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What's new? Your career, with retraining

by Adam Stone | February 23, 2012



After a successful run as an entrepreneur, Sparrow Rogers of St. Michael's, Md. decided it was time for a change.



"I did a lot of reflecting on the entrepreneurial cycle, with all its very high risks and lots of pressure," said Rogers, 35. "I decided I wanted to find something that was both a profession and vocation. I wanted a career with a cause."



Like



After launching and selling such companies as FastBite, Venture Lanes and MDTrex, Rogers turned her back on that lifestyle and returned to school at Loyola University of Maryland to work on a master's degree. She wants to be a teacher.

Here's to fresh starts

It's a difficult leap to make -- to walk away from a successful career and pursue something completely different. It takes courage, creativity and, more often than not, new training and education. On the up side, a fresh start can bring new satisfaction to one's working life, a chance to do what you're always really wanted.

A major career change can mean more money, depending on the move. It may mean a chance for professional growth, if you've gone as high as you can in your present field. Or it can offer an opportunity for personal enrichment. Here's your chance to study up on something you've always wanted to know and then to put that knowledge into practice.

Studying up likely will be part of the agenda for mid-career adjustments. "Any retraining will take from at least several months to a few years depending on a profession," Jindrich Liska, CEO of recruiting site Jobmagic.

Some career changers will go back to college for their [bachelor's degrees](#) or pursue an [advanced education](#). Others will look for professional certifications to kick off their new ventures.

Don't quit that old job yet

Yes, going back to school will cost money -- perhaps the highest hurdle to a mid-career leap. "Every person who plans on a career in a new profession should definitely assess the temporary impact on both their finance and lifestyle," Liska said. Tuition, books and possibly housing will all take a bite out of the budget.

With this in mind, it can make sense to keep on working either part-time or full-time while chasing that dream.

"It is great if a person can keep the current job," Liska said. "However, even if a person keeps a job, he or she needs to take into an account the lifestyle 'cost.' Besides the regular working hours, one will be spending significant time in a classroom and working on additional projects. This can very quickly suffocate the initial enthusiasm."

Burnout indeed can be a hazard to those "moonlighting" in the classroom. Financial aid helps ease the burden and begins with the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). This is the basic form the government uses to help decide whether you qualify for grants or other financial aid to cover tuition and fees.

For some, the financial burden will be doubled by that common curse of the recession: unemployment. The tuition bill may hurt, but for those without a job, a new for education may be the smartest thing to do.

"If you are out of work for any length of time, but you have been engaged in your pursuing your education, then you can say to an employer, 'I have been busy doing this,' rather than just being unemployed," said Dr. Edward Meyer, dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies at the College of Mount Saint Vincent in Riverdale, NY. "What have I been doing? I've been earning this new degree."

Worth the effort?

Consider the financial impact of a little retraining, even for those who swap careers within their existing field of expertise, according to Payscale.com.

- Use a [computer science degree](#) to join the rank and file of web developers at \$51,400 or take on further schooling to become an IT business analyst for \$80,500 a year.
- A psychology major can earn \$49,400 as a mental health counselor, or train up to become a human resource manager and earn \$61,300.
- An [economics degree](#) will draw \$54,300 as a financial analyst, whereas specialized training can bump you up to \$96,500 as an information technology project manager.

Once you've decided to begin the journey, which way should you turn? The web offers a lot of basic information regarding possible professions, schools and training programs. Just as valuable is the personal touch: Talk to those already in the field, commune with members of professional organizations.

"Go to professional meetings, organizations, seminars or conferences. Meet people and tell them you are considering a career change. Ask for their advice on how to break into your chosen new career. Look for learning opportunities offered by trade organizations," said Elizabeth Venturini, a [college admissions advisor](#) with Scholastic.

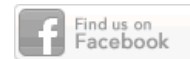
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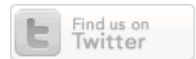
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Education and training take time and effort and money, but the payoff can be substantial in both professional and personal satisfaction.

"Once you have made your career change and have established yourself, you might find yourself much happier," Venturini said. You just may wonder: "What was I thinking to stay in my old profession for so long?"

About the Author

Adam Stone is a freelance writer specializing in health care, technology, finances, education and hospitality.

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