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New Job, New You: A Guide to Reinventing Yourself in a Bright New Career

By Alexandra Levit



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If you're dissatisfied in your current position, fantasize about doing something else with your life, or have just unceremoniously been given a pink slip, take heart. It's never too late to start fresh and forge ahead on a fulfilling new career path. Alexandra Levit, career columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, has interviewed dozens of individuals who have successfully switched careers—many of them more than once—and provides practical, empowering, and action-oriented steps for figuring out your next move with clarity and confidence. Organized by the seven major motivations that lead people to seek career changes—family, independence, learning, money, passion, setback, and talent—**New Job, New You** shows you how to

- research careers that best reflect your new direction
- stand out in this competitive job market
- market yourself to a particular (most ideal) position
- create a financial plan to maintain income during your transition
- use the power of networking to put you exactly where you want to be

Complete with compelling personal stories, helpful questionnaires, and savvy, down-to-earth advice, **New Job, New You** gives you the resources you need to turn your wildest pipe dream into a solid reality and obtain the rewarding, invigorating career that you deserve.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Few people consider how or why to change careers. Alexandra Levit's *New Job, New You* explores the motivation behind successful transitions and teaches you how to follow in the footsteps of others who are living their dreams. Let it guide you to success and joy."—Guy Kawasaki, author of *The Art of the Start* and *Reality Check*

"Is it time to follow your passion? Spend more time with your family? Walk through the job transition process with the help Alexandra Levit's *New Job, New You*. By diving into the pages of this insightful book, you'll be prepared to discover the secrets to loving your job." —Marshall Goldsmith, author of *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

"*New Job, New You* is one of the best career books I've read in a very long time. It's packed with success stories, interesting statistics, and probing exercises. But equally important, it does a terrific job of helping readers understand their motivations for seeking change in the first place. If a new, better, or different career is on your horizon, you want—you *need*—Alexandra Levit as your guide." —Daniel H. Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*

"Changing careers is in vogue, but what's missing for most people is the reason to do it in the first place, as well as the step by step actions required to make it happen. Alexandra Levit's *New Job New You* deftly explores the journeys of accomplished career changers at various life stages and instructs readers how to replicate their success."—Penelope Trunk, author of *The Brazen Careerist*

"The personal stories of how different individuals made their own career change are perhaps the jewels of this book. People learn through the example of others. *New Job, New You* offers practical and real world advice about taking charge of the career you want. Anyone thinking about reinventing themselves would do well to read this book."—Chris Russell, Founder, JobRadio.FM

"Career change is scary. Alexandra Levit helps you face the fear and do it anyway. **New Job, New You** is full of inspiring stories and smart advice for anyone who longs for a more fulfilling career. I love that Alexandra digs down into the motivations that drive career changers and provides guidance tailored to address the causes of job dissatisfaction, not just the symptoms. I will confidently recommend this wonderful book to my career coaching clients."—Pamela Skillings, author of *Escape from Corporate America*

"Reinventing myself—the result of a painful pink slip—was my single best career move. It could be yours too with this smart, straightforward guide. If you're struggling to figure out what makes you tick—or how to turn those strengths and passions into a fulfilling career—dive in and let Alexandra Levit lead the way." —Tory Johnson, CEO of Women For Hire

"Alexandra Levit is *the* career guru of our times! Part adventure ride, part career guidebook, **New Job, New You** is outstanding and could not come at a better time for the many Americans who suffer work related frustrations."—Lisa Haneberg, author of *Two Weeks to a Breakthrough*

"This well-sourced guide can help nearly every working adult, since we all entertain thoughts of switching careers at some points in our lives. **New Job, New You** could become the wisest investment for reshaping your professional life!"—Tom Musbach, editor, Yahoo! HotJobs

"Written by seasoned career expert Alexandra Levit, **New Job, New You** is the perfect book for people who feel lost and are looking for a change. It sprinkles in just the right amount of motivation and practical advice to get you off the dime."—Ressler, co-author of *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It*

"At a time when the future is uncertain and career reinvention is widespread, **New Job, New You** has the secret formula for opening your eyes and empowering you to make a difference in your life. "—Dan Schawbel, author of *Me 2.0*

"Career changes aren't easy, and now thanks to Alexandra Levit, no one has to undertake one blindly. In **New Job, New You**, Levit provides both interesting and varied examples of successful career changers interspersed with inspirational and practical advice. A must read for anyone seeking a career change in this difficult economy."—Diane K. Danielson, CEO of DowntownWomensClub.com

"I can't wait to give this book to everyone I know who's whined about hating their job or wondered how to pick themselves up after a devastating layoff. Alexandra Levit takes the guesswork and fear out of creating your own self-styled career, even in a shaky economic climate. The checklists, resources, and in-your-face quizzes are worth the cover price alone."—Michelle Goodman, author of *My So-Called Freelance Life* and *The Anti 9-to-5 Guide*

