

How to change careers in your 40s, 50s and 60s

It's one thing to switch direction early on in your career. But changing careers when you're well established can feel like a bigger leap.

A career change in your 40s, 50s or 60s and beyond can come with its own challenges. But some clever planning and preparation can help you make the change, and transition more smoothly into what you really want to do.

And the good thing is, if you're considering a career change well into your working life, you've probably got the drive and passion to help you see it through.

Here are some tips to help you.

Build a financial buffer

It's often assumed people reach a certain level of financial security by 40 or 50, so changing careers can feel daunting because it can mean taking a pay cut or starting at the bottom.

But building up a safety net before you take the leap can ease that. Andrew Brushfield, director of Robert Half Victoria and Western Australia, advises, "Put some money away and create a financial buffer to support your decision, so that when the time comes to change careers you won't feel the pinch in your pocket."

And remember, this is just one potential scenario in a career change. "Sometimes a switch in roles can mean more cash in your wallet," Brushfield says.

Read more: [How to stretch, boost and crush your finances for a career change](#)

Assess your skill set and tailor what you can offer

An obvious advantage to being established in your career is having built skills and

experience – even if they're not a precise match for the new career or role you're aiming for. Now is a good time to take stock of what you've done and where your skills are, so you can present yourself in the best light to potential employers.

It's also a chance to work out where you might want to upskill or expand. Devlin recommends assessing yourself against the ideal type of person an employer might look to hire for roles you're considering, then making an action plan for how you might address any gaps in your experience or skill set. You could also check out the qualifications, skills and experience on job listings that interest you. From here, you might consider further study. With short courses, self-directed learning and online options available, there are choices out there if you do require a new qualification.

Volunteering can also be a great way to gain experience in a field you haven't worked in, and it's often outside work hours. Taking on a related project or trying out a career as a side hustle could also help you build up confidence and job-specific skills.

But don't feel you have to focus on gaps – just as important is to see which existing skills and experience you can bring to a new role or industry.

At this point in your working life, you'll have transferable skills – those capabilities that can apply to any role or company, such as organisation, teamwork, leadership, creativity, or administration. These can be as useful as experience (or even more so) when it comes to making a career change.

Read more:

- [Are transferable skills the new experience?](#)
- [Transferable skills checklist](#)

Present your age as a positive

First, it's worth noting there's no legal requirement to include your age on your resume – you don't need to put emphasis on age at all.

Unfortunately, though, ageism is a real form of discrimination that does exist in the job market. What you can do is be ready to focus on all the positives of where you're at now in your working life and what you could bring to an organisation, and be proactive if you suspect ageism is at play.

“Focus on experience from your previous career, life experience, transferable skills,

financial and financial stability, and diversity,” says Erin Devlin, managing director of people2people Victoria.

It’s also a good idea to explain your motivation, show you’re making a considered move. “If the employer can understand that you’re changing careers on purpose, then they are more likely to consider your background,” Devlin says.

If you feel that your age is holding you back, take the chance to think about the skills and traits that have come with your years of experience, the range of people you’ve worked with and the changes you’ve seen in your industry – and look at how you can highlight these to a potential employer.

Read more: [Ask Sabina: How can I combat age discrimination in my job search?](#)

Have confidence in yourself

Taking a leap into something new can be confronting and challenging – and this can hold many people back from trying. But if you go for a role you love, you’ll be bringing with you positivity and proactiveness: two highly valuable qualities employers look for in candidates.

You can work to improve your confidence by reaching out to those in your desired industry or role, Brushfield says. “Talk to them and find out what it takes to do their job. Establish connections, research the people and products or even become involved in your desired career on a pro bono basis.”

And don’t worry about burning bridges. “Just because you are beginning a new career does not mean you are closing doors on your current work partnerships. Your connections can be your biggest supporters in driving your ambition to find a role you that suits you. Look for ways to make these people or connections work for you, rather than against you.”

Changing careers in your 40s, 50s or 60s can be daunting. But planning, preparing and presenting your unique skills and experience to potential employers can set you well on your way. After all, you’ve worked hard to get to where you are – so know that leveraging that to take steps forward can lead you to a job you love.

Read more: [Big change, small steps: How to switch industries](#)