



**Dear Friends and Clients,**

In the new professional world, we're often cultivating two careers – the one that pays the bills this month, and the one that will shape the next phase of our lives.

The most challenging times during a career transition can be at the beginning, when you're trying to get started. Your first question may be: what do I do when I don't have the vaguest idea about where to go next? And then, once you have a glimmer of an idea about your next career, your question might be: how do I start building a path in that direction?

To answer the first question, a helpful process can include exploring a few possible options, even if they feel like long shots. You can evaluate more than one possibility at a time, and your energy won't be wasted. As you consider and then abandon various possibilities, you will be developing insight about the career objectives that ultimately may shape your rewarding next phase.

But what I will focus upon in this ezine is the second question. When you are intrigued by the potential of a new career, what steps can start you moving in that direction?

**Warm wishes, Bev**

**Interested In a New Career Path?  
Try These Steps to Get Started**

July 20, 2010 \* Number 129

Chances are that you have a career switch in your future. Maybe changes in your professional field will force you to look for something new. Or maybe you will elect to step off the treadmill and find a career that is less stressful or more personally rewarding. Perhaps, like me, you'll keep things interesting by reinventing your career several times.

If you are beginning to think about a new career direction, but don't know how to start moving, consider these strategies for building some momentum:

- **Read.** Whether you surf the web or go to the library, an obvious way to begin is to read about the field. Consider subscribing to professional magazines or

newsletters. Even some light fiction can introduce you to various professional settings. For example, there is a genre of “cozy” mysteries in which the action is built around the main character’s business, like training dogs, organizing clutter, or running a yarn shop.

- **Ask the pros.** Find a way to visit with people already pursuing the professional path that intrigues you. If you don’t know whom to call, ask your friends if they know of anybody who might be willing to visit with you about their work. Post your query on Facebook, or send out an email to your broader network. You have nothing to lose by asking for informational interviews, and you might find that most people enjoy talking about what they do.
- **Study.** Sign up for a course related to your target field. There are so many options today, as colleges explore new ways to reach out to potential students. Geography may no longer be a barrier, because so many options can be found on line.
- **Volunteer.** Look for an early opportunity to get experience. A good option can be to volunteer your services. For example, if you’re tired of working with numbers, and are thinking of shifting to public relations, volunteer to assist the publicity or communications chair of a local non-profit board.
- **Go to conferences.** Attending professional conferences can be a great way to immerse yourself in a new professional world. If money is an issue, contact sponsoring organizations and volunteer to help out in return for a chance to attend some sessions.
- **Intern.** College students aren’t the only ones who are getting great experience through internships. A new trend is for mid-life career changers to negotiate opportunities to work as interns. Even if your day job is keeping you busy, you might be able to structure an opportunity around your vacation or weekend schedule. If you are willing to work for little or no money, established professionals might be willing to take you under their wings.
- **Learn to run a business.** If you are thinking about leaving a traditional job to do free-lance or contract work, become familiar with the basics of small business. For example, if you want to retire from teaching to pursue your dream of becoming a wedding planner, it’s not enough to become expert in bridal trends. To make it all work, you’ll need to know the basics of business, from product development to marketing and billing. Thinking of yourself as a small business can be a useful way to get started in a new field, even if you do plan to get a job within a large organization.
- **Get business cards.** Even before you are ready to market yourself in a new way, it can be useful to buy business cards that are appropriate to your next path. For example, if you have a card that says “photographer” and pass it around among people who serve on boards, it can lead to opportunities to take pictures for charitable organizations.

- **Find a buddy.** Changing careers can be a lonely process. Find a friend who also is engaged in reinvention and meet regularly to share ideas, networks and encouragement.

**Want to read more about career transitions?** Read the latest from my friend and occasional colleague, financial journalist Kerry Hannon. Kerry is getting rave reviews for her book on mid-life career changes: **“What’s Next? Follow Your Passion and Find Your Dream Job”**. Find more career ideas at: **[www.ClearWaysConsulting.com](http://www.ClearWaysConsulting.com)** or email to **Bev** directly.