"In **New Job, New You**, Alexandra Levit provides a wealth of information, ideas and inspiration for career changers in a wide variety of situations. This book combines Levit's expert guidance with courageous examples of real people who will motivate readers to take the leap into new careers of their own. I highly recommend it!"—Lindsey Pollak, author of *Getting from College to Career*

"**New Job, New You** is not just another career book - it is a must have resource for individuals at professional crossroads. Alexandra Levit combines thorough research, years of career coaching experience and a fresh perspective to the topic of career transition.."—Christine Hassler, author of *20 Something Manifesto*

"If you wake up every morning and say 'I love my job and love what I do,' then don't buy this book to read, but to give to one of your friends. If you can't make that statement, then read this book and start your own reinvention process."—Levy, CEO of Happy About

"Alexandra Levit's **New Job, New You** is a timely, comprehensive, and no-fluff guide that answers the all-important questions of career change. If you've ever wanted to reinvent yourself but haven't known where to start, read this book." —Guillebeau, author of the blog, "The Art of Non-Conformity"

"Alexandra Levit's **New Job, New You** should be handed out in unemployment offices, college career centers and chamber of commerce branches across the country. Anyone who dreams of starting a new career, but who is afraid to take that first step will find Levit's book priceless." —Maria Pascucci, founder and president of Campus Calm

"In these economically precarious times, Alexandra Levit's new book shows you how to rediscover what your career is truly supposed to be." —Barry Moltz, author of *Bounce*

About the Author

Alexandra Levit is a nationally recognized business and workplace author and speaker. A syndicated columnist for the Wall Street Journal and a blogger for HuffingtonPost.com, Alexandra has authored several books, including the popular *They Don't Teach Corporate in College*, **How'd You Score That Gig?**, and *Success for Hire*.

Alexandra makes frequent national media appearances and has been featured in thousands of outlets including the New York Times, USA Today, National Public Radio, ABC News, Fox News, CNBC, the Associated Press, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, and Fortune, and her articles regularly appear on the home pages of CNN, MSN, and Yahoo!.

Known as one of the premiere spokespeople of her generation, Alexandra regularly speaks at conferences, universities, and corporations including Campbell's Soup, CIGNA, the Federal Reserve Bank, McDonalds, and Whirlpool — on issues facing modern employees. Alexandra is also a global spokesperson for Microsoft and has recently been called upon to speak to corporate C-suite audiences and Baby Boomer and Generation X managers about leveraging the talent of the Millennial generation.

Alexandra has ten years of experience providing integrated marketing communications solutions for Fortune 500 companies and is also skilled at providing guidance regarding twenty-first century motherhood, human resources and general business issues, and entrepreneurship. She graduated from Northwestern University and resides in Chicago, IL with her husband Stewart and son Jonah.

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Chapter One

Family

The only rock I know that stays steady,

the only institution I know that works is the family.

---Lee Iacocca, business magnate

As a young professional, I was always told by my mentors that I shouldn't make a decision about whether to reconfigure my career to accommodate children until the first one arrived. "You can never tell how you're going to feel or what you'll want to do," they cautioned. Yet somehow I knew that I would always want to work without shipping my kids off to a -day--care center eighty hours a week. So in my -mid-twenties, little by little, I started creating a career that would allow me to be home a few days a week, with the ability to juggle my work and family lives as I saw fit. By the time my son was born, I was able to support myself as a writer and speaker. I work in my home office three days a week, and spend the other two at playgroups and music classes.

You might associate a schedule like mine with -self--employment, but the workplace is shifting in this regard. As Phyllis Furman recently reported in the New York Daily News, global consulting behemoth Ernst & Young provides a flexible work arrangement to 10 percent of its approximately three thousand New York area employees. Also, when American Express learned in a Center for -Work--Life Policy survey that -one--quarter of women worry they could hurt their careers by asking for flexibility, the company allowed select employees to customize their schedules to work -twenty--one hours a week without negatively affecting their

shot at advancement.

Some fields, however, simply don't permit individuals to put their families first, and this is a major reason that workers who are concerned about children, spouses, and even aging parents decide to change careers. In this chapter, you'll meet some inspiring individuals who took their schedules into their own hands and - custom--created careers that are compatible with spending precious time with loved ones. They are some of the happiest people I came across while working on this book, and they are as proud of their ability to achieve balance as they are of their professional endeavors. I'll close with some guidance about how to adjust your own career---either by transitioning to a more -family--friendly field or by taking advantage of new policies where you are---in order to make the people waiting at home a higher priority in your life.

