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## Is it time for a career change?

By Ross Fattori  
Special to The Toronto Sun

Changing careers can be a daunting experience, fraught with doubt and uncertainty. But for many people who have taken that bold step, the result is often tremendously liberating.

Whatever your reason for changing careers -- you are bored with your job, or want a career that utilizes more of your talents -- experts recommend you start by asking some tough questions about yourself and what you want to accomplish.

Helping individuals discover their true calling is what David Cornfield does for a living. He and his wife, Linsay, operate Creative Edge Counselling, a company that specializes in career counselling, business coaching and mid-life crises. Usually career counsellors rely on testing.

"Our approach to career counselling is meaning-centered," Cornfield says. "As trained psychotherapists, we help clients to know what they want from the inside, without having to resort to a test."

Cornfield believes there is some work that you are meant to be doing, and that you discover what that work is by aligning what you want from life (your passion) with what life wants from you (your calling).

"The mid-life crisis is a crisis of meaning," Cornfield says. "When you have established yourself in a first career, and the pursuit of your original goals no longer gives your life direction, then meaning becomes an issue. This does not mean that the skills and experience gained in a first career are no longer of value. They are the springboard to launch you on your second career."

Over the course of 20 years, Barbara Cohen has gone from being a record promoter to becoming a florist, with careers in videocassette marketing, teaching, TV commercial acting and floral decoration in between.

"The more often you change careers, the more risk tolerant you become," says Cohen, owner of Petals and Stems Floral Decorators in Moncey, N.Y. "You learn to adapt to changing realities and to use your creativity for planning and problem solving."

Strategies for changing careers vary according to individual circumstances. "We target what clients enjoy doing, and then we determine a path to get there," says Michael Mayne, a partner at Catalyst Career Strategies Inc., a company that specializes in career counselling and outplacement. "Then we help the client to expand their network and to gather the right information to take the next step."

Some people quit their job cold turkey and start new careers from scratch. This approach may seem impetuous, but if you really hate your job and you have the means to support yourself while finding another career, then it's an option worth considering.

But for the majority of people, quitting a job cold turkey isn't practical. Instead, they apply other strategies, such as starting a parallel career

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working nights or on weekends. This allows them to keep working and earning a living at a full-time job.

Starting a part-time business on the side is another option. Developing a business on the side can provide valuable experience and credibility while still earning income from your full-time job.

It's always best to inform your current employer about any part-time business venture, especially if it involves a similar type of work. Failure to disclose such information could result in a conflict of interest and possible dismissal.

In many cases, changing careers will likely involve some form of retraining. According to Steve Cook, vice-president information technology services at The Employment Solution, a staffing company that specializes in the IT sector, the world is full of training courses. "Some retraining courses are useful, others aren't," he says. "Candidates should practice due diligence before taking any training course."

In Mr. Cook's experience, those who have achieved the greatest success in changing careers are the ones who sought advice from professionals and who have worked hard at developing their skills.

"The best results are derived from dedication and hard work," he says. "There's no magic formula."

Career changes can take place at your current place of employment. The term for this type of move is job enrichment, where an individual will seek a new position within his company.

Returning to school is a good strategy if you want a radically different career. Going back to school allows you the tools and the certification you'll need to make that all-important move, but it can also be expensive and time consuming. Before enrolling in any course or program, make sure it's what you really want.

(Ross Fattori is a Toronto-based freelance writer who can be reached at [rosswords@rogers.com](mailto:rosswords@rogers.com).)

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