

7 Midlife Career Change Tips - how Van Gogh did it

By Lyndsay Swinton

It's never too late for a midlife career change. Before he taught himself how to paint, *Vincent Van Gogh was an art dealer, schoolmaster, student priest, and missionary. Indeed, he was **well into his thirties** before his artistic talents were recognised. Not too shoddy for a midlife career change!

Whether you want to **return to work**, get your **dream job**, achieve a better **work-life balance** or simply need the **challenge**, this 7 step career decision making advice will help you think through your midlife career change.

Let's get started...

1. What skills and experience do you possess?

List exactly your skills and experience, focussing on what you **can** do, **not** on what you can't. These are commonly called "*transferable skills*" because no matter what line of work you're in, they are useful.

You've probably got unique talents or knowledge – go ahead and list that too. These may end up differentiating you from the rest, and land your dream job. (If you have problems identifying these, ask a friend, or consider some [email coaching](#).)

Okay, so there may be some **gaps** between you and your dream job, but if you could do it all already, why bother with a midlife career change? It's highly likely you can close those gaps **without** going back to school full-time.

Sound unlikely? Well, have you heard of secondments, job shadowing, or learning on the job? And what about taking a sabbatical to work in the voluntary sector to test things out? All of these enable a mid life career change without going back to school.

(If you would like more help closing skills gaps, take a look at my [free personal development plan guide](#).)

2. What field would you like to work in?

So now we know **what** you can do. Maybe you want to stay doing what you do, but in a different field? My uncle moved from a **high flying banking job** to become **a financial director of a large theatre**, fulfilling his love of the arts whilst still getting his "fix" of numbers.

Science, medicine, government, working from home, military.... There are so many choices it can be overwhelming. Luckily the next step will help narrow it down.

3. What lifestyle do you want?

Your **lifestyle aspirations** change as your circumstances change. What suited you as a footloose fancy-free twenty something may no longer hold water as a thirty something with 2.4 children, dog and pet rabbit. What is your **ideal day**? Who do you see? What kind of people are around you?

4. Where do you want to live?

Choosing to live in a remote community may be tough going if you have super niche skills. Maybe you can market those skills online – just check out if you can get broadband before you move : >)

Travelling is another consideration, be it the daily commute or international globe-trotting. Does this figure in your dream job? If so, you need to consider the dull reality of trains, planes and automobiles.

5. What salary fits your lifestyle?

Let's talk **money**. How much money do you need to live your life - now and when you retire? It's a sorry truth that most of us have to work to get bread on the table.

Don't let dollar signs cloud your vision of your dream job though. My sister-in-law took a **massive pay cut** to move from corporate life to the public sector but one year later is earning more than her corporate salary.

6. What career progression exists?

Are you **painting yourself into a corner** career-wise? Does your dream job have a finite life span or are there opportunities to grow and develop? Lack of career progression may be why you are looking to change careers now! I certainly moved from one job as the **glass ceiling** was firmly fixed above my head.

7. How will you progress this?

Right, here's the really difficult bit. I never said it was going to be easy ; >) In fact, I'll spill the beans now. **Making a midlife career change can be slow, hard work**, and requires you to do some tough thinking. But consider the alternative – wasting your life in a dead end job, unfulfilled and embarrassed about how your obituary will read. (Besides, if you make the right decision, your enthusiasm will carry you through the trickier bits).

So come on, how will you progress this?

I'm not going to let you off the hook here! **How** are you going to land that dream job? **Who** do you need to speak to? **What** research needs done? Who can help? Just like fishing, **you can only catch a fish when you have a line in the water**. Your dream job is out there waiting to be caught.

Giving midlife career change advice is easy - it's up to you to **make it happen**. But whenever you find the going getting tough, remember Van Gogh! Pull together an action plan and do it, no excuses.

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Owner, Management for the Rest of Us

www.mftrou.com

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