



TOP 5

Career Change Myths & How To Avoid Them

For as long as we've had jobs, we've been able to feel unfulfilled by them.

At Escape The City we believe life can be lived another way. Call us crazy, but we believe in a world where work—this activity we spend most of our time toiling away at—can be spent in the pursuit of something meaningful, something that makes you feel really alive. Life is too short to do work that doesn't matter to you.

So if you're stuck in a crappy job, feel like something is missing for you at work, or just know you need a change: you're in the right place.

The challenge of course is getting unstuck. In helping thousands of people escape into more fulfilling work, we've noticed a handful of common myths that stop people from moving forward. You may recognise some of them.

Here are the top 5 career change myths — and how to avoid them.



**MYTH 1:
Follow Your Passion**



You may have heard the popular career and life wisdom: “Find your passion!” or “Follow your passion!”

But here’s the problem (according to Stanford’s popular [Design Your Life](#) course:)

“Only 20% of the population can identify a singular passion.”

For the remaining 80% of us mere mortals:

- There are many things that excite us, and
- No single thing stands out as a “passion”

Being told to “find your passion” is an empty call to action that doesn’t work for the vast majority of us. How does one go about “finding” their passion? Where does it live? What if I don’t know what my passion is? Am I stupid if I haven’t already found it?

Your passion isn’t a treasure to be found at the end of some glowing rainbow, or in a lightning bolt flash of genius. Moments of epiphany might occur in the pursuit of more fulfilling work, but the truth is that most people who “found their passion” actually **became passionate about their work.**

In *So Good They Can’t Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love*, Cal Newport describes how to think about this:



“Here’s the key: there is no special passion waiting for you to discover. Passion is something that is cultivated. It can be cultivated in many, many different fields. Therefore, it doesn’t make sense to say, ‘I don’t know what my passion is.’ What does make sense is to say, ‘I haven’t yet cultivated a passion, I should really focus down on a small number of things and start this process.”

If “follow your passion” is bad advice – where do we start instead? Here’s a more helpful call to action:

CHASE YOUR CURIOSITIES.

On the surface “chase your curiosities” sounds worryingly like “follow your passion,” but there’s an important distinction here. “Follow your passion” implies that you know exactly where you’re heading and how to get there. Chasing your curiosities on the other hand doesn’t ask that you know exactly where you’re going before you start. It asks only that you start. From where you are right now, with what you have available to you, running toward whatever sparks your interest.

It may not immediately lead you to a career change, but it will likely lead you in the right direction.

“Follow your curiosity. Trust your curiosity. If something is interesting to you, trust that it is interesting to you for a reason; that it is another breadcrumb on the amazing trail that will make your life yours and not anybody else’s.” –

Elizabeth Gilbert

Myth 1 busted → Passion is cultivated. Chase your curiosities instead.



**MYTH 2:
Find “The One”**



It's tempting to believe in finding "The One." As in: "There is one true dream job for me and I will stay put until I find it."

We scroll longingly through any job board we can get our hands on. We gaze starry-eyed at people who seem to have stumbled upon fairytale dream jobs. Maybe you've even subscribed to our weekly [Top 10 Opportunities](#) email hoping you'll lock eyes with your dream job and live happily ever after.

The chance that you'll find your dream job waiting for you on a job board, while not impossible, might be rare. **You contain multitudes.** There may be many jobs and organisations that might be "the one" for you. Instead, be on the look out for "The Ones."

Here's a thought: thousands of companies and tens of thousands roles didn't even exist twenty or even ten years ago (i.e.: Google, Airbnb, Etsy, etc). How inconvenient would it be if your One True Job hasn't even been invented yet?

Myth 2 busted → Be open to "The Ones"





MYTH 3:
The Grass is Greener



One of the most dangerous myths of all is believing that the grass is always greener in another line of work and once you “arrive” everything will be perfect.

Everything will be better when I...
...land a job with X.
...transfer to Y.
...become a Z.

But we’ve found that the destination is over romanticized.

The hard reality is that every pursuit and purposeful line of work, no matter how glamorous it seems, includes what author Elizabeth Gilbert so eloquently calls a “shit sandwich”

“So the question is not ‘What do I love?’, the question is ‘What do I love so much that I don’t mind eating the shit sandwich that comes along with that thing?’ So for me in my life, writing is the thing that I love, and the shit sandwich was the seven years that I was not getting published.” –[Elizabeth Gilbert](#).

