

## What happens when your career change doesn't go according to plan

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Ever dream of jacking in your current role and doing something entirely different?

While the idea of a change can be alluring, particularly after a tough week on the tools, those brave enough to give it a go say the grass isn't always greener in another industry or profession.

So, what's the key to successfully steering your career down a new path and how can you ensure you're not out in the cold if you subsequently conclude your old gig wasn't too bad after all?

### Look before you leap

Do plenty of homework before you make the leap and keep your escape hatch open for as long as you can, recruitment consultant Greg Pankhurst says.

He recently returned to the hiring game after canning his plan to relaunch himself as a high school science teacher, eight months into a one-year graduate diploma.

"I was halfway through my second practical placement...and I just decided I simply wasn't enjoying it – it wasn't what I expected it to be," Pankhurst says.

"I'd always found teaching and coaching and mentoring incredibly fulfilling but generally when I've coached people or mentored people...it's always working with people who are interested and engaged in what I have to say. It was a real shock to walk into an environment where the kids literally do not care what I have to say and were not interested in the least."

Staying connected with his old industry meant he was able to jump back in to the recruitment sector when an attractive opportunity presented.

### Ask first, then decide

It's important to research your new career path to ensure it will lead to satisfying and sustainable employment before you make a move, careers coach Simon Bennett says.

Pick the brains of those in your network and work your connections for information and introductions before changing tack, he advises.

"I advise people to create a career change plan – a disciplined approach will increase your chances of success," Bennett says.

"Decide what steps you will need to take to achieve your career change and include them...detail the specific activities involved, the tools or resources you will need and the date you would like to reach each one.

"Targets can help you to stay motivated and enable you to track your progress and achievements."

## **Let reason be your guide**

Most folk aren't so organised and leaping without looking is common among individuals who are unhappy with their current role, careers specialist Edwin Trevor-Roberts observes.

"They basically just go, 'Stuff this, I'm going to go and do something different'," Trevor-Roberts says.

"They're caught up in that emotive cycle without actually really deeply thinking through the practical ramifications of what it will actually mean."

Trevor-Roberts recommends testing the waters by way of part-time or project work in the industry or profession you'd like to move in to, before jacking in your job.

"It's very much experimenting with the possibilities, rather than making the decision too early that this is exactly what I want to do," he says.

## **Tried and tested**

It's an approach which served army officer Jamie Roberts well when he decided to pursue a change in 2012, after more than two decades carrying a rifle for his country.

Roberts took 18 months long service leave and leave at half pay to try his hand in the corporate world, as an operations manager for an enterprise software firm, but began questioning his choice within the year.

"I interviewed well, got the job and started working and was doing quite well for the first six months but I found, for me, the main thing as I went on, I was really missing the sort of ethos that we get in defence," Roberts says.

## **Time away is all you need**

He subsequently decided to return to a new role in the army but says the stint on civvy street was not a mistake. Rather, it had a reinvigorating effect.

"I realised I actually like being a soldier... Once I came back, I was able to very clearly see what I wanted to achieve before I retired. I just came in and got on with it and have had some success. Where I was told I wouldn't get these opportunities, I've just not taken no for an answer and now I've got them. I don't think I would have had the energy or the desire to do that if I didn't step away.

"Sometimes you've got to step outside your comfort zone to realise that you do like what you're doing and I was lucky I was able to come back; I hadn't thrown the towel in."