

Interview with the Author

New Job, New You: A Guide to Reinventing Yourself in a Bright New Career

By Alexandra Levit

Q1: What's the premise of *NEW JOB, NEW YOU*, and why is the book especially relevant now?

A1: It used to be that only celebrities like Madonna reinvented themselves. But this is the twenty-first century, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the average young American will have about 9 jobs between the ages of 18 and 32, and between 5.3 million and 8.4 million people ages 44 to 70 already are involved in “second act” careers. The gutsiest and most innovative individuals have taken these trends a step further. They have changed fields not just once but multiple times, and have successfully supported themselves in different careers over a period of several years.

Today's employees are not content to view a job as a paycheck. On the eve of economic recovery, more than half of employees say they're planning a career change in order to pursue more meaningful work. These individuals need inspiration, and they need guidance. Using the effective mix of prescriptive and anecdotal content that I've provided my readers in the past, *New Job, New You* gets to the heart of what makes people take the plunge into a new field.

Q2. What makes *NEW JOB, NEW YOU* different from other career change books out there?

A1: In my early research, I discovered that career changers have several common motivations for their decisions, but such motivations haven't really been explored in the career advice genre. I thought that they should be discussed, however, because how you go about a career change depends on your unique circumstances. The motivations I selected are:

- Family: When true work/life balance becomes a necessity
- Independence: When you've been bitten by the entrepreneurial bug
- Learning: When your bookish, curious side takes over
- Money: When an increase in earning potential is on the horizon
- Passion: When you yearn to do what you love with all of your heart
- Setback: When one door closes, another one opens
- Talent: When you're too good at something not to give it a shot

Q3: How did the idea originate?

A3: Even before the economy tanked, career change was the topic I was most being asked about on college campuses and at association conferences. There were a few books on the topic already, but they all featured stories from renowned executives and celebrities who catapulted to the top 1% of their profession. I couldn't personally relate to these people because I didn't understand their motivations and didn't feel that there was any real chance of becoming that successful. I wanted to write a career change book about normal people, for normal people, that would go down easily like a summer bestseller, and that's how *New Job, New You* came about.

Q4: What's the most interesting story you heard while interviewing people for the book?

A4: The story that comes to mind most readily is that of Gerry, who graduated from Harvard Divinity School and became a minister. As Gerry progressed in his ministry career, he began to doubt his calling as a clergyman. He realized that the aspect of his job that he felt most passionate about was engaging in communication activities that were designed to formulate a more positive perception of the church. He decided to change careers, and with some creative spinning of the relevant skills from the ministry, Gerry was able secure interviews with a few PR agencies. Now 30-something, Gerry rose to the rank of manager at prestigious Boston-based agency FitzGerald and eventually to the position of senior managing director at RF|Binder Partners.

Q5: What do you hope readers will get out of your book?

A5: I hope readers realize that they don't have to take a job – or stay in one – that they dislike. The concrete advice and steps provided for launching a new career in the midst of specific circumstances (busy family life, etc.) will allow readers to go out tomorrow and take the first steps for securing meaningful work. All readers can be in the same enviable situation as the profilees in *New Job, New You*. I give them the tools to get there.

Q6: What's your best advice today for people who want to score their dream gig?

Finding a career that will fulfill you personally and professionally requires exploration, and a great deal of trial and error. Throughout this process, it's important to have realistic expectations of "dream careers." Although the individuals profiled in my book love their jobs, even they don't believe there's a such thing as the perfect work situation. Every job has its ups and downs, and aspects we love and aspects we don't love. This is a hard, but necessary lesson that I had to learn when I succeeded in my dream job of being a book author!