

The 7 STAGES of
**CAREER
CHANGE**



ROADMAP 

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RELAUNCHING YOUR CAREER

isn't easy, but it

CAN BE DONE

Making a major career change can be a very lonely journey, especially if you're making an unconventional move or starting your own business. I've been there—quitting medical school to pursue a career in marketing. Leaving the US to restart my career in the UK. And saying farewell to my stable corporate job to start my own business. Each time, I felt like I was off the beaten path, like everyone else was happily cruising along in their careers while I was disrupting mine.

Over time, I realized most people yearn for a career change. In fact, 85% of people are not fully engaged in their jobs.* Trust me, you're not alone.

I commend you for not settling, and wish you the best as you make the brave leap toward work that really matters to you.

After coaching and speaking with hundreds of professionals navigating career change, I've noticed common patterns amongst people who have successfully reinvented themselves. With this in mind, I've compiled the 7 most common stages people go through during the ups and downs of a major career change. When you're lost, figuring out exactly where you are is often the first step toward deciding where to go next. I hope this guide helps you do both.



Intro:

USING THIS GUIDE

WHO IS THIS FOR?

Professionals who aren't entirely happy at work, who want to work with greater purpose & make use of their true talents.

WHAT WILL I GAIN?

A better understanding of where you are on your career journey and how to navigate each stage.

WHEN SHOULD I USE IT?

If you feel unsatisfied with certain aspects of your career or are struggling with whether to make a major career change.

HOW DO I USE IT?

Identify your stage, complete the reflection exercises, then take action based on your responses.

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

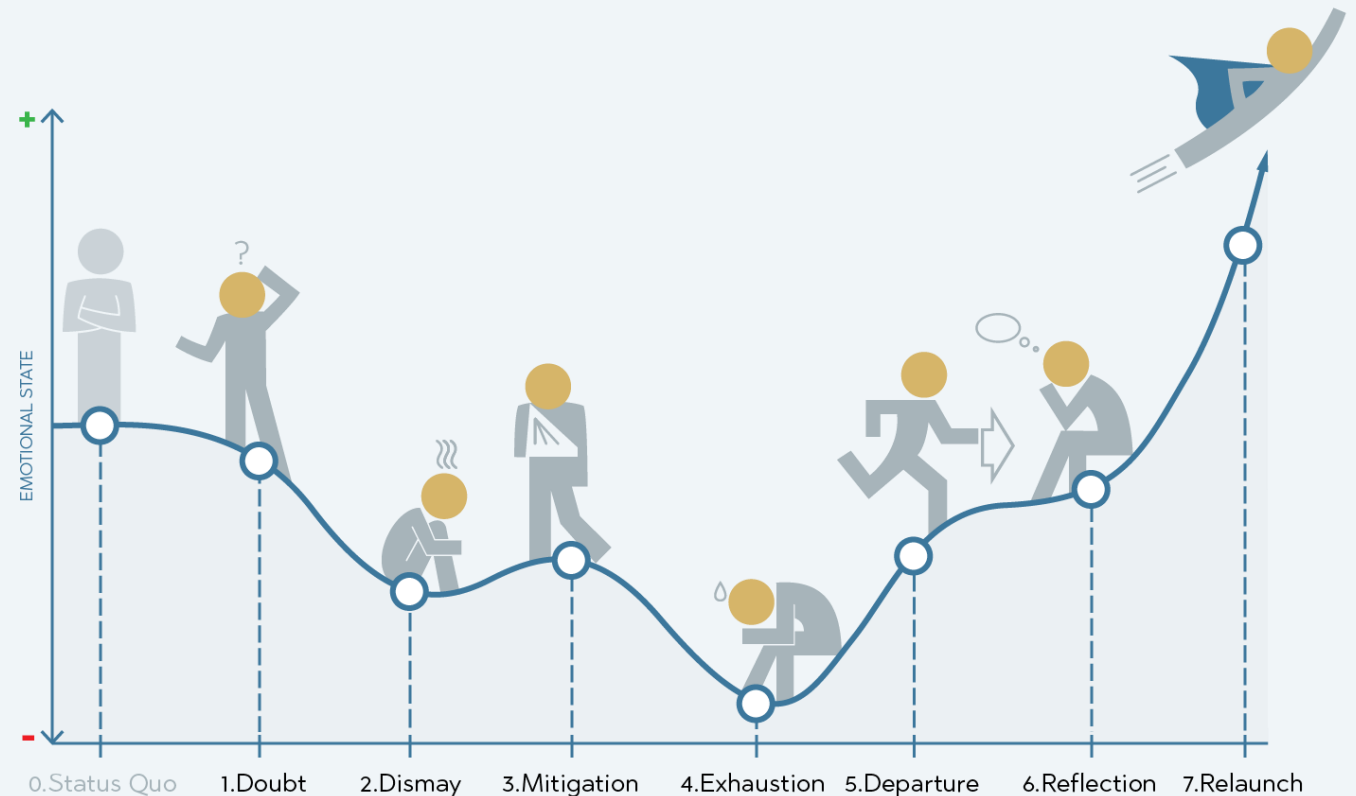
When you're lost, pinpointing exactly where you are helps you figure out what to do next.

