

Background

Career changes

In the latest in our series on career changes we meet Veronica Paralova and Edwin Zeedorf who have made very different career moves.

Veronica Paralova

Veronica Paralova left school at 17 with few qualifications. After a job making school lunches for eight years, on poor pay and working long hours, she realized that she was no longer motivated and needed to do something different but she didn't know what. We asked her how she went about changing her career.

What helped you make up your mind about changing your career?

'Well, for a while I was focusing on the things I disliked, but someone told me to think about the things I liked both in my work and in my life. The things that I was passionate about, the things that excited or challenged me. I loved it when I was asked to organize things, whether a new menu in the kitchen or a party for a friend. I realized I enjoyed organizing.'

So what happened next?

'I started to look around for jobs that involved organizing events or activities, I found out about event management and thought it would be something I would like to do. It combined organizing and being hands on, the last thing I wanted was a desk job.'

Did you need any special training?

'Yes, I went back to college, just part-time but I did a course called Event and Project Management. We studied everything from project management to event law and contracts. It was really interesting. It took two years but at the end, the college organized a placement with Global Events. The placement lasted for six months and when it finished they offered me a full-time job.'

What is your favourite part of your new job?

'I need to be creative, I have to think about the client, their identity and their needs and come up with something that will catch the eye. It can be as much about marketing and image as it is about actually organizing the event.'

Do you regret the change in careers?

'Not at all. I love my new job. The kitchen job was monotonous but now every day brings a different challenge.'

Edwin Zeedorf

When Edwin Zeedorf decided his job was not motivating him, he made a life-changing career move. The former Amsterdam-based human resources director went off to look for a more rewarding challenge. We asked him about his new career.

You made quite a dramatic career change, didn't you?

'Yes, I did. I had always wanted to work in the voluntary sector and now I work for a charity called Childcare International. I work in the distribution depot and the job takes me to places that I never dreamt I would visit. Last year I was in Sri Lanka to distribute supplies to the victims of the tsunami, and this year I have already been to the Sudan and I am going to Kenya in October.'

How did you choose this charity?

'I wanted to get out from behind my desk and do something that would make a difference I suppose. I was lucky, in my previous job I had met the manager of an organization called Working for Charities. They help people find work with charities and so when I finally decided to change jobs I contacted her. To start with she offered me recruitment jobs, but I told her that I wanted to be on the front line. My skills were limited, I wasn't a specialist, they really need medical staff and engineers but I was happy to take anything. So they offered me a driving and distribution job and here I am.'

What is your favourite part of your new job?

'I am helping people and that is great. Every day we take food to people who need it. We work very hard, in very hot weather, so I am very tired but I feel like I am making a difference.'

Do you regret the change in careers?

'Not at all. Obviously I don't get as much money now but the job is very rewarding and I really enjoy it. I think I will go back to the desk job one day but I will stay in the voluntary sector for now.'

Exercises

1 Work with a partner. Ask and answer these questions.

- 1 What jobs did you do before your current job?
- 2 What do you like and dislike most about your job?
- 3 Why do people change jobs?

2 Student A, you are going to read about Veronica Paralova. Student B, you are going to read about Edwin Zeedorf.

- 1 Read your own section of the text quickly and find out why the person changed their job.
- 2 Compare your answers with your partner. Did both people change for the same reasons?
- 3 Read your section of the text again and choose three pieces of information from it that you find interesting. Tell your partner your information and explain why you found it interesting.

3 Work together and decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F) and say why.

- 1 They both worked in their previous jobs for eight years.
- 2 They both left their first jobs because they didn't feel motivated.
- 3 They both had to go back to 'school' to learn their new jobs.
- 4 They both now work at a desk.
- 5 Both their jobs involve helping people in some way.
- 6 Neither of them have regrets about changing careers.

4 Match the verbs from the text 1–8 to the correct preposition a–h. Use the text to help you.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1 come | a in |
| 2 decide | b out |
| 3 find | c to |
| 4 focus | d out |
| 5 get | e for |
| 6 look | f about |
| 7 stay | g on |
| 8 think | h up with |

5 Work with your partner. Using the text to help you, decide what the verb phrases in 5 mean.

6 Look back at the text and choose three words that you could use in your day-to-day work.

7 Work with a partner. Discuss what you think about these career changes. Do you think both of them made the correct decision?