



Partnering With You At Midlife To Create The Life You Choose

Second Career Considerations

When I think back to my childhood years, I remember my parents stressing the importance of doing well in school. The formula as laid out for my siblings and me was to work hard, get good grades, graduate with a degree, get a good job at a large company, and be set for life. Once in the large company, if we continued the same basic approach, (do a good job, contribute, make your bosses happy, etc.), you would be with the company for life, likely receive good benefits and a pension once you decided to retire from that firm.

Admittedly, that model has been out of date for some time now. To be fair to my parents and many like them from their generation, that model had worked for them and they wanted what they felt was best for their children. For the last 15 to 20 years while the security portion of the model has been eroding away, many of the children of their generation have continued to move forward with parts of that model still part of their makeup. If for example they have been let go from a position in one company, often their focus is to look for a similar type position in another company. Their methods for locating a new position are also many times ingrained in methods previously learned (checking ads in a newspaper, working with a recruiting agency, and in recent years searching the internet sites).

The economic events of the last two years have impacted a record number of job seekers, many of whom are looking for their next position after involuntarily leaving their last employer. The world in which they are searching is far different than the one in which they found their previous job. The number of candidates for positions continues to increase. The number of available open jobs continues to decrease. Now more than ever is the time for those looking to continue to work to refocus how they go about determining what they will do next as their career. While this applies at all age levels and generations, it is particularly applicable to those in midlife, who often were brought up under different strategies and approaches on how to conduct a job search.

Often when people leave a first career, especially if that ending came unexpectedly, a natural reaction is to search for another job that is similar to the one they left. This does have validity to it if they enjoyed the type of work they did in that position. However, if the reasons behind that feeling are centered around such ideas as that type of work being the only way they know how to make a living, or they're not sure what else they may be qualified to do, it is time to rethink the situation. Very likely they have acquired skills that are transferable to another career type or for a different industry. If they did not enjoy what they did in their first career, and stayed in the position because they were unwilling to explore a new path, this is the perfect time to consider other avenues.

Individuals explore second careers for all types of reasons. If their economic situation is not 100% where they want it or need it to be, it likely would be for the income to live the lifestyle they desire. Others enjoy getting up, having a place to go and the social interaction with their fellow workers. Still others do not have interests outside of their work life that fully take up their time and as such enjoy the activity that work provides. Whatever, your reason for continuing on your desire to work, many of the same principles apply as you move forward.

As with most things worthwhile in life, it benefits one to take time to make a plan of what they may want to do next. Moving forward in a second career is no exception. Explore your reasons for working. According to David McClelland's theories on workers motivation once getting beyond the financial need, those motivations basically fall into one of 3 categories.

The first is for **achievement**. If you find that you are a person who enjoys setting challenging goals for yourself, achieving them and continuing to advance forward in your chosen profession, taking on work that affords you this opportunity needs to enter your equation. Usually individuals motivated by achievement gain greater personal satisfaction from the accomplishment than the praise or reward they get from completing the task. Additionally, security or status is not a prime motivator for them and they're constantly seeking ways to do things better.

The second need is for **power**. Those motivated by power want to be influential, effective and capable of having an impact. They seek leadership positions in the activities in which they are involved. Additionally, they enjoy seeing things happen in organizations in which they are involved. Many who were driven by that motivation in their first career find they need that same type of outlet after leaving it, whether they obtain it via a second career option or by becoming a leader in worthwhile organizations outside of their work life.

The third and final motivation is **affiliation**. These individuals enjoy friendly relationships and interactions with other people. Their preferences tend toward exhibiting sensitivity to the feelings of others, enjoy working in teams and consider human interaction an essential part of their life. They tend to perform well in customer or client interaction situations. Additionally, when joining organizations outside of work, they tend to enjoy contributing to committees and teams they are on as opposed to being the leader.

Midlife is also a time to take a reflection back on your life and examine both why you entered the first career you did and what other interests you may have had that you chose not to pursue. For example, someone who went into law because it was expected since other family members were lawyers, and might not have been happy in the profession, may find they developed hobbies or interests that now could become a worthwhile second career. Or, there may have been a desire back at childhood or adolescence which never was pursued. Now, may be the time to pursue that passion and see where it leads.