Leslie

From -High--Tech Saleswoman to Novelist

A -high--achieving student in the Wharton undergraduate program at the University of Pennsylvania, Leslie was assured a bright future. Shortly before graduation, minority recruiters from Xerox Corporation attended a large job fair in Philadelphia and literally picked Leslie out of a lineup. "I chose a career in -high--tech sales because I had monster student loans and the pay was the best," Leslie says.

Over the next several years, Leslie sold "-big--box" equipment for Xerox, -Hewlett--Packard, and Digital Equipment Corporation--com-panies with the most professionally recognized sales forces in the country. "I learned almost -military--like discipline, how to have a thick skin when it comes to rejection, and how to understand business models, profits, margins, and ROI [return on investment]," she says. "I also figured out how to sell based on listening to what customers were really saying they needed, and by the end, I could sell anything."

Leslie, married and with a newborn, was a supermom. The stress took its toll, but Leslie continued on her path as a driven sales executive until her daughter was in an unthinkable accident at her -day--care center. "My -six--month--old was left in a room with an ironing board and a hot iron," Leslie recalls. "She pulled on the cord and spilled scalding hot water on herself. I left my job that day and went to sit vigil at the hospital. She lost three fingers and had seventeen surgeries."

These were the days before the Family and Medical Leave Act, and representatives from Leslie's company--- she dubs them the "Men in Black"---came to visit her and "nicely" laid her off. "There I was, unemployed, on the verge of divorce, with no legal settlement because the -day--care provider didn't have insurance," she says. "The day I looked down at my helpless, burned little baby with -third--degree wounds all down her left arm and hand, I decided that no matter what, I wasn't leaving my child in the hands of anyone else."

Financially, though, Leslie was in trouble. "I had been making six figures, and then, nothing. It was like doing a -high--wire act and suddenly realizing that there's no net," she says. "I liquidated everything I had, bled out savings. I started a gift basket company, did people's resumes, wrote grants, and hustled a bit as a consultant." Then Leslie saw an ad in a magazine for a -short--story contest. The winner received \$2,500 in prize money. "My goal was very -short--term---write the damn story and win."

Leslie never submitted that short story because it was too long, but she kept working on it and before long, she had a book. Without Leslie's knowledge, her girlfriends sent the finished manuscript to publishers, and before long she was offered her first deal. She had found a fulfilling career that she could have as a -stay--at--home mom, and she jumped on it. Leslie began writing like there was no tomorrow, eventually penning

more than thirty novels and eleven novellas in a wide range of genres from romance to crime suspense. She recently won Essence magazine's Storyteller of the Year Award and transitioned into the hot new genre of paranormal fiction with her -twelve--book Vampire Huntress Legend series.

Leslie's experiences caring for her daughter have infused her writing with compassion and empathy. "My child was badly hurt, but she is relatively normal save the loss of part of her hand. I saw people grieving because their children were dead or worse, so horribly disfigured or mentally damaged that there was no end to the nightmare," she says. "I also realized that the deck is stacked against people who are experiencing hardship, and that you're not necessarily a deadbeat because you can't pay your bills. We are all close to being a paycheck or two from homelessness, and when I see people begging in the street now, I'm not so quick to walk by them."

Leslie, who writes under several pen names ([www.leslieesdaile](http://www.leslieesdaile.com)

banks.com), feels blessed to have survived what she terms a frightening, sobering, and humbling journey that has resulted in greater accomplishment than she ever imagined. "I have the best job in the world. I'm a -full--time author and I get paid to create entertaining stories," she says. "I work at my own pace and am home for my daughter whenever she needs me. I go to a lot of great conferences, but when I'm not traveling, I keep the same schedule: see my child off to school in the morning, walk the dog, answer email, and begin editing. I end my day when my daughter comes home so that we can eat dinner together, and then when she starts her homework, I sit down and let my creativity flow."

Many people write novels, but few make enough money at it to be able to stay at home and watch their children grow. Leslie credits her endurance, discipline, and a strong sense of her own spirituality. "I can't tell you how often I have conversations with God," she says. To those who are looking to change careers, she advises, "Start now before you are forced to. Do a little bit every night to chip away at the task. And begin your new career as a sideline to your regular job. That way, you'll have a trial period to gain strength and financial stability before you jump ship."

J.B.

From Automotive Marketer to Toy Producer

As a Detroit native, it's no surprise that -thirty--nine--year--old J.B. got his start in the car business. Shortly after graduating from John Carroll University with a degree in marketing, he went to work for the Caribiner Group, where he coordinated corporate meetings for large automotive clients. "These were -multimillion--dollar productions in which automotive executives would introduce new car models to their sales forces and dealers," explains J.B. "It was a great experience on many fronts. I got to be a part of the inner workings of some of the most famous companies, and I learned the essentials of communication by working with some of the best speechwriters, coaches, and presentation creators out there."

