

Meta Title:	How to Change Career Paths Successfully Forward Role
Meta Description:	Changing careers can bring new opportunities. Learn how to do it with our step-by-step guide and tips from recruitment expert [Name].
Headline score:	79
Readability score:	99

How to Change Career Paths Successfully: A Step-by-Step Guide

Research by [Prospects](#) found that 49% of young people want a career change. But switching careers can be daunting, especially if you're uncertain about where to start or how to navigate the transition.

In this guide, we'll provide you with practical steps on how to change profession, advice, and how to write a CV and cover letter for a career change, with help from recruitment expert at Forward Role, [Name]. Whether you're seeking personal fulfilment, better work-life balance, or new challenges, we've got you covered.

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What is a career change?

A career change is the process of transitioning from one profession or industry to another, often driven by a desire for personal fulfilment, new challenges, or a shift in interests.

For example, you may begin your career in graphic design and then decide social media marketing is more suited for you and your interests.

Reasons for a career change

There are many reasons for wanting to change career paths. Some of these include:

- **Personal Growth** — You may want to acquire new skills or take on challenges that push you beyond your current capacity. For example, if you've been working in traditional advertising, you might decide to learn digital marketing techniques to broaden your skill set and adapt to the evolving media landscape.
- **Work-life balance** — You might be in search of a role or industry that better aligns with your personal life or family commitments.
- **Industry shifts** — You could be facing changes or downturns in your current industry that necessitate a move.
- **Interest changes** — Over the years, your interests and passions can evolve, leading you to seek work that's more in sync with them.
- **Financial incentives** — You may be considering a transition to a role or sector with better financial prospects or benefits.
- **Seeking a new environment** — You might have a desire for a different company culture or work setting that resonates more with your values or aspirations.
- **Career progression** — You could be feeling stagnant in your current role and are on the lookout for positions with more growth potential.
- **Burnout** — Experiencing exhaustion from your present role, especially if you're constantly under tight deadlines or handling high-pressure tasks, might make you seek a change for better mental well-being.
- **Lifestyle changes** — Factors like relocation, health reasons, or other personal circumstances might prompt you to consider a shift in career direction.

When is the right time for a career change?

Deciding on the right time for a career change can be influenced by a mix of personal feelings and professional situations.

X explains, "when you're constantly dreading those Monday blues, feeling like your tasks aren't giving you any satisfaction, or realising that what you're doing now doesn't fit with where you want to be in the future, you might be in need of a career change. And let's not forget those tough workplace issues. If you're stuck in a place that feels toxic or you feel like you're not growing, it's probably time to think about making a move."

"But remember," X adds, "jumping ship too often can be a problem. It's a good idea to stick around in a job for a few years to show you're reliable. If you're hopping from one job to the next all the time, hiring managers might start wondering if you're the problem, questioning how dedicated you really are or why you left so many jobs before."

Steps on how to change your career path

1. Understand why you aren't happy in your current job

Dive deep and figure out the reasons you're feeling dissatisfied with your current job. Is it the work culture, the nature of the job, or something else? Understanding what you don't like about your present role is crucial. It not only gives clarity on what to avoid but also helps pinpoint what you're genuinely seeking in your next career move.

X says, "people often make hasty career changes only to find that they've jumped from the frying pan into the fire. By understanding what elements of your current job dissatisfy you, you can make more informed decisions about your next role, ensuring it aligns better with your aspirations and values."

2. Review your interests and skills

Reflect on the skills you've honed and the interests you've nurtured throughout your life, from university to past work roles. What tasks did you excel at or enjoy the most?

"Combining your genuine interests with your proven skills can guide you towards a career that's both fulfilling and suited to your strengths", says X. "By evaluating your past experiences, you can pinpoint a career direction that aligns more authentically with who you are and what you bring to the table."

For example, you may have worked on a project at university creating website content and got intrigued by search engine optimisation. Today, you're in journalism, but lately, you've felt the pull for something different, perhaps a new challenge. Given your past interest, content creation or a career in SEO could be something to look into further.

3. Research alternative careers

Take some time to explore different career options and stay up-to-date with the latest developments and changes happening in the field you're interested in. This can help you identify emerging opportunities and areas of growth, ensuring that you choose a path that is relevant and promising in the long run.

X says, "I recommend reaching out to friends, family or professionals in the area of work you're interested in, as this can provide valuable insights and guidance. Their thoughts and experiences in the industry can help you gain a deeper understanding of what to expect. LinkedIn is also a great place to connect with professionals, ask questions, and expand your network."

To learn more about connecting with other professionals, read our guide on how to network successfully.

4. Look at job opportunities

X advises: "As you explore potential career paths, look at job listings related to the roles you're considering. Pay close attention to the job descriptions and the skills or experience they demand."

"By understanding the requirements and responsibilities, you can gauge how closely they match your current skill set and what additional training or experience you might need."

5. Make a plan

Once you've determined the field or industry you want to transition into, it's time to craft a detailed plan. Start by setting clear, achievable goals and determining realistic timelines. Ask yourself where you envision yourself in six months or a year within your new career. Then, create a comprehensive roadmap that outlines the specific steps and actions you need to take to reach those goals.

