



SPECIAL TOPIC

Unconventional Jobs

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

For students seeking a non-traditional or alternative career path, focus tends to be more lofty and more adventurous. These students are willing to take a chance on the road less traveled and pursue something fun, unexpected and exotic. These students want more than a job. They want more than a career. They are seeking something that is more in line with their life's calling.

You may be one of those students seeking an opportunity that is different from your peers. It might be something in the creative field, in the non-profit sector, in the skilled trades, something overseas, or something more freelance and entrepreneurial.

There are careers and then there are dream careers. There are things you always wanted to do in life, and then there's the cubicle! Lesser-known alternative careers may offer lower pressure, better hours, and greater personal satisfaction.



Why is important for some students to seek an unconventional career path? Because your career path doesn't necessarily have to look like anyone else's. You can be different and unique and pursue your own special career path.

For the most part, we are all told the same thing about getting a job. Go to high school, go to college, get your degree, find a stable job in an office with a pension and benefits. But what if at the end of the line, after doing everything you were told, you realize that the conventional path isn't for you?

But, taking the unconventional route requires planning. It requires that you do more than wish and hope and rely on luck. To reduce any risk and help ensure your success, it requires that you do your homework, gather information, explore your options, and get experience while you're still in school.



The problem with being young and not knowing what you want to do with your life is that sometimes you simply don't know what options are available. There could be a job out there that perfectly suits your skills and desires, but, depending on what you've been exposed to, you may have never come across it.

UNCONVENTIONAL CAREER PATH

It's not about the degree. It's about how you apply it. You can obtain an education in any academic major, but you have to extend that education beyond the classroom to be able to translate your knowledge into something career-related. Your academic major may be very broad in its scope, so it can potentially relate to a range of possible careers. You should select a major based on your career goal. It will serve as a foundation for that career but it will not provide everything you need to pursue that career until you apply the knowledge in a real world setting.

Research your field thoroughly. Become the resident expert on the occupation you are pursuing. Know the requirements, qualifications, and expectations of your field of interest. Be knowledgeable of the functions and responsibilities. Know the relevant skills and competencies. Know the language and culture of your field of interest. Know the trends and challenges.

Talk to people in the field. It's easier to enter your field of interest if you have access to insider knowledge. Obtain information and advice from people who work in the occupation and industry you're interested in.

Build your relevant skill set through experience in any setting. Increase your knowledge and competencies in any number of transferrable skills. Even if you are not getting direct experience in your specific field, you can easily build specific relevant skills through indirect experience in other settings.



If you are interested in working in a medical lab and the field requires research skills and experience, you can obtain your initial experience by getting a research position at a library or a university. If you are interested in sales, you can begin obtaining the necessary skills and experience by working in the hospitality field, as a waiter or customer service associate. If you are interested in the finance or banking field, you could begin by working part time as a teller or by serving as the treasurer of a campus club or organization. If you're interested in the computer field, you can begin by managing creating and maintaining the website of a campus club or organization. If you are interested in being a star, going into the entertainment field as an actor or singer, get experience anywhere and as often as you can through campus musical and theatrical productions and in local entertainment venues.

Gaining experience and building skills is key to your career credibility. And the experience you gain can be fulltime or part time, it can be paid

or unpaid, it can be official or unofficial, it can long term or short term. You can gain experience through extracurricular activities, campus clubs and organizations, part time jobs, volunteer community service, and internships.

GEAR UP FOR THE JOURNEY

Plan ahead. It is one thing to ask "What can I do with this degree?" as a freshman. And quite another thing to ask that question as a graduating senior. When you ask the question early enough, you have sufficient time to explore your options, gather information, get experience, build your skill set, and become a qualified candidate with credibility. When you ask the question too late in the game, you are leaving your chances of success entirely up to luck.

Your crazy idea about a career doesn't have to be insane and unattainable. It's only foolish if you don't do what is required to make it work. Be smart about taking the road less traveled. Be realistic and intentional about your preparation.

Ask yourself. Are you doing the job you do because you like it or because you think it's what you're supposed to do? Your job should satisfy you, not the expectations of others.

Are your career goals based on money only? Are they based on prestige and status? Are they based on ease and convenience? Or are they based on your personal mission? Are they consistent with your passions and talents? Are they aligned with your values?

Do you possess the necessary skills and competencies? If not, how are you going to obtain them? Do you have sufficient knowledge? If not, how will you gain it? Do you have the required level of experience? If not, what will you begin doing now to start building your experience?



Do your homework. How much do you know about your options and how will you gather the

information you need? How much do you know about the field you want to get into? How much do you know about the industry? Know what you're getting yourself into. Be informed.

Reality check. Jobs in the skilled trades are rapidly opening up as Baby Boomers retire and only a small portion of young people have the skills to fill them. 60% of all jobs are in the skilled trades. And they pay big bucks!



