

The Myths of Career Change

by: Jeffrey Levine

Chances are you already have many ideas about what it takes to successfully transition into a new career, even if you have never done it before. Some of those ideas might be useful – most probably are not. In this article I would like to expose The Myths of Career Change, which might actually be holding you back.

MYTH #1: PASSION AND WORK ARE NOT COMPATIBLE In fact, research shows the opposite to be true. Most successful people are those who have learned to follow their passion. The problem is that many of us were taught to be rational when we make career decisions. So we buried our passion. Think about your own career path. Maybe you were passionate about writing when you were younger, but made the rational choice to go into nursing. Maybe you were passionate about working with children, but decided accounting would be a “smarter” choice. (By the way, if nursing or accounting is your passion, and you followed it, congratulations.) When we are passionate about our work, we are able to be spontaneous and joyful because we are tapping into our natural strengths and abilities. When we enjoy and are fully engaged in our work, our self-esteem is higher, and we are able to perform at a higher level. On the other hand, when we are unable or unwilling to connect emotionally to our daily tasks, we are less likely to be successful. To draw an analogy, if you are in the wrong career, it is like a cactus trying to grow in the middle of a forest. It doesn't belong there, it won't grow – and the same is true for you. You won't grow and success will be very unlikely.

MYTH #2: THE WAY TO BE SUCCESSFUL IS TO PICK A CAREER IN ORDER TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO SOMEDAY QUIT AND DO WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO DO Again, studies confirm that this isn't what successful people do. They, instead, are so absorbed in their career they work long hours, think about their work constantly, talk about it to their partners and friends – they have that “fire in the belly.” In other words, their commitment to their work is unwavering. But if you are working just make money and you are postponing enjoying your work for some later date, you will be unable to maintain that type of commitment over a long period of time. Successful people have made an important discovery - that the journey itself is even more important than the goal.

MYTH #3: YOU NEED TO BE SURE WHAT YOU WANT TO DO BEFORE YOU START DOING SOMETHING This belief holds people back from making any moves at all. People who have successfully changed their career began by experimenting; trying out new opportunities part-time, on a small scale, beginning weekend projects, volunteering, taking night classes or going back to school. They found a way to “stick their toe in the water.” When you begin exploring, you actually begin to experience your possible future and what it might feel and look like. You can then make adjustments in your course as you gain more experience and your direction becomes clearer. The reason is simple. For years, you have been molded by what you do. Therefore, you need to actually start doing something else. If you are the kind of person that likes to do extensive research, make lists, take assessment tests, and research potential companies before making a move, do it. Gathering information can be useful. Don't forget, however, that you need to begin taking steps to try out what you are learning. Career transition does not follow a straight line and no two transitions are the same. It can take 2-4 years and it is often a case of three steps forward and two steps back. By waiting until your plan is perfect, you increase the chance that no moves will be taken. So, begin the search for where your passions lie. Start by doing experiments, trying things out. Don't let career change myths keep you stuck. By changing some of your beliefs about your transition, you will actually change the direction of your journey. Good luck.

About the Author

Jeffrey Levine, MBA, CPCC is a career coach with Clarity and Action Partnership and is currently President-elect of the Professional Coaches and Mentors Association, L.A. Chapter. After working in the entertainment industry as a composer, in what he thought was his dream career, he found himself frustrated, disappointed and he made a radical shift in direction. “My journey has given me a deep appreciation for the courage it takes to navigate a major life transition.”

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