Every job, no matter how sexy it appears on the outside, includes aspects that are boring, mundane, difficult, stressful or even defeating. Within every job there’s a grind. There’s a shit sandwich somewhere. The question is whether the work matters enough to you that you’re willing to press through it.



Don't let this deter you. Instead, think of ways you can try out your dream and de-romanticize the destination. Can you interview someone who has the job you dream of? Can you spend an afternoon shadowing them? Better yet, can you work on it as a mini project and treat it as if it were your day job? For example:

- If you think you want to be a travel blogger – why not pretend to be a traveler in your own city and post three blog posts full of photos and helpful tips?
- If you might want to retrain as a computer programmer – can you take a field trip to a co-working space and offer to take a programmer out to lunch and interview them about their day-to-day work?
- If you think you want to work for a social enterprise - instead of a relaxing trip to the beach, how about spending your next holiday volunteering for a non-profit organization you care about?

Give yourself a taste of your dream destination and ask yourself – do I still want to pursue this?

Myth 3 busted → De-romanticize the destination. Give yourself a taste before you commit.



MYTH 4:
Think.
Plan.
Implement.



Ready. Aim. Fire!

This is how we should approach our Escape, right?

Make sure you're ready. Carefully prepare until you know you're ready. Then, and only then, start moving.

It's tempting to get caught up in the theory, research and navel gazing that comes along with attempting a big career change. Of course it's important to know who you are and what matters to you to ensure you're moving the right direction for *you*.

But at some point (and this point comes a lot sooner than you'll want it to) you'll need to start acting. Moving, doing, testing, putting yourself out there and boldly engaging with the world – despite not knowing exactly what you're doing or where you're going.

In her book [*Working Identity*](#), Herminia Ibarra highlights the #1 mistake of hopeful career changers:

“By far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change careers is to delay taking the first step until they have settled on a destination.”

Think, Plan, Implement may work for destinations in which we're completely sure. But when attempting a career change, it's largely toward a destination unknown. It requires a different approach.

MYTH 4: Think. Plan. Implement.

