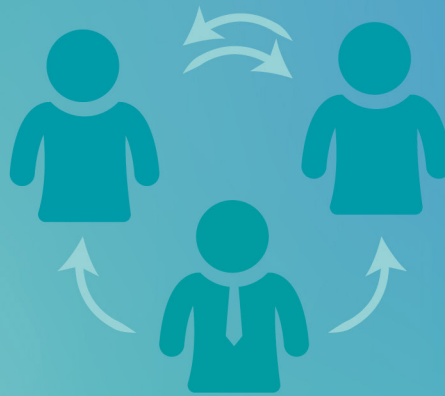


SWITCHING JOBS



**How Smart Professionals
Switch Careers**

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INDIA'S LEADING CAREER COACH



Switching careers can be a daunting prospect, no matter your level of experience. Whether you are switching industries or functions, or both, it can be a pretty unsettling period of your life as career pivots are challenging both professionally and emotionally, as compared to a traditional, relatively linear career path.

This leads us to the question - How can professionals navigate massive career changes while reinventing themselves in a manner that leads towards success in the new role?

Reasons professionals consider major changes in their careers

There are two core reasons why professionals consider major changes in their career.

The first one is regret. Professionals experience regret when they realise that they have not made the amount of progress they expected to have made until now. This can be progress in terms of financial expectations, responsibilities that one may be handling, the designation or role that one wanted and professional fulfilment that one receives from their work. They could be in a misaligned career or in a job that they don't enjoy.

Both these situations are not sustainable - (a) You love your job but hate your salary and (b) You love your salary and hate your job. If you are in a career where you do not experience fulfilment and make great money, you will experience dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction accumulates over time and becomes regret. It is also when this happens that people experience midlife crises.

Not knowing how to handle this regret turns it into anxiety, which is the second core reason why professionals consider major changes in their career. The regret turns into a feeling of desperation, an unhappy realisation that you are not future ready, and that you won't be able to fulfil the responsibilities that you shoulder in the various roles that you play in your life, whether it is to take care of your family dependent on you, save for your children's education, etc. These factors give rise to anxiety over the inability of fulfilling your responsibilities to the standard that you will be held to.

These two core reasons, regret and anxiety, express themselves in different intensities for different people. These are the root causes that may express themselves through different symptoms such as:

- Feeling bored
- Feeling disengaged
- Victimising yourself because you may have a bad boss or may be working in a company that doesn't provide you with growth opportunities, or may be working in a politically charged environment.

The problem arises when professionals don't have the awareness to distinguish between situations that will help them grow vs. situations they need to move away from. The human mind always wants to take the path of least resistance and unfortunately, many professionals end up taking the path of least resistance without the introspection or reflection that the situation may require. Thus, understanding the difference between situations that you are running away from and opportunities for growth is very critical.

When you run away from situations helping you grow, you try to find solace in the next thing, and it then becomes a vicious cycle that doesn't end. A lesson in life will not leave you until it has taught you what you need to learn. Drastic career changes occur when people use switching as an escape mechanism and without proper guidance which only leads to deeper disappointments. It takes a certain level of engagement with personal development in order to break the cycle.

Types of Career Switches

The fundamental roadblock to switching careers is not having the experience. This is called the permission paradox. What this means is that you cannot get the job without having the experience and you cannot gain the experience without getting the job.

While the permission paradox is a real issue to contend with, switching becomes easier when you understand the degree of difficulty associated with different types of career switches.

A) Changing Industries - Easiest Career Switch

The major business functions usually apply across industries - Sales, Operations, Marketing, Supply Chain Management, Information Technology, Product Development, Research & Development, Accounts & Finance, Public Relations, Corporate Affairs, Administrative, Legal, Customer Service, Production, Human Resources.

B) Changing Functions - Moderately Challenging Career Switch

Functional understanding is more difficult to build. For example, if a professional wants to go from Product Development to Supply Chain Management (SCM), the knowledge required for Product Development is very different from the knowledge required for SCM. While Product Development is all about anticipating and understanding the needs of customers, SCM is all about getting a product from Point A to point B in a more efficient manner and includes calculating shipping and freight costs, understanding the import export process, customs, bonds, etc.

Thus, the functional knowledge required in these two areas are very different and this is where education plays an important role. It helps establish a baseline and opens the door for you by arming you with functional knowledge. The technical knowledge that you need for a career in Finance is very different from the technical knowledge you need for a career in Information Technology. It is the same for shifts from Sales to Supply Chain Management, or from Marketing to Finance, etc. In these kinds of switches, it will take a while for professionals to acquire enough knowledge to contribute value to the function.

