

## Making a Successful Career Change

*This article appeared in a slightly different format in the January 2009 issue of AustinWoman magazine*

Frustrated by the uncertain economy and job market? Are you ready to move into the driver's seat and take control of your career? Is it time for you to find work that is a fit for you both *inside* and *out*?

If yes, you may be one of the thousands of professionals who has decided it's time to consider changing careers.

Transitioning to a new career, whether it's simply changing industries, starting your own business or making a larger jump to a new field, requires courage and a willingness to take risks. The most important—and difficult—questions to answer when considering a change are “Am I clear on what I really want?” and “Am I willing to do the work to get there?”

Having clarity and focus, knowing how and where to locate resources to help you make a transition and building a support system to assist you during this process can help alleviate paralysis, fear and frustration.

### **Strategies for launching a career change:**

- 1) **Draft a plan and timeline**, realizing that if you need training or additional education, it may take one to two years to successfully transition to your new career. A career change always takes longer than you think it will!
- 2) **Do your homework**: conduct informational interviews with professionals in the area you're exploring, attend monthly networking meetings through professional organizations in your chosen field and tap into career resources through your university, local community colleges and continuing education programs.
- 3) **Start working right away in the area you want to move into** while you're still at your current job, even if it's on a contract, part-time or volunteer basis. It's also key to spend time around seasoned professionals in the field you want to move into so you can start envisioning yourself in your new career and make sure it's really is a fit for you.
- 4) **Get clear on “what you do best”** and enlist a mentor or career coach to brainstorm with you on how you can leverage your strengths and talents. You will experience the greatest enjoyment, prosperity and satisfaction when you are doing those things that are second nature to you.
- 5) **Create a support system**: seek the counsel of friends, mentors, coaches, consultants and career transition groups to guide you, inspire you and provide feedback and emotional support throughout your career change.
- 6) **Save as much as you can** prior to your transition and create a budget and financial plan that allows for maximum flexibility and financial breathing room while you're getting started in your new career. Keep in mind, almost all professionals who make a

considerable career change, begin by working part-time on the side while they are still at their current job.

7) **Take baby steps:** realize that a career change doesn't happen overnight. If you're employed full-time and are having trouble finding time to work on your career plan, set up a weekly "career date" with yourself to focus on your next steps. Schedule this career date on your calendar for the same time and place every week (for example, every Friday morning from 7-9 a.m. at Sally's Coffee Shop). Knowing that you're committing the time to make this a priority will motivate you to keep moving forward.

8) **Be gentle with yourself:** Gregg Levoy, a colleague and author of *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*, says "Generally people will not pursue their callings until the fear of doing so is finally exceeded by the pain of not doing so. But it's amazing how high our tolerance is for this type of pain." Changing careers takes tremendous courage. Expect to ride an emotional rollercoaster--from joy to fear to exhilaration to extreme frustration. And, be easy on yourself.

Based on our personality, professional background and life stage, we all have different ways of accomplishing our goals. There is no right or wrong way to make a career change. Do what works for you, however, a little foresight and planning and a lot of support can make all the difference in how you experience this journey.

#### RECOMMENDED CAREER CHANGE AND JOB SEARCH WORKSHOPS:

Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> 6-8:30 p.m. **Finding Your Career Mojo Workshop**

**Location: St. Edward's Professional Education Center (183/Mopac)**

Ready to find work that's a fit for you inside and out? **Finding Your Career Mojo** is a highly popular career change workshop for professionals in career transition. Led by Renee Peterson Trudeau, president of Career Strategists. Learn more and register online at [www.careerstrategists.net](http://www.careerstrategists.net).

Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 9:00-noon **The Ultimate Job Search Workshop**

**Location: St. Edward's Professional Education Center (183/Mopac)**

What is the secret to landing a new job? The job search process requires "inner work" and "outer work" to really generate the results you desire. Join other mid-senior level professionals for this empowering, supportive and resource-packed seminar. Led by Renee Peterson Trudeau and her team, you can learn more and register online at [www.careerstrategists.net](http://www.careerstrategists.net).