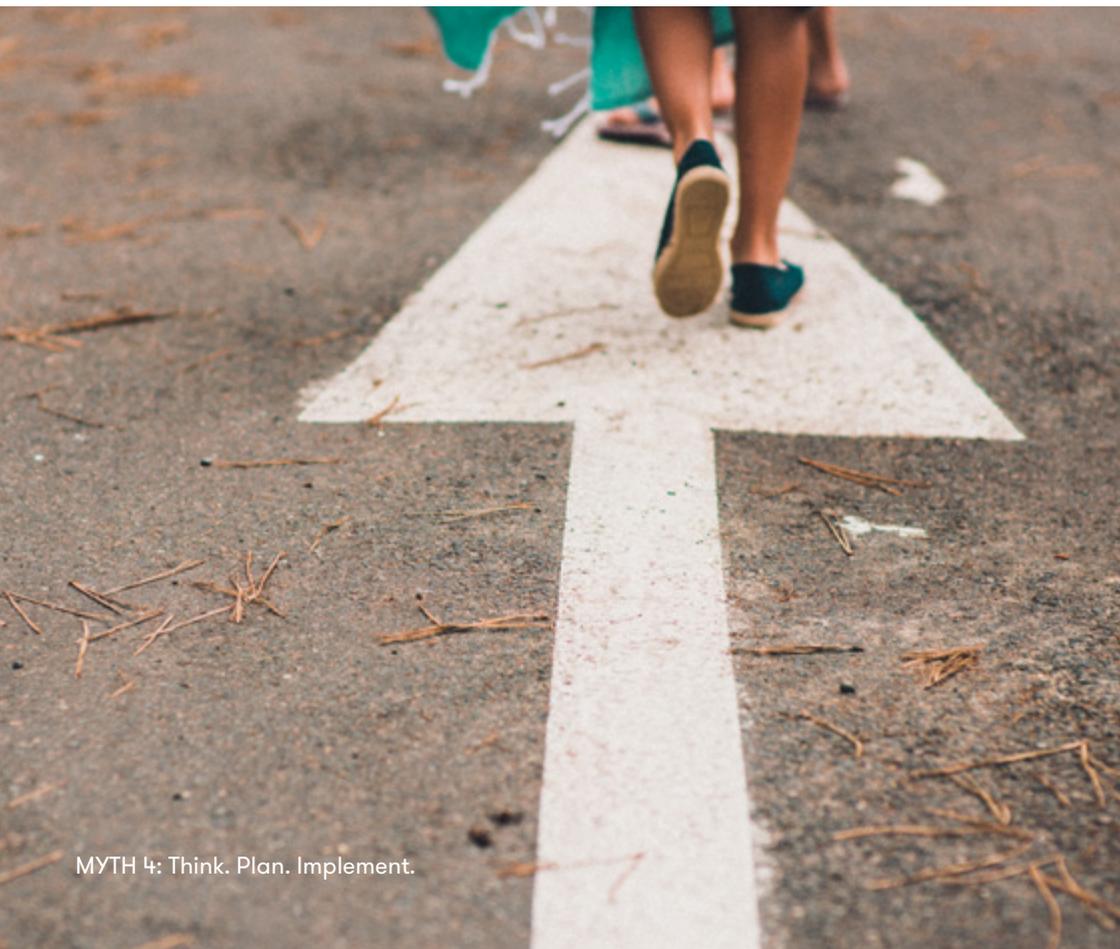


People who successfully Escape do so by constantly acting, testing and moving their way there.

They approach their Escape as a series of small projects rather than massive moves. They do it by viewing each action as an experiment instead of their be-all, end-all. They do it without feeling “ready” and without having it all figured out.

The mantra to remember instead is: **Act first. Reflect along the way.** Aim a little bit, but fire before you’re ready.

Myth 4 busted → Act first. Reflect along the way.





**MYTH 5:
The Big Leap**



Escape stories that resonate most feature a big, bold leap:

- Big city lawyer turns best-selling author!
- Banker turns arctic adventurer!
- IT consultant turns entrepreneur!

The single big leap is sexy—but it's largely untrue.

The truth is that underneath that moment of success is a lot of work, loads of rejection, false starts, wrong turns and fantastic failures. Most people likely tested a few avenues and made small gambles and decisions before committing to a completely new direction.

Successful Escapes tend to look more like an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg is what everyone can see: the remarkable life, the big change, the brave leap. But underneath the surface is a massive collection of tiny decisions, small steps, and little experiments that enable the tip of the iceberg to exist.

Intelligent transitions manifest through small steps and tiny experiments—not single blind leaps.

Before committing to a drastic jump – take small steps. Hell, half steps if you must. Conduct experiments. Work on projects. Act first and reflect all along the way: What are you learning? About yourself? About your ideas? About new possibilities for yourself? About what you enjoy? What you don't? What you're great at? What you're not so great at? How the world responds? How does this inform your next small steps?

Relentlessly focus (and refocus) on where you're going. And remind yourself WHY you're going there.



When you find yourself stuck deep in introspection (and you will), remember to get out of your head by immediately helping someone else. And please, please, please remember to ask for help yourself.

Be generous. Be brave. Celebrate your tiny wins along the way. Do it with people who get it. Sadly they might not be found within your current circle, but they're likely waiting for you inside another tribe.

Wash, rinse, repeat. This might not get easier, but you will become more confident and courageous as you keep on stepping.

And when the time does come to make a larger leap, you'll be ready to heed the advice given to a young Native American at his initiation:

“As you go the way of life, you will see a great chasm. Jump. It is not as wide as you think.”

Myth 5 busted → Commit to small steps, not massive leaps.



BOOKS



Our favourite books on career change and finding fulfilling work:

So Good They Can't Ignore You

by Cal Newport

Working Identity

by Herminia Ibarra

How to Find Fulfilling Work

by Roman Kzarnic

BLOGS



From the Escape Blog:

Will Quitting My Job Be a Massive Mistake?

by Matthew Trinetti

How Can I Make a Big, Bold Career Change?

by Rob Symington

Seven Ideas to Get Closer to a Dream Job

by Matthew Trinetti

WANT TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

We help people make bold transitions into more meaningful work.

Join our next **Escape Bootcamp** - a 2-day crash course to **get clarity on your career next steps, build your career change toolkit, and map your Escape route with confidence.**

Check out upcoming intakes, view the course syllabus, and book your spot [here](#).

It's never too late to Escape.

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