

**SPRING  
CLEAN  
YOUR LIFE**



There's no time like the present to check whether your career's on track or whether you need to adjust your course and set sail for new horizons

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# HAVE YOU FOUND YOUR DREAM JOB?

WHEN KINGSLEY WALLEMAN lost his job as General Counsel for Cable and Wireless (C&W) in San Francisco, he had little idea it would set him on a path towards career fulfilment and personal happiness. After a decade riding the gravy train of corporate law, buying and selling companies for firms based in London and the US, Wallman's own company was sold and he was given his marching orders.

"I didn't jump off a train that was headed down the track towards retirement," says the 42-year-old Sydney resident, who grew up in Toowoomba and studied law at the University of New South Wales. "My train derailed. My company was sold. I lost my job. Shit happens."

Indeed it does. But in the wreckage of Wallman's corporate career lay a golden opportunity. After C&W paid him out, he hit the road for six months, travelling around the US and Europe and – for the





first time in a long time – thinking about where his passions lay and what he wanted to do with his life.

Three years later, Wallman, together with his architect partner Genevieve Lilley, is the owner of boutique gemstone jewellery store Venerari in Sydney's prestigious Strand Arcade.

After a tough transition that involved going back to school to study gemology with people half his age, moving back in with his mother, the birth of a second child and a very lean first year, the shop is starting to generate some serious word of mouth and Wallman is now deciding where he should open a second one.

## NEW TRACK

Career change. It's a phenomenon of our times and chances are you've looked around your office, workshop, laboratory or building site at some point and thought "What am I doing here?" or even "How did I get here?" According to Mike Creagan, author of *Surfing Your Horizons* (HarperCollins, \$29.95), a staggering 88 per cent of Australians don't feel fulfilled in their jobs, while a report by global human-resources company Morgan & Banks in 2000 found one-in-three people regret their first career choice.

While few of us have the luxury of taking six months off to think about what we really want to do, it's definitely something to which you should devote some time, even if just to make sure you're on the right track.

Perhaps you're pushing paper when you'd rather be pushing the limits of quantum physics? Or maybe you're clashing with colleagues when you should be challenging whaling ships? Do you leap out of bed in the morning or are you one of the automatons plugged into their iPods on public transport, wishing their train was heading anywhere but the office?

If it's the latter, it's not surprising. Our parents may have accepted their lot, but a more mobile workforce means jobs for life no longer exist, while technological advancement and greater education have given us more choices than any previous generation.

"Fifteen years ago there was no such thing as a windsurfing instructor," observes Lifestyle Strategist Ian Hutchinson, author of *52 Strategies to Work Life Balance* (Pearson Education Australia, \$49.95). "We have so many more options to choose from now."

He sees the increasing pursuit of career change as a result of people not knowing what they wanted to do in the first place – and pursuing wealth by default.

"Usually, the knee-jerk reaction is that if you get a good mark at school, you go and become a lawyer," explains Hutchinson. "Very few people get a good mark at school and then become an artist. It doesn't make much money and the quest for money is one of the reasons that people go into roles they're not satisfied with."

The consequences of an unfulfilling working life can be profound. If left unattended, an insistent nagging feeling can blow out into a full-scale midlife crisis that begins to affect other parts of your life.

"In this day and age you can talk about a person/job fit," says Melbourne-based organisational psychologist Dr Peter Cotton. "If there's a good fit, you tend to get positive spillover into the home environment, whereas if you have a poor person/job fit you get negative spillover. People go home disgruntled and unhappy and take it out there."

Before you evaluate your career path properly, you need to know what your passions are

So how do you know if you're on the right track – or if you should jump off the train before it reaches a tunnel?

## KNOW THYSELF

Before you can evaluate your career path properly you need to know what your passions are and where your skills lie. According to Hutchinson, passion is just "aligning your top skills and interests with the field that you work in".

You may already know your calling is to foment dissent in Third World dictatorships or become a juggler with Cirque du Soleil, but if you don't, consulting a psychologist to undertake an assessment can give you an idea of where your interests lie (take our "Get Psyched" test over the page). These tests measure specific psychological attributes, including personality, aptitude, motivation, abilities and career interests.

"It prompts people to start thinking about their career interests by answering a series of questions about how people actually make decisions about career," says psychologist and Managing Director of Australian Psychologists Press, Dr Martin Boulton.

He recommends that anyone looking to evaluate or change careers should undertake a comprehensive assessment using validated tests of personality, vocational interest and IQ, all administered and interpreted by a qualified psychologist or career counsellor.

"You might have someone who wants to be a brain surgeon. Their personality match shows that they like



## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

What's the biggest roadblock to finding your calling? You. "Get out of your own way," advises Andrew Banks, Managing Director of HR agency Talent 2 and co-author of *Achieving Your Dream Career* (Viking Penguin, \$29.95). He identifies five excuses for not opting for a career change that don't wash. They are:

### I'VE GOT A MORTGAGE AND KIDS.

"Crap," says Banks. "These days you can have your résumé on the Internet anonymously and jobs can find you while you continue to earn a living."