UNUSUAL AND ATYPICAL

From the crazy to the cool, the serious to the silly, there are a variety of ways to pursue a career that you might never have heard of. Perhaps because of their liberal arts education, some people have forgone the most common career routes and have decided on something a little more abstract, a little more off-the-beaten-path, a little more unconventional.

ALTERNATE CAREERS

You love to teach but prefer adult students to kids... consider being a corporate trainer. You're a wiz at finance and investing but wary of Wall Street... consider being a personal financial advisor. You have great skills as an engineer but you also like people... consider being an engineering (or technical) sales representative. You love investigating but you'd rather wear a lab coat than a badge... considering being a forensic science technician. Healthcare is your passion but you don't want to be a doctor... consider being a nurse, medical technician, physician assistant, or a dentist. You want to be a lawyer but you don't want to work for a high pressure law firm... consider being a corporate attorney. Architecture is your passion but you're a little more laid back... consider being an urban planner. You have excellent sales abilities but you want to sell a product you believe in... consider being a non-profit fund raiser.

SOME GOOD EXAMPLES

Corporate trainers teach employees skills, technologies and protocols. A bachelor's degree is required. A technical, business or psychology background plus a certificate are helpful. The median training and development specialist salary was \$55,150 in May 2011, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Personal financial advisors are often self-employed, so you'll need entrepreneurial skills. Strong math, accounting and problem-solving abilities are helpful. According to the BLS, the median personal financial adviser salary was \$66,580 in 2011. Income depends on the size and wealth of your client base, according to the National Association of Personal Financial Advisors.

Sales engineers are technical resources who articulate how business and technical employees can use technology and equipment. You'll need good communication skills, a bachelor's degree in engineering and some sales experience. Unlike most engineers, you'll be able to pull in (sometimes hefty) commissions. The median annual sales engineer salary was \$89,330 in 2011, according to the BLS.

Forensic science technicians investigate crimes by collecting and analyzing physical evidence. A bachelor's degree is required. Legal knowledge and lab experience are great assets. The median forensic science technician salary was \$52,180 in 2011, according to the BLS.



Radiology technologists work with doctors and perform complex imaging procedures such as computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging and mammography. An associate's degree and state certification are required. The median radiologic technologist salary was \$55,120 in 2011, according to the BLS.

Corporate attorneys work for companies and advise on legal rights, patents, contracts,

property interests, SEC compliance, reporting requirements and IPOs. The hours are not arduous and although you won't get super-rich, the pay is good. The median attorney salary was \$113,310 in 2011, according to the BLS.

If architecture is your passion but you want an under-the-radar career... Urban planners look at the bigger picture of land use and growth of urban and suburban areas. Local governments employ most urban planners. A career change from architecture is not simple. You'll need a master's degree from an accredited program in urban or regional planning or a related field, such as urban design, environmental planning or geography. The median urban planner salary was just over \$64,000 in 2011, according to the BLS.

You like to be in charge. You have great entrepreneurial skills. But you don't want to work for someone else... Start your own business and work for yourself. You can open a franchise, you can sign on with a small business incubator, or you can take out a loan to get started. In any case, be realistic, don't naïve. There are practical things you need to do to prepare. You have to have a solid idea of what kind of business you want to start. You have to possess the necessary skills in basic business, management, administration, marketing, and accounting. You have to know everything there is to know about the industry you're going into. You have to be able to write a business plan. And you should definitely spend some time learning the industry from the inside by actually working for someone else for a while.

UNCONVENTIONAL JOB TITLES

Bar Musician
Sign Language Interpreter
Sports Equipment Manager
Clinical IT Analyst
Skilled Trades
Community Organizer
Blogger
Personal Assistant
Forensic Science Technician
Holistic Healer
Newborn Photographer
YouTuber
Environmental Science
Website Designer
Medical Technician
Tour Guide
Event Planner
Animal Therapist
Corporate Attorney
Marine Biologist
Technical Writer
Restaurant Manager
Fragrance Chemist
Potter
Craft Beer Brewer

Green Technology
Web Content Finder
Machinist/Skilled Manufacturing
Movie Location Scout
On-Line Reviewer
Boat Captain
Social Media Technician
Barista/Coffee Specialist
Nanny/Au Pair
Professional Scuba Diver
TV Writer
Radiology Technologist
Flavorist
Flight Attendant
Music/Art Therapist
Criminal Investigator
Sommelier/Wine Broker
Makeup Artist
Bed and Breakfast
Financial Planner
Elder Care Provider
Cruise Director
On-Line Performer
Uber/Lyft Driver
Human Rights Advocate

Public Health Specialist
Theme Park Performer
Color Expert
Ski/Snowboard Industry
Dentist
Technical/Industrial Sales
Bartender
Personal Trainer
ESL Teacher
Software Developer
Caterer
Home Stager
Nutritionist
Physician Assistant
Model
Political Organizer
Park Ranger
Property Manager
Computer Hacker
Circus Clown
Urban Planner
Corporate Trainer
Chef
Speech Language Pathologist
Historical Interpreter