

Changing careers in 2022 — is it worth it and should I take a pay cut?

New year, new job? Everything you need to know if you're looking for a career change

By Sam Benstead

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If you're thinking about a career change in 2022, you're not alone. The number of British people [looking for a new job](#) generally soars in January compared to the rest of the year, according to [Indeed](#).

Experts say the new year is [a good time to start looking for a different occupation](#) as candidates and recruiters come back to work reinvigorated after the festive period. But with so many people thinking the same thing, what's the best way to get ahead?

Making a career change has never been so popular, with [almost a million people moving from one job to another](#) in the three months to September 2021, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Employees are on the hunt for better pay as inflation surges, but also more flexibility and meaning from their jobs after reconsidering their priorities during the pandemic.

But making a career switch is not straightforward. Telegraph Money asked career change experts what were the most important factors to consider.

Think about the impact on your CV

Switching careers means a CV may not flow naturally, as workers may have taken time to retrain for a new role in another industry.

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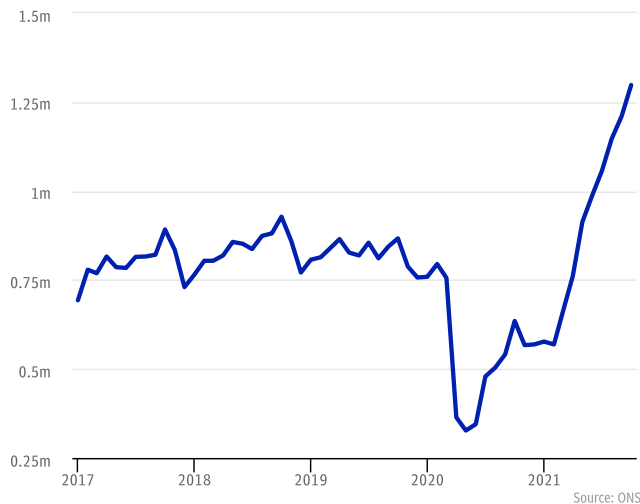
But this is not a reason to worry, according to Alice Stapleton, a career change consultant. She said there was no such thing as too many changes, so long as a candidate could explain the move.

"If an employer has a problem with someone who has tried out a range of careers, then they may not be the right fit for a candidate who has been willing to try new things," Ms Stapleton said.

She said "looking for a new challenge" was a common reason for trying new careers and employers generally responded well to this. However, [gaps in employment](#) can present a more serious hurdle to finding a new job. "They need an explanation, but job seekers should not hide them," she said.

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Should you take a salary cut?

One of the most common worries for people changing careers is that a lower salary would mean a lower quality of life. This is a sensitive topic and if you're after more money you should ask for it before you actually join the new company.

Russell Clayton, a business professor at the University of South Florida, said a way to overcome these worries was to test out an estimated salary before moving roles.

"A candidate should try and figure out what they expect to earn, and live on that for two to four months. This will give them a realistic picture of what life would look like, from an income perspective, in their new career," he said.

He said taking a 10pc salary cut would be relatively easy as subscription services and restaurant meals could be cut, but a major pay cut would be more challenging.

"They should look at major spending categories to identify cost-saving opportunities. Are there more-affordable housing options in the area? Can they cut commuting costs by using public transportation?" he said.

However, Ms Stapleton said a career change did not necessarily mean a pay cut.

"People in their 20s and 30s can often move without taking a pay cut. As people get older, this becomes harder, but only because they have had more time to reach a higher payer role.

"A pay cut is usually temporary, however, as people can quickly rise up the career ladder again," she said.

Searching for meaning

Finding a greater sense of purpose is one of the core [reasons for making a career switch](#), but true job satisfaction can be elusive and many people develop a "grass is always greener" attitude, according to Ms Stapleton.

She said there was not a single thing that a person was born to do and job hunters should be pragmatic.

"They need to accept that a career change is a journey and any step forward is good as it leads to the next step on the route to true career happiness.

"Job seekers should start by listing priorities and values and then find a role that fits these. There will be numerous options which can then be narrowed down," she said.

However, Ms Stapleton said a career change was often extremely rewarding.

"Learning and development is key to job satisfaction and a new career brings this. It will not be easy though and candidates should be ready for a challenge," she said.

Top tips for job hunting, interview techniques and making your CV as attractive as possible

The job hunt

Shaun Thomson, head of Sandler Training, a business development consultancy, said it was important to avoid being "blinkered by the present" and instead to think about where you want to be in the next three to five years – and then apply for jobs that will get you there.

And as well as applying for jobs the usual way, using jobs websites and recruitment agencies, Laura Hayes, who runs her own HR consultancy, Freshr, said it was worth emailing companies directly.

