

# Considering a Midlife Career Change?

Cynthia Stephens

In today's world, it's natural for employees to reevaluate their current jobs and explore alternate career choices. At times, people become bored with their job, while others have been "downsized" out of work. Some job seekers use the opportunity of "forced retirement" to explore more rewarding careers, and often these choices lead to jobs that offer greater satisfaction.

No matter what the reason, transitioning into a new career later in life can be a challenge, but it doesn't have to translate into a "midlife crisis." Individuals who make a midlife career change should search for opportunities that best suit their skills and specific talents, and offer them the greatest level of satisfaction and reward.

Job seekers—especially older adults—frequently face a number of barriers in making career transitions. Often a job seeker feels that age is an obstacle to changing jobs.

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## Tips on Career Transitions . . .

- Before leaving a job, think of ways to improve your situation.
- Instead of searching for a new job, consider lateral moves with your employer.
- When exploring new jobs, ask yourself some key questions: What fields interest you most? Where do you want to work? What it will take to make it happen?
- Take your time when making a career change. Make a transition gradually.
- Discuss the pros and cons of transitions with family and friends.
- Educate yourself about the skills you would need for a new career by conducting research on the Web.
- Gain hands-on experience about a new job by moonlighting if possible.
- When interviewing for a new job, promote your experience and what you can offer the organization to counter the advantage of hiring younger workers who may not demand as much pay.
- Emphasize your enthusiasm to convince employers of your interest.
- Attend functions of professional organizations to network.
- Leverage your skills by trying to show a potential employer how your work experience would be beneficial.

However, older, more experienced job seekers have more to offer an employer. Mature individuals offer a great deal of experience and skills acquired in a career and can easily transfer those skills to most other jobs regardless of the industry. In general, they have a willingness to learn new ideas and skills and are more open to learning from others. The mature individual can more clearly identify past accomplishments and relate abilities to a specific job.

Seasoned workers are often more loyal to their employers, motivated to work hard, and have the life experience to make sound judgments and decisions.

With this in mind, employers should reevaluate their job requirements and seek individuals who are exploring a career transition. These individuals have a renewed sense of energy and passion, and the employer benefits from the sense of their experience and skills.

Based on my experience, these candidates will stay long-term with a new employer; are more stable in the working environment; and tend to be more reliable, dependable, and more enthusiastic about the job opportunity than the younger, newly trained individuals.

For those exploring a career change, consider taking a temporary position in the field first to get a feel for the new demands and environment of your job. It could be the first step to making a transition that will increase your career satisfaction.