

# Unhappy in Your Job? Design Your Next Career Step

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Are you no longer feeling energized and excited when you wake up Monday morning?

It is a common experience, yet one we rarely talk about openly. It is perfectly normal that what we once strived for; the "dream job" of five or ten years ago, is no longer fitting to our current values, passions, or stage in life. We all develop and change as a person, so it is only logical that our careers should change with us.

On top of our personal evolution, society at large is changing at such a high pace that the very nature of work is shifting. The old promise of "life-long safety" within a single company has faded. We are now forced to keep developing and redesigning our paths. Alternative career paths are getting more and more common, like Portfolio Careers. Rather than leaning on one pillar, a portfolio career allows you to blend multiple income streams; combining for example contracting, consulting, and interim roles into a custom-built professional life. This approach doesn't just offer variety; it offers a modern kind of "diversified security" that a single traditional role can no longer guarantee.

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So, why do we stay anchored to unhappy careers for the sake of a safety net that no longer exists?

If you've realized you want, or need, to make a change; consider this your invitation. It is never too late to reinvent your path.

Follow the below steps to help you get started on designing your next career step:

## Step 1: The Power of Reflection

Before rushing into a new job search, you must take the time for deep reflection. You cannot design a future if you haven't audited your present. Ask yourself:

- **Energy:** Where do I feel most alive and engaged during the week?
- **Uniqueness:** What are my unique skills and experiences that feel effortless to me but valuable to others?
- **Contribution:** Where am I able to contribute best? What does the world need now that I am uniquely positioned to deliver?
- **Needs:** What are my absolute "must-haves" and "nice-to-haves" in a company and / or position?

All of these answers are clues about which career direction would most likely give you more fulfilment, joy and flow.

## Step 2: Creating Your "Odyssey Plan"

In the book *Designing Your (Work) Life* by Stanford University professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans (a must-read for anyone at a life / career crossroads!), they introduce a tool to help create a more meaningful life.

It's called the **Odyssey Plan**. It's about brainstorming three different possible futures for yourself to prove that there is more than one way to live a happy life.

Take some time for yourself and reflect on the following 3 possible futures you could have:

- 1. The Expected Path:** This is the trajectory you are on now. What happens if you stay in your current field or role? What is the story you will tell looking back at your life if you don't change anything?
- 2. The Alternative Path:** What if your current plan was no longer an option? If your industry disappeared tomorrow, what would be your "Plan B"? What other lifestyle or career would you pursue?
- 3. The Wild Card Path:** If money and social expectations weren't a concern, and no one would laugh at you, what would you do? This is your "dream" scenario.

Brainstorm for yourself the 3 different scenarios, then assign a title to each path and assess how you truly feel about them. Remember: embrace a prototype mentality. If one plan doesn't feel right, do another!

### Step 3: Start Prototyping the Direction

Once you've mapped out your three scenarios, identify which one pulls at you most. You don't need a rigid 10-year vision; you just need a direction to test. The goal isn't to make a monumental life decision today, it's to lower the stakes by "prototyping." Prototyping allows you to "try on" a career before you commit to it, using small, low-risk actions to gather real-world data.

#### How to start testing:

- **Networking:** Start talking to people already in the fields you're curious about.
- **Experimenting:** Ask your manager to take on a project in a different area or volunteer for a new initiative.
- **Reskilling:** Once a direction feels right, look into courses to upskill yourself.

As you take these small steps, the "fog" begins to clear. You'll quickly discover which paths energize you and which ones were just "good on paper." Remember: changing your mind isn't a failure; it's a successful data point. Bit by bit, as you move, the next step reveals itself, and a new professional reality begins to take shape.

## **Your Permission Slip**

The most important step isn't the career move itself; it's giving yourself permission to look beyond the horizon of your current path.

True clarity doesn't come from knowing; it comes from doing. We are not static beings; we are meant to reinvent ourselves as we gather new experiences, values, and dreams. Mistakes aren't detours; they are the data points that help you calibrate your next move.

You deserve a professional life that feels meaningful and exciting. You don't need to see the whole path yet; you just need to take the first step.

**What is one small action you can take today to start prototyping a new career direction?**

### **About the Author**

*Hi! My name is Sasja. I offer coaching for individuals who feel stuck or unfulfilled in their career, so that they can create a career path that brings them joy, fulfilment and flow. My passion is supporting people to reconnect with their true passions and step into their full potential. With certifications as a transformative coach and yoga instructor, as well as my background in Strategic HR, I bring a holistic approach to my coaching practice."*

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