She said: "Try writing a polite email explaining that you've read about the company, the reasons you like it and why you feel you'd be a good fit. Ask if there are any upcoming opportunities and for it to bear you in mind. It's a blessing for a company to receive these kinds of messages."

You should also use your own networks: arrange some informal chats with people in the types of job you're interested in or with people who have good relationships with recruiters.

Sprucing up your CV

The problem with CVs is that they all look overwhelmingly similar, said Mr Thomson. "We're all motivated team players with bags of passion. You've got to be a bit bold. Some employers won't like it but it's better to stand out than be lukewarm."

He said companies had become a lot more focused on their "culture" and "values", which they often displayed on their websites. This should be reflected in your CV in a summary at the top.

"Include some points at the top which reinforce how you relate to the company's values. 'Fit of company culture' will be a box to tick at lots of firms," he said.

There's no point telling everyone everything. Tailor your CV to the role and make it specific to the company, including the most relevant jobs and experience, with five points describing each role and the impact you had on the organisation concerned.

Ms Hayes, who can read up to 100 CVs a day, said that if, for example, you had achieved £10,000 of sales in your first month at a former employer, explain what this had enabled the firm to do.

Make sure you include some hobbies and interests, as interviewers will be "looking for a colleague, not just

someone to fill a role", she added.

And if there are gaps in your CV, be honest about them. "If you've spent a short time at a company or it ended on bad terms, explain this in the cover letter.

"It's much better to say that your current role is not right for your circumstances, which you can explain at the interview, rather than leave the firm to make its own assumptions."

Two pages is plenty for your CV. For more tips see [how to write the best CV](#). If you've got a LinkedIn profile make sure it's up to date.

The interview

Preparation has always been key so make sure you've done your research, found out who will be interviewing you and have an idea of what to expect. Is it going to be a "getting-to-know-you" chat or something more formal?

Questions can usually be categorised into a handful of topics, such as technical ability, strengths, weaknesses, working with others, self-motivation and customer service, according to Catherine Davies from Pay Rise Accelerator, a programme to help women negotiate higher salaries.

Think of a couple of examples to illustrate these points and you'll have something to say for almost any question you will be asked, she said.

Ms Hayes said many companies had moved away from asking questions that were competence-based to "scenario-based", where you're put on the spot and tested on how you'd respond in certain situations.

This line of questioning is often "rhetorical". The interviewer isn't necessarily after a particular answer but wants to see how you'd react and your thought process.

Ms Hayes said more firms were asking questions that were deliberately "weird" such as "How would you get out of a washing machine if you shrunk down to three centimetres?".

The best way to deal with these curveballs is to stay calm. It's fine to tell the interviewer you weren't expecting that question and take your time answering it. They want to see your thought processes, so talk it through methodically.

The worst thing you can do is clam up and not answer it. Companies want to see more courage than that.

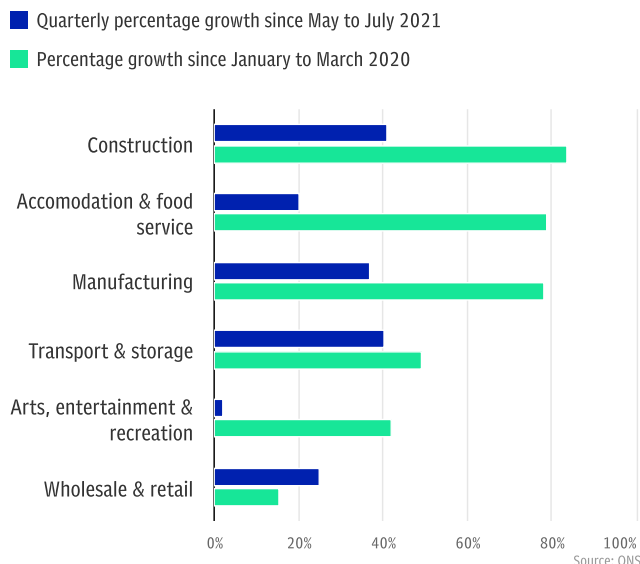
Positive behavioural patterns are also very attractive, according to Mr Thomson. For example, if you go to the gym regularly three times a week it works in your favour as it implies there is a "bigger purpose or goal". Companies also often want regular tasks completed.

Don't be too "matey" too early. It's important to create a relationship, so start open and friendly but follow the interviewer's lead. If you're getting nothing back, adjust your banter. Make sure you are as "interested" as you are "interesting".

Once you've got through the interview you should always have questions to ask. Ms Hayes said: "Have a question about the job, one about the company and one about the team or working environment."

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This article is kept updated with the latest advice.

Have you changed career and did you end up taking a salary cut in the process? Let us know the comments section below

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