

WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU NEED TO MAKE A BIG CAREER DECISION?

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Whatever your career path, you'll probably run into a few occasions when you're faced with a decision that could dramatically change your future. With so much at stake, you want to do all that you can to be prepared. Maybe you're torn between two attractive job offers, or asking yourself if a promotion is really worth uprooting your family to go live in an another state.

Figure out what's important to you and take actions that will bring you closer to your goals. Try these suggestions that will build up your confidence for making big career decisions.

Gather Resources

Start collecting information and feedback now even if you're not facing any major dilemmas in your work life. You'll be glad that you got a head start before your decision making skills are put to a real test.

1. **Keep a journal.** Writing down your thoughts and aspirations will help you to understand yourself. You'll see how your priorities change over time and spot recurring patterns.
2. **Take an inventory.** Identify your strengths and the areas where you want to grow. *Focus on what you like to do and what you're good at.*
3. **Ask friends and family.** Your loved ones can often provide valuable input. Maybe they'll notice talents that you take for granted.

4. **Consult experts.** Reach out to your college career center to see what services they offer for alumni. Ensure your network includes colleagues who can assist you with the next stage in your career path. If you hire a career coach, check references and credentials, and ask for a short-term contract so you can test your compatibility.
5. **Browse online tools.** Thanks to modern technology, you're no longer limited to making a list of pros and cons on the back of a napkin. You'll find lots of free decision-making tools and templates online to help structure the process.

Weigh the Factors

Remember that there's often no single correct answer, and you can use any choice as an opportunity to learn and grow. At the same time, understanding tradeoffs will help you to address your practical and emotional needs, and maximize the returns on your efforts.

1. **Think beyond money.** Once you have enough funds to cover your basic expenses, nonfinancial factors may be more important to your happiness. ***Does the opportunity excite you and align with your values?***
2. **Sleep on it.** Reconsider your conclusions after a good night's sleep or a long walk. You may change your mind or confirm your first reaction.
3. **Accept uncertainty. Remember that any move involves some risk.** Focus on the issues you can control and make peace with the rest.
4. **Research alternatives.** Examine various options before making up your mind. Then, come up with a short list to avoid becoming overwhelmed.

5. **Think long term.** Visualize where you could be in 5 or 10 years if you make a certain decision. Ask yourself if this is really what you want for your career.

6. **Try it out.** If possible, find a way to test your decision before you make a final commitment. Maybe you can take a single course at night before you quit your job to go back to school full time.

7. **Make contingency plans. Give yourself something to fall back on.** Either you'll succeed the first time or you'll be in a stronger position to try again.

Sound decisions lead to smart career moves. Gathering information and deliberating carefully will help you to achieve work-life balance and find the job satisfaction you're looking for.