing, you passed by the opportunity. Or maybe you were so focused on something else, that you missed an obvious clue. Instead of dwelling on the past, which you can't change, vow to keep your eyes open and to look beyond the obvious. **Career Myth #6: Asking "What's the best thing for me to do?" is the right question** This is one of the most common questions asked when considering a career change or a career move. It seems like a logical analysis - weigh the pros and cons and evaluate the balance. Do not ask yourself this question!! It rarely leads you to the answers you're seeking. It will lead you to feeling overwhelmed with options (sound familiar?), or feeling like you have to choose what's practical over what seems to be impractical. The question that will lead you to answers is simple (but not easy!!) It is "What do I really want to do?" This is a very different question than "what's best?" **Career Myth #7: If you don't like your job, you're probably in the wrong career** Cause and effect, right? One way to tell if you're in the right career is whether or not you like your job. If you're dissatisfied with your job, it's probably a sign that you need to re-examine your whole career choice. This is frequently what I hear from new clients who have decided to work with a career coach. They know something isn't right because they don't like their jobs. Their natural assumption is that their dissatisfaction is a symptom of a larger underlying issue - their career choice. This is an example of false logic. Not liking your job might be telling you you're in the wrong job. It doesn't necessarily mean you're in the wrong career. It doesn't even mean you're in the wrong job. You could just be working for the wrong person or the wrong company. It takes a skillful approach to discern the source of discontent, and I think it's very hard to do it on your own (shameless plug for career coaches here!) **Career Myth #8: Everyone needs a mission statement** Do you know what your mission is? Mission statements are supposed to guide us, keep us on track, and help us move forward. But what if you don't have one? Does that mean you're destined to never fulfill your potential career-wise? A client who was a successful professional contacted me because she was at a career crossroads. She felt that if only she could find her mission in life, she would know which career path to take. She had a clear goal for coaching - find her mission! Instead, the most amazing thing happened. She decided that she didn't need a mission. She chose to trust that she was already fulfilling her mission statement, even though she didn't know what it was. After the client shifted her focus from finding her mission to living her life, an amazing opportunity came her way and she pursued it. Here's a little tip: If your mission statement is elusive, stop chasing it. Be still and let it find you. And in the meantime, keep living your life and see what happens. **Career Myth #9: Expect a career epiphany** When you see a link to "Find Your Dream Job," do you immediately click on it to see what's there? Do you look at every "Top Ten Career" list out there to see if anything catches your interest? Do you know your MBTI type? If you do, you might be falling prey to the career epiphany myth. I'd love, love, love it if most of my clients had a career epiphany that indicated to them, in crystal-clear terms, their next step. Instead, I see career "unfoldings" or a journey of discovery much more regularly. That is, being willing to not ignore the obvious, the pokes, the prods, and listen carefully to the whisper within. Yep, forget harp music and angels, for most of us, the career epiphany is a quiet whisper. **Career Myth #10: Ignoring your career dissatisfaction will make it go away** Oh, if only this worked in the long run!! Granted, it does work at first. When you find yourself beginning to question your career, you'll find it's rather easy to push the thoughts aside and pretend they aren't there. You know what I'm talking about: the "what ifs" and the list of regrets. Over time, the random thoughts become nagging thoughts. You spend more and more time daydreaming about options. You build your list of reasons to ignore your growing career dissatisfaction:

- You're too old.
- You don't want to take a pay cut.
- You don't want to go back to school.
- You missed your opportunity 5, 10, 15 years ago.

With clients in this situation, we work on identifying and challenging these fears. Sometimes the fear of change remains, but there becomes a greater commitment to living than to feeling the fear. **Challenge** So now that you know that one or all of these myths have been holding you back, what are you waiting for?