

## FROM SOFTWARE ENGINEERING TO THE CORPORATE WORLD: IS SWITCHING WORTH IT?

**Summary:** Find out whether switching from software engineering to consulting is really worth it in the long term.



**Question:** I'm a software engineer in my late 20s earning about \$80,000 annually. I have a graduate degree in computer engineering, and I know I can become a freelance consultant and earn about \$120,000 a year. But I don't want to be in the IT industry forever. Airline management interests me a lot, and my career goal is to achieve a senior-level position in that field with an established company, such as Delta or another global airline. I strongly feel that earning an MBA full time at a top program will help me reach my goal. Some of my friends think I'll lose a lot of money with the switch, since I won't be working for two years. While the loss of income doesn't concern me much, I still think I can make up for it in a relatively short time, especially if I do well in my new career. What do you think?

— *Venu, Raleigh, N.C.*

**Venu:** If you start your career over by earning an MBA with a concentration in management, then spend a summer or two interning with a major airline, I'm sure you'll find a mid-level management position once you graduate. However, my airline industry sources say that not only is it a tough market that can nosedive quickly if the economy heads south, but that starting salaries for new MBAs at top international airlines is \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually. It typically takes them many years and lots of good luck to break the \$100,000 barrier. And since the competition is so fierce, you may end up at a regional carrier earning even less. You have to decide if the opportunity outweighs your significant loss of income (although your personal travel costs will fall). Of course, you can try combining your two interests now by targeting IT jobs in the airline industry. I'm told demand is just as high there as in most other industries, and you may be able to maintain your current compensation level.

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