THE 7 STAGES *of* CAREER CHANGE

This roadmap outlines the common characteristics, key challenges, and one basic exercise to help you navigate each stage and gain:

- **Clarity** on where you are in your career change journey
- **Confidence** to embrace your unique strengths & values
- **Courage** to make that brave change you've wanted for so long

Everyone has their own unique career path. Similarly, there isn't just one way to change careers. So this guide is simply intended to help you start making sense of where you are in your career journey. The reality though is that the journey is uniquely yours and never really ends.



0. STATUS QUO

“My job is fine.”

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Sets career foundation



I feel *content.*

I think *I'm working for a good organization with professional growth opportunities, credibility, status, stability, and a steady paycheck that keeps my career moving forward.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Climbing the ladder, building goodwill, learning, achieving results.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Job-related day-to-day tasks, key responsibilities, getting promoted, making a good impression.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

What are the 3 specific projects that will make the biggest difference to your organization, and in turn, your career progression?

⚡ ACTION

Write down a specific goal for each of the 3 projects to achieve the next 90 days. Ensure you're focused on at least 1 every single day.

! TIP

Post your goals in a visible spot to keep them top-of-mind.

1. DOUBT

"I don't like my job"



WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Signals something's off

I feel disengaged.

I think *about whether this job is really the right one for me. I'm not unhappy per se, but I'm also not happy. Maybe a project change, a different team, or another tweak could help fix things?*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Chatting with friends or professional mentors to sort out whether challenges are unique to me, my company, or my specific role.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Clarity on what's reasonable to expect. Figuring out if these mixed feelings about my job are really an issue or "normal" for anyone in this position. Maybe it's just me?

KEY CONSIDERATION

What aspect of your job is bothering you?

ACTION

Pinpoint 1 step you could take in the next 2 weeks to: a) address the source of your frustration, or b) soften the impact on you.

TIP

Don't forget about all the positive things that attracted you to this role in the first place.

2. DISMAY

"I don't like my career"

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Reinforces you're on the wrong path



I feel misplaced.

I think *neither my job nor my career trajectory is fulfilling. What I enjoy is disconnected with what I do in my day-job. I'm wasting my talents. I'm no longer proud of what I do for a living.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Going through the motions at work to get by. Watching the clock. Dreading Monday mornings. Complaining about job all the time outside of work.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Letting go of investment. I can't just walk away from all the time and energy I've invested to get this far.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

What aspect of your career IS still attractive to you?

⚡ ACTION

Identify a tweak you could make to your location, industry, organization, function, or role so you can spend more of your workday doing things you actually enjoy.

! TIP

Challenge yourself to get very specific and literally write down exactly what you do like & don't like about your work.

3. MITIGATION

“Maybe I can fix this”

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Plants seeds for future pursuits.



I feel *persistent.*

I think *I’m going to figure out how I can make this work. I’ll focus less on my job and find fulfillment elsewhere. The positivity from these other activities may offset negativity from work.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Exploring other options. Networking with others to uncover other job options out there. Working on side projects to feed my interests. Enrolling in that evening course I’ve been wanting to take.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Being spread too thin. Limited time. I’m struggling to find the headspace to give any activity 100%.

KEY CONSIDERATION

What key interest or strength of mine is not being fulfilled by my work?

ACTION

Take one small step to explore another activity that could feed this important part of who you are.

TIP

Look toward non-work activities to feed your interests.

4. EXHAUSTION

“This just isn’t working”

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Forces you to face what’s wrong



I feel stuck.

I think *I’m out of energy. I want to continue exploring other interests and options, but cramming them into the evenings & weekends is becoming too tough. I’m not able to give this exploration the time & energy to really get anything out of it.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Doing everything in a half-hearted manner. Spending weekends recuperating from very draining weeks.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Lack of energy. My draining day-job leaves me with nothing left in the tank, either physically or mentally.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

What aspect of my life is really suffering? What would it take to improve this?

