

Turn that hobby into a career

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Business consultant by day,
photographer by night.

That's how Michael Marmur started out — now he owns pinpointnationalphotography.com and has parlayed his hobby into a lucrative career that reaches across Canada.

If you're thinking of making a career change, consider putting your passion to good use — “but do it slowly. Ask yourself: ‘Will someone pay me to do what I love?’” stresses the Toronto-based entrepreneur.



Photo by Supplied

“Don't just abandon your day job. Test it out on weekends and at night and build up business — you have to get creative in exploring ways to drum up business.”

Lisa Moore packed in her sedentary administrative desk job to get others moving with Be Moore Fit in London, Ont. “It's so much more rewarding — and it's a great feeling to get up in the morning and love what you do!”

Moore got certified as a personal trainer and also taught cardio kickboxing while holding down a full-time job. Now she trains clients in their homes or offices, as well offering corporate boot camps.

Aligning passions with the ability to generate income is popular, says executive coach Janice Gair. “It's also very popular in considering your retirement planning — people want to know how they can do what they love and supplement their income.”

Gair herself took her interest in mentoring others and launched janicegaircoach.com: “After 20-plus years of working, with 10 years in the C-suite, I decided to leave the corporate environment to focus on my passion for helping others achieve their leadership potential.

“My ‘encore’ career as an executive coach has given me the joy of seeing many young leaders identify their personal leadership style, own it and take their place at the corporate table,” says Gair, a certified executive coach based in Winnipeg.

According to career development expert Lisa Taylor, “some of our clients call this goal ‘purpose with a paycheque.’ Many have spent their career within defined corporate structures and are now looking to take their experience and apply it to problems that they find personally interesting.

“For some, this relates to a specific social cause. For others it includes a passion for the arts. Still others seek to solve technical or operational problems that personally impact them, their family or their community ... we find that career changers in their 40s, 50s and 60s are also seeking roles that are both personally meaningful and professionally rewarding,” says Taylor, president and founder of Challenge Factory and the CentreForCareerInnovation.com.

According to Gair, there’s a lot to gain: You are living your passion, and sharing what you love. Self-esteem gets boosted as you are validated in a financial way.

Taylor adds that you’ll have more energy for your work and in your life as you focus on activities that are meaningful. “It doesn’t mean that it is easy — and the hours can be long — but you are working for something that you feel matters, and that makes all the difference.”

But there are drawbacks too: Turning your passion into a career might turn into too much of a job, adds Gair. “If it’s commissioned work, your creativity may be hindered.”

And it’s not all fun and games: “There are now administrative and accounting requirements to manage while running a business.”

Before you quit to make money from your hobby, Taylor advises to consider your needs and how they will be met during the transition and in the future in this new role, including financial needs, meeting family obligations, what kind of benefits do you need, how long a commute can you tolerate, do you need to be in charge or follow, do you like to work alone or with others.

Be clear about your talents, she adds “Do you have the talents required to succeed in the sector as a professional?” Know your market and be sure to make a transition plan. Figure out what training, networking and building you need to allocate time and resources to, so you are ready to make a solid move.

Got an interest? Consider these careers, suggests career expert Lisa Taylor:

- A passion for organizing: Project management, home organization services, virtual or personal assistant roles, event planning
- A passion for sports: Retail, coaching, club management, tournament co-ordination, team-building consulting, personal training

- A passion for technology: Consulting, app development, technology sales, teaching, quality assurance testing, technical writing
- A passion for the environment: Policy development, corporate social responsibility, product development, research and analysis

Take that hobby and make money, according to career coach Janice Gair:

- Sewing: There is a shortage of this skill now. Stop by your local dance studio, and get on the team as a seamstress.
- Carpentry/Woodworking: Build or repair furniture, even restore antiques.
- Dog Walking: Ever seen that person at the dog park, walking six dogs at one time at approximately \$20 per hour? “If loving pets is your hobby, then being an official dog walker may be your ticket.”
- Musician: Share your love of music by teaching or tutoring.
- Photography: Sell locally or online; bridge into graphic design if you have the skills.
- Personal Training: Love to work out? “Bring the gym to your clients’ home. Those working parents who have endless commutes and commitments will thank you for it.”