Pursuing a second career may require the acquiring of new skills and the gaining of new knowledge. While sometimes that may appear daunting, it actually can be very invigorating if it is centered on gaining knowledge in an area of interest to you. That learning can take place in a number of ways. It may mean going back to school and taking courses. It could mean pursuing a certification or affiliation through a training program. However, it could also mean being an apprentice and learning a trade first-hand from someone already in the business, so that when you are ready to move forward on your own, you have practical hands on experience. The major points here are:

- No one is ever too old to learn.
- There are many different ways of learning as adults. Pick the ones that resonate with you.
- Learning is a continual process. Once one finds they can learn one set of new ways at midlife, it often leads to them being a student that wants to continue to learn additional new concepts to which they have not previously been exposed.

Part of your planning should include how much you want to work, do you want to work for someone else or yourself and also how the work aspect of your life balances with your non-work activities. While these are items that one at any age may want to consider, they become particularly a focus at midlife where one may be looking to explore how to enjoy all aspects of their life. In regards to someone moving into a second career, particularly after a long and successful first career, considerations include:

- Do I want to work full-time or part-time?
- Do I want to possibly look to phase in working less by seeing if my company will let me work less hours a week?
- Do I want to consult in my area of expertise?
- Do I want to explore starting my own business? What kinds of training, information and guidance do I need to do that? SCORE is an excellent non-profit organization of former executives and entrepreneurs providing guidance on starting your own business. They can be found at www.score.org.
- Would I be interested applying my expertise to help train younger workers in my profession? Which companies are looking to hire such trainers?

- Do I want the freedom of working at certain times, and not working at others? A temp agency may be just the answer for someone to explore who wants to choose when they want to work or not.

Above all, share your 2nd career aspirations with others. Sometimes this can be difficult. If you left your first career under less than ideal circumstances such as a job reduction, you may feel that others will feel it is a reflection on your work abilities. In today's environment, most people realize that is not the case. Included in that sharing, of aspirations should be your spouse and immediate family. They're your primary support system. Discussing your thoughts with them may uncover interests they have noticed you have expressed that you yourself may have not considered in your decision. They can be discussion partners in formulating your plans. Additionally, your plans going forward may likely impact their own plans, so sharing your feelings, thoughts and directions may avoid a lot of surprise and misunderstood feelings later.

Other reasons to share your 2nd career thoughts with others:

- Friends and acquaintances are good networking partners. It is possible they may have leads in the areas you want to pursue.
- Talking with others will help to build your excitement and commitment toward the 2nd career you are pursuing.
- They may have experience in the career you are looking into, and may be able to offer valuable advice on how to get started on your pursuit.

It may be advantageous to also seek professional help in pursuing 2nd career options. Outplacement services contain a great deal of information both in their online libraries, contacts and counselors which may be of benefit to you. Additionally, they may have sessions which will have you work with people similar to yourself going through career change. Another option may be to work with a life or career coach. A coach is a partner to work with you in seeking your goals. Coaches are non-judgmental in their approach, basically questioning you on your interests, how you may want to proceed, and holding you accountable for actions to which you commit taking. Additionally, their questioning may bring up ideas of which you have not previously thought.

If professional services are not for you, your local public library is a valuable source of career information. Many libraries have professionals on staff responsible for both putting together business programs and providing access to materials to assist you in your career planning and explorations. Library resources are usually for free and provide a quiet comfortable area for developing your plans.

Your 2nd career options and approaches are numerous. They do take planning and forethought on your part to pursue. There may be challenges along the way in transitioning to something which is unfamiliar. However, there are also many rewards in exploring new opportunities, ways of doing things and most of all matching up your interests and passions into a profession which you enjoy. At midlife you likely have put in many years into a career which may have fulfilled you and then again, may have not. Given the opportunity, to "choose anew", your career of choice is a gift that you can wisely take advantage of if you allow yourself the chance to do so.