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PERSONAL BRANDING SERIES • VOLUME 08

Reinventing Yourself Professionally

Think through a career change, translate the experience you already have and build a realistic path into new work.

08

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A note before you dig in

Changing direction is scary, especially when you've built some success where you are. People will have opinions. Your own brain will have opinions. Somewhere in there is a little voice saying, "Who do you think you are?"

Here's what I've learned: reinvention doesn't mean throwing everything away and starting over. Most of the time, it means taking what you already know and pointing it somewhere new. You don't lose your experience. You carry it with you.

This guide helps you change direction with your eyes open: clear about what you want, honest about the money and smart about testing before you leap.

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YOU'LL WALK AWAY WITH

- Clarity on what you want to change and what you want to keep
- Your experience translated for a new audience
- Real research on the roles you're considering
- A transition budget with an honest runway
- A small experiment and a story that explains your move

WHAT'S INSIDE

01 Understand career reinvention

02 Translate your transferable skills

03 Investigate the opportunity

04 Build a transition budget

05 Test your direction and tell your story

Time: 60 to 90 minutes, then a month of small steps

Best for: working professionals, business owners, career changers and anyone figuring out what is next

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read a lesson, look at the example, then answer the questions in your own words. Pencil is fine. Messy is fine. Treat your first answers like a rough draft and check them against real conversations and real evidence before you put serious time or money behind them. Then come back to the 30 day plan and actually do it. That part is where the change happens.

LESSON 01

Understand career reinvention

Decide what changes and what stays.

What reinvention means

Career reinvention is a deliberate change in the work you do, how you use your abilities or how you present yourself professionally. It could mean switching industries, coming back after time away, stepping into leadership or starting a business.

Know your non negotiables

Separate what you want to change from what you want to keep. Think about pay, schedule, location, benefits, responsibilities and work environment. A transition can be gradual. Keeping your current income while you test a new direction can take a lot of pressure off.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A retail supervisor wants predictable hours. Instead of assuming she needs a whole new career, she looks at inventory coordination and purchasing roles that use the experience she already has. The change she needs might be smaller than she thought.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Assuming reinvention means starting from zero
- Quitting before you've tested the new direction
- Forgetting to name what you want to keep

YOUR TURN

Describe your current situation and the work you want.

List three non negotiable conditions and three preferences.

Name two things about your current work you want to keep.

LESSON 02

Translate your transferable skills

Show a new audience what your experience means to them.

Know the types

Transferable skills are abilities you can use in different settings. Technical skills involve specific methods or tools. Interpersonal skills involve working with people. Operational skills involve organizing resources and processes. Evidence makes these abilities clear to someone new.

Describe what you actually did

Look at paid work, caregiving, volunteering, education and side projects. For each, describe the task, your action and the result. Don't inflate informal experience into a credential or a title you didn't hold. Just explain what you did, clearly.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A parent who ran school fundraisers describes vendor scheduling, volunteer coordination and expense tracking. That's directly relevant to event operations, even though she wasn't paid for it.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Giving yourself a title you never held
- Leaving out unpaid experience that clearly applies
- Listing skills without any evidence behind them

YOUR TURN

Create five entries: experience, skill, evidence, possible new role.

Which entries can be backed up with a sample or a reference?

Which one is your strongest bridge into new work?

LESSON 03

Investigate the opportunity

Fall in love with the work, not the job title.

Look beyond the title

A job title that sounds exciting might not match what you need. Research the actual work, required qualifications, pay range, schedule, location and room to grow. Different employers often use different titles for very similar jobs.

Do real research

Compare at least five job descriptions from different employers. Mark which requirements are required, preferred or unclear. Talk to someone doing the work before you pay for expensive training. Look into public workforce programs and training employers will pay for.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A former hospitality worker compares project coordinator and operations assistant postings. She sees the same requirements over and over: spreadsheets, documentation and scheduling. So she takes a short spreadsheet course instead of signing up for an expensive degree she doesn't need.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Paying for training before talking to anyone in the field
- Reading one job posting and assuming it represents them all
- Ignoring free workforce programs and employer funded training

YOUR TURN

Choose two possible roles.

