

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO RETHINK YOUR CAREER PATH

Summary: Find out what you need to do if you want to change your career trajectory while you're still in college.



Question: I am an engineering student majoring in telecommunications. Having completed the first year of my studies, I feel confused about my career options at this stage. Looking at the job market, I am not sure whether to stay with engineering or switch to a business degree (accounting), although the projected engineering salary is attractive. I intend to go on for an M.B.A. Should I make a career shift at this time or carry on with what I initially chose?

Answer: Rather than thinking of your decision as "make or break" or "right or wrong," start from the premise that either focus could pave the way for a promising career. While market demand and salary are legitimate concerns to factor into your decision, a number of variables, from personal values and motivation to labor trends and work-environment preferences, combine to lead to career success. Therefore, broaden your decision-making criteria to include your own personal style and preferences.

The day in the life of an engineer is considerably different from the day in the life of an accountant. Before simply replacing one with the other, take steps to determine your own work profile as it relates to both fields. Also, continue researching labor trends to project your marketability upon graduation. Finally, talk to faculty and professionals in both fields, as well as M.B.A. alumni, to gain first-hand knowledge of job responsibilities and to get their recommendations about niches that are both fulfilling and in demand in these fields.

As a second-year student, make the most of every opportunity to "try on" careers through internships, co-ops, work-study assignments, course projects and student memberships in related professional associations. Use course electives to experience an accounting class or two. Meet with a career counselor at your college to take interest inventories and to help pull together the results of your self-assessment with your findings on engineering and accounting. Allowing yourself this exploration will leave you in a much better space from which to pursue a career path.

- See **Considering Changing Careers - Should I Make the Switch?** for more information.