J.B. wanted to expand his marketing horizons beyond meeting planning, however, so he took a job at DMB&B, a more traditional firm that represented Cadillac and Pontiac. Responsible for catalogs and dealership collateral materials, as a young -twenty--something J.B. found himself managing multifaceted projects. "I worked with the client engineers on catalog content, as well as our art directors, copywriters, graphic designers, and print production staff," he says. "It was a challenge figuring out how to get the most out of all of these people."

J.B. spent the next few years continuing to market cars. His job at DMB&B was followed by a direct

marketing position at advertising powerhouse -McCann--Erickson, and then by a role as a marketing manager at a division of General Motors. Of the latter job, he says: "I was exposed to so much because the company was exploring different areas of growth, and backed by GM we had the resources to get things done. It was fantastic_._._that is, until it got too big and too bureaucratic."

At the age of -twenty--eight, J.B. married his college sweetheart, Michele, with whom he'd had a -long--distance relationship. They began building their family soon afterward, welcoming daughter Anna and son Konrad. "There's something about having children that makes you picture your life down the road," says J.B. "I knew I didn't want to be marketing cars when my kids were in college. I wanted to be on my own, and to be able to participate in my kids' lives while they were growing up."

J.B. decided that the best path to entrepreneurship would be a master's degree of business administration from Babson College, near Boston. "I needed a new network and the right MBA program could help me develop that," he says. J.B. was making a career change in part because of his family, and his family was what saw him through the obstacles. "Without their emotional support and -day--to--day help, I never would have made it through the long road of GMAT testing, applications, choosing where to go, selling the house and most everything in it, moving, and downgrading our lifestyle."

Indeed, the pressure was on. J.B. and Michele had two more children, and J.B. felt compelled to make sure the family was comfortable financially as soon as he finished school. The couple was also devastated by the sudden deaths of two of their siblings, including the sister to whom J.B. was closest. "These losses further cemented my decision to pursue the dream of having my own business. After all, you never know what's going to happen. We could all be gone tomorrow."

In the Babson MBA program, J.B. met Antonio -Turco--Rivas, a classmate who shared J.B.'s desire to involve his family in doing what he loved. Both being parents, J.B. and Antonio realized that home is one of the key environments where children play and learn, and they saw a need to improve play furniture. J.B. and Antonio sponsored research with the Rhode Island School of Design, and the result was their new company's flagship product, the P'kolino Play Table. Before they knew it, the two had finished their degrees, moved to South Florida to be closer to their extended families, and were getting their children's input on new designs for chairs, benches, desks, and storage containers.

Today, J.B. is in charge of the product development and marketing functions for P'kolino (www.pkolino.com). "I've always been a closet engineer, so I love being -hands--on, working with the prototypes," he says. "And things are going well. We've recently started working with large clients like Babies 'R' Us, and moving many of our products overseas. But Antonio and I, we're never satisfied. We want P'kolino to be a household name."

What J.B. is satisfied with, though, is his lifestyle. "I'm in total control of my career, and that means no more useless face time---feeling like you have to be in the office even if your work is done," he says. "I'm in a situation where I can keep on top of things while making time to take my kids to school and socialize with the other parents. I never have to apologize to anyone for making my family a priority."

J.B. encourages others to acknowledge that what is important to your family should have an impact on the career you choose. "You can create any type of life you want, but it will often require stepping out of your comfort zone," he says. "Just remember that the fear of regret is stronger than the fear of failure."

Erica

From Television Ad Manager to "-Mom--preneur"

Erica always had a special hobby that wasn't shared by other kids her age. Transfixed by commercials instead of television shows, Erica spoke in taglines as a child. She spent her teen years shadowing her uncle, who was an art director at an advertising agency in Houston and in college she worked at radio and television stations. "I got an internship building content and advertising opportunities at an America Online subsite, the Family Travel Network," says Erica, now -thirty--three. "But when I began looking for a -full--time job in advertising or marketing I found few options. Then, one day I heard that a local radio station was recruiting telemarketers to staff a new phone center for listener research. I impressed the team and was offered an account executive job for one of their newest radio stations, -WRBT--FM in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania."

Erica had never considered working in sales, but she figured she'd take the job to learn as much as she could and position herself for a promotion into the marketing department. Ironically, though, Erica quickly discovered she had genuine sales skill---and that she hated the radio business. She accepted a sales job in television at the CBS affiliate in Harrisburg and immediately felt at home. "I studied my clients, their competitors, and their messaging," she explains. "I knew that if I could create campaigns that were -solution--based rather than just negotiate spot schedules, I would earn business."

In the two years Erica worked for CBS, she got married and gave birth to her first daughter. The new family relocated to Washington, D.C., where Erica continued her television sales career as an account executive with -WUSA--TV, Gannett's CBS station, and then -WRC--TV, the NBC affiliate. While at NBC, Erica grew her account list and became one of the top billers at the station.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Byron Jorgensen:

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James Henderson:

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