

# Test driving careers before making a change

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Why do we test-drive cars? The manufacturer provides us with all of the specs. We can see the colour. We know how a car works and if it has the features we're looking for. In this day of one-click purchases, why is it that we still insist on taking our new wheels for a spin before we commit?

For most of us, cars are not an impulse buy. We likely have known for a while that we need something new. We read and talk with friends to get recommendations. We research and comparison shop – or find a service that will provide us with reasonable pricing.

But no amount of reading and talking and researching and thinking can let us know how it feels to be in the driver's seat of one vehicle versus another. For that, we need to actually get in and go for a spin.

In this sense, careers are like cars. Making a change involves commitment, investment and knowledge of what you need. But all the reading and talking in the world can't possibly prepare you for how the new role, job or industry will feel.

In a recent blog published by Harvard Business Review, Bill Barnett encourages mid-career and legacy career changers to try out a new job before taking the leap. This hands-on approach to career change is a growing trend among boomers and mid-career professionals.

As Canada's leading career test-drive provider, Challenge Factory has been matching clients with experts in over 160 fields for 1 day career test drives since 2009. Similar programs are available across the country for individuals, companies and governments. These focused days allow you to experience first-hand what a new career will be like, well before you give notice, invest in training or announce to your network that you're heading in a new direction.

Barnett rightly points out that these career test-drives are seductive. Trying something new is invigorating. However, just like with cars, you don't need to drive every vehicle on the lot to know which one you really want. You must prepare to make the best use of your test-drive time.

In May, Steve Craig spent a day test-driving a new career in public relations with Keka DasGupta, President of [Precision Marketing Group](#). He used the day to fine-tune his plans for launching his own business, The Grumpy Penguin — a content writing services company aimed at small business owners, and scheduled to open this summer. Steve wrote about his career trial, and how it impacted his decision to take the leap into entrepreneurship, on his company's [blog](#).

Just like trying out a new car, a test-drive can help you choose your new career. It's about comparing specific criteria, performance and features, and helps you test assumptions and better understand your new company's work environment.

*Lisa Taylor is the President of Toronto-based Challenge Factory, the only company in Canada where you can test-drive your next career. Challenge Factory provides individuals and companies with innovative talent and career programs targeting new graduates, mid-career professionals and Boomers seeking Legacy Careerstm. With clients across the country, Lisa is often called upon to speak and write about topics related to career transition, employment trends and workplace demographics. Website: [www.challengefactory.ca](http://www.challengefactory.ca)*

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