

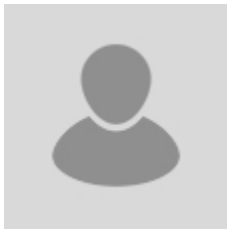
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[From public service to a new career: How professionals should navigate a new career path to success](#)

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From public service to a new career: How professionals should navigate a new career path to success

A fulfilling career is not just about a paycheck but about living with purpose.



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5 min read

From the third grade, I dreamed of a career in law enforcement. Watching crime-solving TV shows, meeting forensic experts, and observing trials fueled my passion. I loved every aspect of my job when I started working in a crime laboratory. A fulfilling career is not just about a paycheck but about living with purpose. When you follow your dreams, your career is not about the job but about creating a lifestyle that represents who you are.

For 32 years, I had an exciting career with the U.S. Secret Service and designed my career path in forensic science, achieving the highest level as director of the labs at the height of my career. It was a journey that combined my curiosity for science, public safety and national security, allowing me to contribute to criminal investigations, research and protecting our nation's leaders. But beyond the science and investigative work, another calling emerged — one that would shape the next phase of my career after retirement from the U.S. Secret Service: mentoring and coaching the next generation of professionals. I had mentored and coached individuals at various stages of their careers before my position as Crime Laboratory Director — whether they were aspiring forensic scientists, public

servants or professionals navigating career transitions. Today, as an executive career and leadership coach, I help individuals clarify what is deeply meaningful and transition that passion into a career that aligns with their mission.

Insights from a career in public service

Working in forensic science and law enforcement taught me invaluable lessons — not just about scientific analysis, integrity and teamwork but also the importance of mission and vision. Throughout my career, I witnessed firsthand how mentorship, community and strategic career planning shaped the success of many professionals in high-pressure environments.

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Public service instills values of dedication, adaptability and resilience, all of which are critical in any career. But career paths aren't always linear, and learning to pivot, grow and seek new opportunities is just as important as excelling in your current role.

Navigating career transitions with confidence

One of the most significant challenges professionals face is career transitions — whether stepping into leadership, shifting industries and positions, or re-entering the workforce. Change can be daunting and petrifying, but it is also an opportunity to reinvent yourself, learn new skills, establish a new professional community, and align your career with your evolving goals.

How to approach career transitions successfully

Successfully navigating a career transition requires a clear strategy, self-awareness and intentional action. For anyone considering a transition, I have found the following step-by-step essential to smoothly and confidently step into your next role:

- Clarify your goals — Ask yourself: What excites me? What kind of work gives me purpose? Identifying your passion and long-term aspirations will guide your next move.

- Assess your transferable skills — Leadership, problem-solving and communication skills remain valuable across industries. Learn to reposition your experience for new opportunities.
- Adopt a growth mindset — See change as an opportunity for reinvention. Be open to learning, networking, and stepping outside your comfort zone.
- Seek mentorship and coaching — No one navigates a career transition alone. Seasoned professionals provide valuable insights, encouragement and connections.
- Take action — Overthinking leads to paralysis. Start updating your resume, contacting your network, and attending industry events. Small steps lead to significant progress.

As Earl Nightingale said, “Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.” Success isn’t about perfection — it’s about consistent forward movement.

The power of coaching

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Throughout my career, I have witnessed the transformative power of professional career coaching. Proper guidance accelerates growth, builds confidence and helps individuals make informed decisions about their future. Coaching is more than advice — it’s a partnership that provides clarity, strategy and accountability. It enables individuals to break through self-doubt, uncover new opportunities, and take intentional steps toward a fulfilling career. Whether navigating a transition, stepping into leadership, or striving for a more significant impact, coaching empowers people to move forward confidently and purposefully. For example, it can help in the following ways:

- Gain clarity on a career path — A coach helps you define what you want, identify strengths, and develop a strategic plan for achieving your goals.
- Navigate transitions smoothly — Whether entering, transitioning or advancing in your career, coaching provides personalized strategies to help you move forward confidently.
- Professional Growth — If you’re aiming for a leadership role, coaching helps you develop the proper mindset, skills and strategies to succeed.

- Enhance networking and job search strategies — Learn how to market yourself, refine your brand, and connect with the right opportunities — not just any opportunities.

How to find the right career coach

A great career coach offers guidance, accountability and a customized approach to help you achieve your goals. When evaluating programs, consider the following:

- Personalized career coaching — Does the program offer one-on-one guidance tailored to your unique challenges, strengths and career aspirations?
- Career transition strategy — Will they help you navigate career changes, reposition your experience, and prepare for new opportunities?
- Leadership development — What techniques do they offer to help you build the confidence and skills to step into leadership roles and advance your career?
- Career clarity programs — Do they offer career growth programs with mentorship, community, and training to guide your career journey and ensure sustainable success?

Regardless of where you are in your career, the most crucial step is to take action. Your dream career isn't out of reach — it simply requires clarity, strategy and the right support system.

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