



## How to Take Your Career in a Totally Different Direction

Transferrable skills and patience go a long way toward making a major change.

By Mary Ellen Slayter, Monster Careers Expert

I graduated college with a degree in agronomy, thinking I would work in agricultural or environmental science. But after I graduated, I realized I would much rather be a newspaper [journalist](#) — something I had never taken a single class on. I had some work experience in college, so it wasn't totally far-fetched. Some years later, I made another decision to switch careers — this time from journalism to [marketing](#).

In both cases, I could see how the skills I had would transfer to my new career direction — even if it didn't seem that way to outsiders. And for others who want to take their careers in totally different directions, that's the key: Find ways your current skills apply to the new industry or position you want to work in.

[Allison Valderia Green](#), a lawyer and life and career coach, agrees. "I advise my clients that aren't sure about their next move or what the best job is to evaluate their talents, skills and abilities." For example, a [teacher](#) might not want to be in a classroom anymore, but the skills he or she developed as a teacher — organization, event planning, writing and public speaking — would translate well into a variety of other jobs.

### Consider Why You Want to Make a Change

It's important to carefully examine why you're yearning for a career change. "It sounds like a simple question, but it's actually pretty complex and often leads to some soul searching to discover why you're unhappy in your current job and whether or not changing jobs is in your best interest," says [Lisa Quast](#), a former Fortune 500 executive turned career coach,

For example, she says, if you feel like your manager isn't supportive of your career development or you're bored and want to do something more challenging, you should consider whether these are problems you have some control over. "What might seem like a reason to look for a different job could turn out to be something within your ability to control and change." This may include telling your boss you're bored and offering examples of projects you'd like to take on to make your job more interesting.

### Explore Your Interests

If you decide a change is really what you need, think about the type of work that will give you a deep sense of satisfaction, not just fleeting joy. I'm talking about the kind of work you could keep doing for hours. "Fun" passes, but deep pride in your work does not.

Once you have an idea of what you're deeply interested in doing, look into jobs that offer compatible opportunities. As you explore your options, you should be able to tell a succinct, credible story about why you want to make the change. This needs to come through in your cover letter, interviews, networking encounters and other job search efforts. You don't want to sound uncertain about why you're making a major career change.

### Be Patient

Career changes can take time, depending on where you are on your current path and what you're aiming to do next. For me, making the switch from agronomy to journalism wasn't that hard because I was a recent college grad. My second switch also didn't take long, mainly because most of the skills were immediately transferable. But if you need new technical skills, you may need to go back to school or even [intern or apprentice](#).

Look for ways to pivot toward your desired new role. This may take multiple steps, but it could keep you from having to start from scratch. For example, say you work in [accounting in the manufacturing sector](#), but you really want to work in [health care HR](#). Instead of trying to go straight to that health care HR job, where you will have neither functional nor industry experience, make just one step and go for an [HR job in manufacturing](#). Once you've done that for a couple of years, pivot again to HR in health care. This way you have the job you want, without losing pay or having to go back school.

