



## CAREER CHANGE CORNER

*Note: I wrote this series in 2014<sup>1</sup> while in the process of implementing my career switch; I was so challenged by what I was witnessing and experiencing that I decided to put pen to paper and record it. I also reached out to others who were going through or had gone through more or less the same experience. Some of my views have since evolved, some have remained the same and I have since developed more expertise in the career change niche.*

### Changing careers mid-life: risks and opportunities

#### Part 1

This is the first in a 6-part series of articles exploring implementing a mid-life career change for those contemplating it and those who are in the midst of a career change and would like to know that they are not alone. If you are a midlife career changer there *is* a supportive network of people out there, but you have to work a little harder to find them.

At one point or another, some mid-career professionals will go through a crisis where they question whether they chose their vocation wisely and whether they can happily ride it out till retirement. They may just decide to ignore that nagging feeling and succeed at quieting it; others, not so much and this may signal a midlife career change.

This article addresses the decision to change careers midway through one's career. I interviewed Evangelos Doucas, a successful realtor with Remax Living in Cape Town, \*Linda, and \*Neo, all mid-career legal professionals, and \*Khadija who trained in Business Administration and Counselling Psychology. These four professionals, all in their early 40s, have changed careers successfully, but not without considerable investment of financial and emotional resources.

I am in the process of settling into a new career as an independent consultant in the social development sector. Previously, I was a legal academic at a higher education institution.

The purpose of these articles is not to deter potential career changers, but to contribute in some small way to their decision-making processes. It is not a blueprint but pieces of advice informed by a set of experiences.

#### What is a midlife career change?

A midlife career change is not about changing jobs or moving from one company to another while still remaining in the same profession using more or less the same skills set. Switching careers means literally substituting one career or profession with a new one.

A career change does not have to be drastic however, and may involve a little career nip and tuck. And it is important to remember that some skills are transferable regardless of how many career detours one makes.

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<sup>1</sup> First published in Skills Portal and Finite Magazine



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In an article titled *“Seven Careers in a Lifetime? Think Twice, Researchers Say”*, the Wall Street Journal identifies some key issues which revolve around midlife career changes which I will be addressing in this series:

- Significant time in the same profession
- Retraining or acquiring a new set of skills
- Decrease in salary
- Cost and risk

In part 2 of the series, I will be sharing my experiences and those of Evangelos, \*Linda, \*Neo and \*Khadija on the **decision-making processes involved** in mid-life career change.

\*Not their real names