### I'M TOO OLD TO SWITCH CAREERS.

"You are never too old to change and grow. There are many examples of flexible and open-minded 50- and 60-year-olds taking different jobs in different industries and having a ball, irrespective of the level of responsibility or income earned."

### THIS IS THE ONLY THING I'M GOOD AT.

"That's probably because you haven't tried anything else," observes Banks.

### I DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP THE PRESTIGE AND STATUS I ENJOY IN MY CURRENT JOB.

"Prestige and status are dangerous traps," warns Banks, "because if you think about them, they're all to do with the effort you used in the past to get there. They have very little to do with the future and where you are going."

### WHAT IF I FAIL?

"Every entrepreneur or successful person in a job will tell you that they've learnt more from their failures than their successes and this is the case for career moves," explains Banks. "The hot job market will give you a second chance, provided you gave the new career opportunity your best shot and can prove that."

working with people in a helping way and their interests say they like medical science, but their intellectual ability would make it very difficult for them to complete the training and perform the job," cautions Boulton.

Get all the ingredients right, though, and you could be on your way to the kind of nirvana envisaged by oft-quoted philosopher Confucius: "Find a job you enjoy and you'll never work a day in your life."

Idealistic bump? Hutchinson sides with the Chinese sage. "Get idealistic first then you can always come back to being really practical," he advises. "Most people don't give themselves permission to think big enough."

It certainly worked for Wallman, whose initial dream was to be an art dealer. After considering his options, he instead decided that the greater prospect of success and happiness lay with gemstones, an industry his family had been involved in for 35 years.

"The final decision was approached with an element of logic and emotion," Wallman recalls. "Sure, I had a passion for gemstones and modern design, but I also thought there was a big gap in the market here for a professionally run business."

### "DO OR DO NOT, THERE IS NO TRY." - Yoda

Whether you decide to stay put or change course, just make sure you're doing something. If you do decide to take the plunge and change careers, you're in for one hell of a ride. You're going to have to build new networks, perhaps go back to school and quite possibly survive on less money than you're used to. On the plus side, some of the skills that you've obtained in your current career are likely to be useful in your new one.



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And if you decide to stay put, it doesn't hurt to evaluate your career once in a while, because it shows you're plotting your own course. It may be that, rather than a drastic change, you instead find a different role within your current field.

"Some people make small changes over a long period of time, some make big changes over a short period," says Hutchinson. "If you feel like you're more in control of your destiny you'll ultimately feel happier."

And if you're someone sitting in your office right now, trying to ignore the nagging feeling that your talents could be better utilised elsewhere, don't wait for your train to derail, because it may just reach the end of the line.

"I like to think I would have had the guts to go and change," says Wallman, reflecting on his job loss. "I knew in my heart of hearts that one day I had to go and do my own thing. I was lucky."

## GET PSYCHED

Is your mind on the job? Take our test to find out if you're sitting pretty or whether you might be better off jumping ship. We asked Con Stough – Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience and Director of the Brain Sciences Institute at Melbourne's Swinburne University of Technology – to devise a composite test incorporating elements of standard personality and emotional-intelligence assessments. It's not a substitute for properly administered psychological testing by a qualified professional, so for advice on psychological testing, with regard to vocational choices, contact a qualified psychologist from the Australian Psychological Society ([psychology.org.au](http://psychology.org.au)).

Answer the following questions by indicating on a scale of zero to four – strongly disagree, zero; disagree, one; neutral, two; agree, three; strongly agree, four – the level at which you relate to the statements. Add up your score to find your rating out of eight in each personality dimension: zero to two = low; three to five = average; six to eight = high.

### Extraversion (EX)

"I prefer to spend time with other people rather than by myself."

"I am usually cheerful and happy"

Extraversion relates to how outgoing you are and your preference for spending time with people or by yourself. If you scored high in extraversion, you'll need to work in a team environment with plenty of contact with others. If you are introverted then you should seek a work environment that involves less group work.

### Emotionality (E)

"I am prone to worrying."

"I am an impulsive person."

If you scored high on emotionality, this might mean that you often experience anxiety and some level of impulsiveness. Avoid jobs that require very analytical decision-making or high stress. If you scored low on emotionality, you'll be able to work effectively in stressful environments, but may need help getting excited by your job and require encouragement to take risks in decision-making.

### Openness (O)

"I often daydream about new possibilities."

"I am interested in new activities."

Open individuals are more likely to be artistic and creative and seek careers that allow them to find new solutions to old problems. Individuals low in openness prefer to get on with their work, are not easily distracted and are interested in routine tasks performed on a regular basis.

### Agreeableness (A)

"When I first meet someone I believe that they are honest and good-natured."

"When I deal with others in a conflict situation I prefer not to challenge them."

This helps determine how you operate within an organisation, rather than the type of job you might find. Highly agreeable individuals show a high degree of trust and empathy, but can sometimes be regarded as naive. Individuals low in agreeableness will be more critical of the input of others and are uncomfortable in team environments – perhaps more suited to critical decision-making roles.