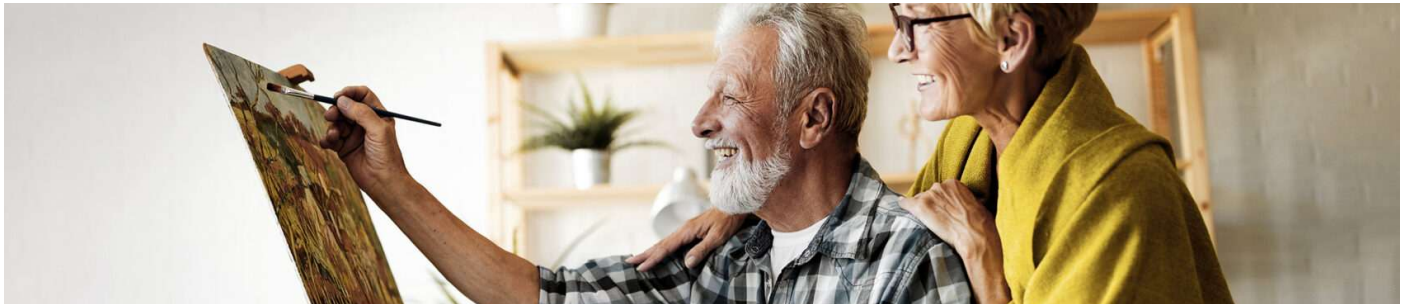


Interested in a career shift for your second act? Start here.

By: Tina Firesheets 6/2/2025



Whether you're nearing retirement or midway through your first career, here's help for staging a successful second-act career.

What job would you love to be doing right now, and what is involved in pursuing the career shift to make it happen?

This line of thinking could lead to a second-act career — basically, a mid-career or post-retirement career shift to pursue personally meaningful work. With lifespans increasing, retirement is becoming a perfect time to stage such an encore. In fact, those 65 and older are on track to make up nearly [10% of the workforce by 2032](#).

A second-act career shift has the potential to be the most rewarding, whether you're mid-career or nearing retirement.

Start with self-reflection

Begin your career-shift journey by taking the time to clarify your objectives. What do you want a new career path to do for you?

Are you looking to utilize new skills, align your personal values, explore a passion, or contribute to your community? Or are you unsatisfied in your current role and why? What level of responsibility are you seeking?

Consider what you need this career shift to do for you economically. Career and income are not always linked, but it is important to do your planning as you may be moving into a new financial phase of your life. Make sure you can afford to make the change. Anytime you experience change, there will be potential trade-offs.

Think through what you hope to gain in a new opportunity by defining what success will look like. What activities do you enjoy doing where you lose track of time? What would give you purpose and fulfillment?

Keep in mind that your objectives and perspectives may change over time as you near the beginning of your career shift.

For example, you may be focused on starting a business venture or writing a book, but as the time nears to make the career shift, your priorities and objectives may change, either economically or personally. View this as an evolving self-reflective journey, not a one-and-done decision.

Share your thoughts with your family, friends, mentors, and advisors asking for their honest input. It may feel overwhelming to make a change, but starting with self-reflection helps you better define a course of action.

Use this as an opportunity to explore and think broadly

There are many types of career shifts that you can make. You could pursue another role in the same industry, start your own business, or move to the nonprofit sector. This is a time to expand your thinking.

How do you determine whether you will be happy in your proposed new career? Here are some useful suggestions:

- Conduct informational interviews with your professional and personal network to explore options.
- Reach out to former co-workers and bosses with similar interests.
- Ask people who are in a career path of interest to share their lessons learned and experiences. Perhaps they would even be open to job shadowing.

Once you have identified a potential career path, research what skills, education, and experiences are needed and the salary and growth potential. Sites such as Glassdoor, Indeed, LinkedIn, and others can provide valuable information.

When you have a clear idea of what is needed, map out your skills, education, interests, and strengths, as they might be transferable to your career change. These can be both professional and personal skills you have gained through your current career, volunteer work, life experiences, or hobbies.

It's important not to underestimate your transferable skills. If you do identify a skill gap, decide how you will gain the necessary tools, education, or experience. Consider online courses, community college classes, workshops, and volunteer work.

Plan your career shift in advance

Your second act will require planning to help ensure its success. Whether you're going to work for an organization or start your own business, you should be thinking in advance about your next steps *before* you make the switch. Also, plan to discuss potential tax and financial implications with trusted advisors.

For example, a new business venture may require more capital than a passion project. An honest look at your cash flow and investments could help determine whether you need to stay in your first-act career longer to support your next venture. Your career-shift plans could also impact your estate planning strategies. Let's say your second-act business venture becomes successful: How might that impact your plans?

Make sure that your career-shift planning includes both likely and potential outcomes — and plan to discuss them with professionals such as financial advisors, attorneys, and CPAs.

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