Thus, changing industries is relatively easier than changing functions.

C) Changing Industries & Functions - Most Difficult Career Switches

The hardest switch to make is one where a professional is looking to change both industry and function. This type of switch is a serious project which will take at least 6 to 10 months, and might take much longer as well.

Since you are dealing with two variables, this kind of a switch requires you to create a dual accelerated learning plan - one for industry and one for function. You need to start building your interaction, experience, involvement, credibility and brand in both the industry and function.

It requires developing a compelling value proposition of what you can do and why you are relevant in a clear, concise, demonstrable way that gets across to potential employees.

Strategies for Creating Right Career Switches

In order to make the right career switches, there are multiple strategies that may be used. These strategies may be direct or indirect. Direct strategies include getting the credentials, demonstrating required competencies while indirect strategies include masquerading as the leader (works in certain circumstances) i.e. taking initiative to lead a particular area, etc. These strategies are used in combination with the specific situation that the working professional is in to create the right career switches.

Here are a few actions and beliefs that separate professionals who manage to pull off radical career changes from those who don't:

> **Take action:**

Successful career switches are ones in which professionals have a combination of two seemingly opposing elements - Having a plan in place with all the contingencies mapped out along with the ability to take a leap of faith without having everything fully figured out. Having a solid plan helps you stay organised and makes the transition easier and manageable, but only sticking to plans and not taking leaps will hinder your growth. Taking small, imperfect actions will go a long way in opening doors in your career.

> **Embrace your uniqueness and focus on your transferable skills:**

Do not apologise for the fact that you don't originally come from the industry/function that you are switching to. In order to create a compelling value proposition while making a switch, you have to believe you're uniquely qualified precisely because of your unique background, not in spite of your unique background, so you can move forward with confidence. You also need to focus on your transferable skills - the skills and abilities that are relevant and helpful across different roles such as problem solving, decision making and communication, technological prowess, etc.

> **Love the process, not the outcome:**

While doing your research, networking and exploring a new role, keep in mind that you have to enjoy what you do on a daily basis. It has to provide you with meaning and fulfilment. While every role comes with a few things that you may not like doing, do not become a victim of the shiny object syndrome. Be willing to pay the price for your success which would include even dealing with matters related to the new function and/or industry that you may not enjoy.

> **Get professional guidance:**

Work with a career coach to eliminate confusion and the feeling of being overwhelmed in the switching process. Do not be afraid to ask for help and find mentors in the roles that you are looking to shift to. Remember, overwhelm stops you from taking action and thus prevents you from making a meaningful switch.

Use The 4R Mindset:

The Four R's & Career Switching Success				
Responsibility	Responsibility	Responsibility	Responsibility	Responsibility
Reality	Reality	Reality	Reality	Reality
Risk	Risk	Risk	Risk	Risk
Resilience	Resilience	Resilience	Resilience	Resilience
NO ACTION	NO DIRECTION	NO RESULTS	NO STAMINA	SUCCESS

To get optimal results in your career switch, it's important to approach the job search with an informed and empowered mindset. There are a few key elements to this way of thinking, and as you progress through this guide, these four general mental themes will continue to emerge. They are namely, responsibility, reality, risk, and resilience.

Each of these themes is critical to career switching success - there are no shortcuts. By embracing these four foundational attitudes (The Four R's), you won't be tempted to throw in the towel when your dream is still within reach.

Responsibility - a switch is a major effort which is being undertaken for the increased fulfilment, increased financial regards and/or superior work life balance that it offers. Fundamentally, you must take responsibility for taking on such a task in your career. This is not a small decision and one that will require you to be in the driver's seat.

Reality - in the process of switching many things will occur which should not occur. You could get low balled in terms of salary, or designation, a company should contact you after an interview but they may not, they may move forward with another candidate, etc. Focus your energy on dealing with the reality of the situation and not on questioning it alone.

Risk - There are no absolute guarantees in a switch. A job search is often an ambiguous and anxiety provoking process and you may be tempted to stay within your comfort zone. Accepting the risk that comes with such an activity will better prepare you to deal with the outcomes you face in running such a campaign.

