



CAREER CHANGE CORNER

Note: I wrote this series in 2014¹ 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 5

In part 5 we continue with the theme of implementing your midlife career change with the help of a strategic plan.

Implementing your midlife career change

The transition period can be emotionally taxing, a time of uncertainty where you are likely to question your decision-making capabilities and even your sanity. Evangelos describes his career transition as a very challenging time, *"...there were many moments where I felt that I was not good enough or felt possibly unstable psychologically knowing that I ended up studying something that only gave me skills for a particular career."* It took him a lot of introspection and personal growth to gain a more positive perspective.

According to *Linda, no learning is ever wasted and Evangelos agrees. He realised that all his previous experiences had equipped him with valuable skills that he could transfer to his new career as a realtor. He had not only evolved as a human being in these years but he had amassed financial growth, analytical skills, vast legal knowledge in commerce and entrepreneurial skills. He says, *"I realized that my skill set was very varied and useful for potential clients in real estate and property development. A very important ingredient in my success today is the fact that clients see my professional background as vital and they are confident that they do not need to double check my advice with a legal professional. My advice is based on real estate, business and legal experience acquired through the years."*

Be realistic

*Neo did a lot of research into CSI opportunities and learnt about the field. However, she also discovered a few contradictions, *"I did find that there are problems with the research stage, the information that you gather does not necessarily reflect the realities out there. It sounded a lot easier than it has in fact been to make the change. The reality is that employers and personnel agents tend to prefer the people that have studied and worked in the employment area they are seeking. Therefore there is a likelihood that you will be starting at the bottom again. For example, many employers want Communications people for CSI. If you have studied Law they tend not to recognise your past experience as being valuable to them. However, in my independent consulting work I find I am able to add huge value to my clients and they recognise that."*

¹ First published in Skills Portal and Finite Magazine



CAREER CHANGE CORNER

The combination of the broader skills I gathered in Law as well as the CSI-related courses and experience now mean I can offer significant value. The transition period has been difficult but extremely rewarding. On a practical level, it has taken longer and been harder than I thought.”

Networking

**Neo advises would-be career changers, “Use your network as much as possible as many jobs are offered through your network.”*

I would advise that networking should not be done clinically. Remember that you are dealing with real people and not mere cogs in the wheel of your new career path. Rather view networking as an opportunity to build solid, real, relationships which have the potential to yield other by-products e.g. a job, a referral, an entrepreneurial opportunity and other collaborations. Develop a genuine, abiding interest in people and their stories; we are after all such fascinating creatures having a unique human experience.

*not their real names