Compare duties, qualifications, pay information, schedule and your skill gaps.

Write down your sources and the dates you checked them.

LESSON 04

Build a transition budget

Know your runway before you take off.

Plan for the in between

A career change might mean less income for a while, training costs, transportation, childcare or a stretch without benefits. A personal cash flow plan shows when money comes in and goes out of your household.

Do the math honestly

Estimate your essential monthly costs and the income you can count on. Divide the money you have set aside for the transition by your expected monthly shortfall to estimate how many months you can manage. That assumes the shortfall stays the same, so build in a cushion. Don't count job offers or grants you haven't received yet.

WORTH KNOWING

Cash flow	The timing of money coming in and going out.
Monthly shortfall	How much your essential expenses exceed your reliable income each month.
Runway	How many months your transition savings can cover the shortfall.
Contingency	Extra money set aside for surprises.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A worker has $3,600 set aside after protecting her emergency savings. Her expected shortfall is $600 a month. That gives her about six months of runway before any surprise costs. She decides to keep working while she trains, so the runway lasts even longer.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Counting money you haven't received yet
- Using your emergency fund as your transition fund
- Forgetting about benefits, transportation or childcare costs

YOUR TURN

List your essential expenses and dependable income.

Write down your available transition funds and any one time costs.

Calculate your monthly gap, your runway and your backup plan.

LESSON 05

Test your direction and tell your story

Try it on before you buy it.

Run small experiments

Career experiments are small activities that help you find out if a direction fits before you make a big commitment. Try a project, a volunteer assignment, an informational interview or an intro class.

Explain your move

A transition story connects where you've been to where you're going. Update your resume and portfolio to put relevant evidence first. If you've had a gap, you can explain it briefly if you choose. Private details aren't necessary.

EXAMPLE (fictional)

A former salon owner going after purchasing roles builds a sample inventory forecast. In interviews, she talks about years of negotiating with suppliers, managing stock and planning around customer demand. Her story makes sense: she's been doing this work all along, just in a different setting.

WATCH OUT FOR

- Making a major commitment without testing first
- Oversharing personal details about a career gap
- A resume that still points toward your old field

YOUR TURN

Design a two week career experiment.

Write three sentences that connect your experience, your evidence and your target role.

Who are two people you can ask for feedback?

WORKSHEET

Transition budget

Use real numbers from the last three months, not your best guess.

ITEM	MONTHLY AMOUNT	RELIABLE? (YES OR NO)	NOTES

QUICK REFERENCE

The short version

Tear this page out, screenshot it, tape it by your desk. This is the whole guide on one page.

01	Reinvention usually means redirecting your experience, not erasing it.
02	Name what you want to change and what you want to keep.
03	Translate skills by describing the task, the action and the result.
04	Never inflate informal experience into a title.
05	Compare at least five job postings and talk to people doing the work.
06	Know your monthly shortfall and your runway before you leap.
07	Test with small experiments first.
08	Tell a short, clear story that connects past to future.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your 30 day plan

Small, real steps. Pick the dates now so this does not turn into one more thing you meant to do.

WEEK 1

Map it

Pick two target roles and map your transferable skills to them.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 2

Research

Look at real openings and talk to two people in the field.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 3

Build

Finish a small skill building project and update your resume and portfolio.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

WEEK 4

Apply and adjust

Apply selectively, review any feedback and update your transition budget.

Date: _____ Done when: _____

My very first action, the date I will do it and how I will know it is done:

What support, time or resources do I need to line up?

THIRTY DAYS LATER

Look back, then keep going

Come back to this page a month from now. Compare what you planned with what actually happened. No judgment. You are collecting information, not grading yourself.

What did I learn about the work I thought I wanted?

How did my budget assumptions hold up?

What is my next experiment?

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

- Personal Branding Expertise Guide, brand evolution section. Supplied reference.
- U.S. Department of Labor, CareerOneStop.careeronestop.org
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook.bls.gov/ooh

Examples in this guide are made up to teach a point. They are not real clients or documented results. This guide is educational and does not guarantee any professional, business or income outcome. Rules change, so double check anything legal, tax or regulatory before you act on it.