"Consider breaking down your plan into smaller, manageable milestones," says X. "Identify the skills and qualifications you may need to acquire along the way, as well as any networking opportunities or certifications that can boost your chances. By having a well-structured plan in place, you'll not only stay focused and organised but also increase your chances of a successful career transition."

6. Upgrade your skills

Identifying gaps in your skill set for the new role is a crucial step in your career change journey. Take the time to assess what skills are required in your desired field and compare them to your existing abilities.

Once you've identified areas where you might need improvement, here are some practical steps you may consider:

- **Work experience** — This can involve internships, part-time roles, or even volunteering opportunities related to your new career path. Real-world experience can be invaluable in building your confidence and demonstrating your commitment to potential employers.
- **Courses or university** — Enrolling in relevant courses or going back to university can be a valuable investment in your career change. Pursuing advanced degrees, diplomas, or certificates in your chosen field can deepen your expertise and expand your professional network.

7. Refresh your CV and cover letter

Once you've acquired the skills and experience necessary for your desired role, it's time to update your [CV](#) and compose a [cover letter](#) that resonates with your new career goals. This step is crucial to showcase your transferable skills and demonstrate your suitability for the position you're pursuing.

How to write a CV for a career change

Writing a CV for a career change follows the same basic principles as creating any CV, but there are some specific considerations to keep in mind.

If you've taken proactive steps to improve your skills for your new career, you should now possess a few valuable, relevant skills. Be sure to highlight those skills at the top of your CV.

However, if you haven't had the chance to gain new qualifications, focus on showcasing your existing transferrable skills and experiences. Although they may come from a different field, they can play a significant role in your new career. You can include any tasks or projects you've undertaken that are similar to the work you'll be doing in your new field.

When crafting your CV profile, use it as an opportunity to convey your reasons for pursuing a career change and illustrate how your skills and background align with the role you're applying for. Here's an example:

'As a graphic designer with a background in visual storytelling, I'm now seeking a role in copywriting to embrace a new challenge. With over five years of design experience, complemented by a recent Advanced Copywriting course, I've refined my communication skills and persuasive writing techniques. I also have a blog about football, which I update in my spare time, highlighting my passion for writing.'

"Remember: It's common for career changers to have gaps in their qualifications, and you shouldn't be discouraged by this," says X. "Instead, view your career change as an opportunity to showcase your confidence and motivation to enter a new realm. Highlight your ability to adapt and learn quickly, as these qualities can be just as valuable as industry-specific experience."

Check out our step-by-step guide on how to write a digital marketing CV.

How to write a cover letter for a career change

Your CV's profile gives a brief overview of your career change, but a cover letter lets you explain it in more detail. If you're applying for a job that represents a shift in your career, your CV needs more context and clarity, which the cover letter can provide.

Start your cover letter by acknowledging your move to a new career. Be clear and concise about why you're making this change, as it provides essential context for the hiring manager to understand your motivations and commitment to the new role.

Also, at the beginning of your cover letter, emphasise the skills and experiences most relevant to your new career. This upfront focus shows that you align with the role's requirements right from the start, demonstrating your suitability.

The start of your cover letter may look something like this:

'I wish to express my interest in the position of Technical SEO Executive at your company. As you can see from my CV, I have spent the last five years working as a social media content creator for [Company Name]. During this time, I have honed my skills in understanding audience behaviour and building relationships with clients.

However, what truly intrigues me is the technical aspect of SEO, which I discovered during a collaborative project with the web development team at [Company Name]. As a result, I decided to expand my knowledge by completing an Advanced Technical SEO course.

I believe my strong analytical skills, attention to detail, and dedication to staying updated with industry trends make me well-suited for a successful career in technical SEO.'

Read our guide on [how to write a cover letter with examples](#) to learn more.

When is too late to change career paths?

A study by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) found people aged 18 to 24 changed jobs an average of 5.7 times, but this number significantly decreased to only 1.9 jobs between ages 45 and 52.

While the research found people change jobs fewer times as they grow older, that isn't to say that changing careers later in life is impossible or a bad idea.

In fact, X says, "It's never too late to consider a career change, whether you're in your 30s, 40s, 50s, or even beyond."

"While the idea of transitioning to a new field might seem daunting, the truth is that people change careers at various stages of life, sometimes even after decades in one profession."

There are plenty of successful people who choose to make career changes in their adult life. Take Vera Wang, for example. Before becoming a renowned fashion designer, she pursued a career in journalism. It was only at the age of 40 that she designed her first wedding dress.

Similarly, Jeff Bezos was working in finance before he started Amazon at 30.

Learn more about Forward Role

Switching careers can open a world of new opportunities, and at [Forward Role](#), we can help you along that journey. Whether you need advice on how to make the change, or you've bagged the interview and want to know [how to prepare](#), [contact our experts](#) today for advice.

Check out our [job seeker FAQ page](#) or, for more tips for succeeding in your career, read our [blog](#).

At Forward Role, we have the expertise to match top-quality candidates with market-leading digital and tech businesses throughout the UK.

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