Resilience - At a basic level, the job switch is a series of human interactions that result in either an offer, or a rejection. And dealing with rejection is not easy. To succeed at this game of switching careers you need to develop the fortitude to be able to move on in situations that do not produce a favourable outcome.

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In conclusion, successful switching will require you to be aware of and understand these four elements that will be needed throughout the process to ensure a switch to a career that you can build with pride and dedication.

Building a Powerful Personal Brand and its Importance in Switching Careers

Building a personal brand is critical in today's world because the fight for someone's share of mind is getting tougher and tougher. The most powerful personal brands today showcase the ability to reinvent themselves. Personal brands help anchor you in people's minds and get you their attention. Investing in building a powerful personal brand pays dividends over a long period of time.

Powerful personal brands are those that showcase humaneness, vulnerability, failure and victory. They are genuine and real.

Here are a few tips to help build a powerful personal brand and bring content to life:

>Social Currency -

We share what makes us look good. For instance, if you get a chance to meet a celebrity and take a picture with them, you post it on social media platforms. You want to let people know that you had the opportunity to engage with someone who makes you look good and that this is the kind of people that you network with. Social currency is a powerful concept, it is the leveraged equity of someone's brand. The more you are able to put yourself in situations where you can leverage social currency, the easier it is to build your brand.

>Environmental Triggers -

You can design the environment around a personal or product brand where environmental triggers help accelerate the strength, intensity and power with which a brand is being built. For example, you are likely to think of Kellogg's Corn Flakes in the morning since it is marketed as breakfast cereal. When KitKat ran a campaign 'Have a break, have a KitKat', their sales grew by 400% since they associated consumption of the product with taking a break.

>Emotional Arousal -

Brands and people connect emotionally. A strong personal brand needs to create emotional arousal. Both negative and positive emotions create arousal, but what matters is that the emotional arousal created needs to be of high intensity. For instance, negative emotions such as anger and fear create high emotional arousal whereas other negative emotions such as sadness create low emotional arousal. Positive emotions such as awe and excitement also create high emotional arousal and lead to responses to calls to actions whereas other positive emotions such as contentment does not. To sum it up, when you tap into someone's emotions, you can have a powerful connection with that individual and that's where personal brands built on emotional experiences and emotional pillars can have a very profound connection.

>Merchandise your Achievements and Accolades -

Do not make the mistake of being the biggest secret in your industry. If you have any accolades, accomplishments, awards that you have won, done research and

published papers, taken up speaking engagements, it is essential to share them on social media platforms. Remember that sharing it is adding value to someone and thus, you need to put it out there. However, this has to be done with tremendous sincerity and the right credits and acknowledgements need to be given so that it does not seem like you are blowing your own trumpet.

>Offer Practical Value -

Make use of your expertise and offer practical value to people - Share tips, tricks, inside secrets, hacks, behind the scenes information, etc. If people find the information you are sharing useful, they will associate with you.

>Storytelling -

Storytelling entails information travelling under the guise of stories. Before people buy into your idea, they are going to buy into you. You are a story. It is important to bring the genuineness of that story to life. When storytelling is used appropriately, there's a lot more texture and personality that comes into the brand and is very useful for brand visibility. Storytelling needs to be leveraged the right way while making career switches.

Managing Finances While Switching Careers

This is the aspect that makes switching careers very real. One needs to have a solid financial plan in place while switching. Remember, the more complicated the switch, the more time it takes to settle down.

The way to manage finances while switching changes based on whether one is employed or not. If you are employed, the switch will primarily cost you time, since you have a source of income.

If you are unemployed, the primary pinch that you will feel is money, since you don't have a running income. You need to put yourself in a situation where you can sustain your lifestyle and expenses and this might mean being frugal and limiting your spending. You will also need to put a cushion in place in order to make a meaningful switch - this can be 15-20% of your salary for at least 6 to 9 months. The more you are able to save, the better, since there will be unforeseen situations that pop up, such as the COVID - 19 pandemic. Apart from unforeseen circumstances, you may encounter upskilling costs as certain roles might require you to get technical certifications such as Six Sigma and Project Management, courses on AI, Data Sciences, etc.

Do not switch simply because you are unable to cope with your current job or are facing a difficult situation. The difficulty has come for a reason, to help you become the masterpiece that you are meant to be. A lesson in life will keep repeating itself until it teaches you what you need to learn. If you run away from one situation, you will keep running from the rest.

The career change cannot come from a place of desire and fantasy, but from a place of logic and planning.