⚡ ACTION

Commit to making one change this week that allows you to honor a part of your life you’ve been neglecting for too long.

! TIP

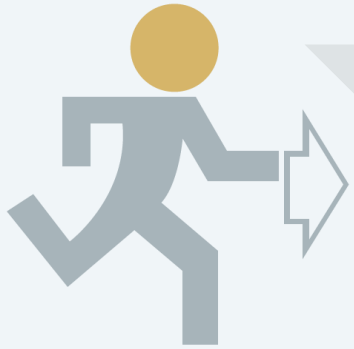
Remember, life is all about tradeoffs, and you always have a choice.

5. DEPARTURE

“I can’t do this anymore”

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Creates space for more genuine pursuits



I feel *depleted.*

I think *My unhappiness is starting to affect my health, my relationships, my family life, my social life, and my overall well-being.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Moving to another organization. Changing jobs. Resigning, even if another job isn't lined up. Taking a break. Getting away from it all.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Overcoming guilt: I don't want to feel like a quitter.

Money: I have bills to pay. I can't leave my steady income behind.

Second guessing: wondering if leaving is really the right thing for me.

Temptation: dealing with counter-offers post-resignation.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

What timing for my resignation will allow me to leave on the best terms possible for both me and my employer?

⚡ ACTION

Commit yourself to a date to inform your manager of your plans.

! TIP

Leaving is NEVER easy, no matter what. But at some point, you have to draw the line.

6. REFLECTION

"I need a break"



I feel *relieved.*

I think *I want a break to figure out what I want. I need to sort things out.*

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Lets you refuel

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

Resting, resetting, and recuperating. Finding ways to create the headspace & time to reflect on what I want, where to take my life & career. Taking a sabbatical, working in a 9-5 job for a while, travelling, spending time with family, having time for myself, or "getting away" from it all.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Confidence: figuring out what to do next, fear of making a similar mistake.

Paralysis: hesitation to move onto something else out of fear of landing in a similarly bad situation.

Uncertainty: not sure what's next for me.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

What do I need in order to make the most well informed decision possible about what's next?

⚡ ACTION

Identify an activity or person you respect to help you gain some clarity.

! TIP

Do not get stuck reflecting all day. A single conversation with someone can be incredibly clarifying.

7.RELAUNCH

"I'm going to go for it"

WHY IS THIS STAGE IMPORTANT?

Opens up new opportunities

I feel *determined.*

I think *I've decided what's next for me. With a newfound purpose & energy, I'll set off in a brand new career direction. I'm nervous about exactly what to do next, but excited about the possibility of feeling more energized by my work.*

COMMON ACTIVITIES:

- 1.** Switching to a totally new industry or function.
- 2.** Departing the corporate world to start my own business.
- 3.** Pursuing my own personal endeavors.

MAIN CHALLENGE:

Figuring out how to start. Finding courage to begin somewhere, even when I don't have it all figured out.

? KEY CONSIDERATION

Do I switch jobs, start my own business, or take a break?

⚡ ACTION

Take one small step toward pursuing ONE dormant interest you've had.

! TIP

You don't have to have it all figured out now. You just have to start somewhere that feels broadly right.

Wrap up:

NEXT STEPS

WHAT NOW?

After you've identified where you are in your career journey, reflect on the relevant questions. Then, be sure to take the necessary actions that emerge from your responses. Even if you don't know precisely what to do, starting somewhere, as long as you're broadly moving in a potentially promising direction, is often more useful than indefinitely trying to nail down a precise, fully planned-out solution.

“Sometimes you have to let go of part of your life to make room for the pursuit of something greater” – [Joseph Liu, TEDx](#)

Action creates opportunity. Opportunity creates progress.

This roadmap is meant to serve as one reference point to help you navigate your career change. Figuring this all out is not easy.

If you're still feeling stuck or confused (not unusual!), check out my other tools and resources at [JOSEPHLIU.CO](#). As a subscriber, you also **get exclusive access to our Career Change & Personal Branding Resource Hub**. Register for access: [josephliu.co/resourcehub](#).

Good luck with your journey!

Before you go,

A FAVOR TO ASK YOU

If you can spare 2 mins, I'd appreciate you filling in this quick survey to let me know which stage you're in and any feedback on this roadmap so I can be as helpful to you as possible in the future. Thanks!

TAKE 2 MIN. POLL