

MAKING THE SWITCH FROM ACADEMIA TO THE CORPORATE WORLD

Summary: Jennifer gets some advice about her transition from her tenured professorship to the corporate world.



Question: I'm a 41-year-old tenured college professor with a Ph.D. I'd like to make a career change, but I'm woefully ignorant about the corporate world. I'm an excellent teacher (I won the "outstanding teacher" award at my college), I'm a captivating speaker, and I organize and run groups well and I have outstanding people skills, so I think I'd be a good trainer or facilitator. I also have research skills and have written and published my own research for the past 13 years. But where do I start my job search? The websites I've found are very specialized, and I have no idea about salaries in the real world. Help!

— Jennifer, Evanston, Ill.

Jennifer: You're obviously well-suited to enter the corporate world in many functional areas, the most obvious being in training and development. But before you can start targeting potential employers, you have to lock in on the type of position you'd find most rewarding. You'd didn't say why you're so eager to leave academia, especially since you've established such a track record at your current employer (I'm guessing money is the main issue). But unless you determine a new career path that accurately reflects your interests, even if the pay is significantly better, you'll be looking to change direction again in a year or two. I'd recommend that you complete one of the leading assessment exercises — such as Myers-Briggs or Strong-Campbell — before attempting your career switch. Once you know where you should head, getting there won't be a problem. You'll be able to use websites targeted to the field you like best, and use salary tables that reflect the jobs you'd prefer. It won't take long to find that, given your background, much of corporate America will value your writing, speaking, research and organizational skills.