



## A CAREER THAT REFLECTS ALL OF WHO YOU ARE

### WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT DURING YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLORATION.

The pressure to find the "perfect" career has many students choosing one of two costly paths: they change majors multiple times, often adding time and expense to their undergraduate degree, or they avoid the matter entirely until they're forced to engage with it post-graduation. The culprit, for many, is that their values, skills, interests and material needs can rarely all be neatly captured by a single occupation.

In her book "[One Person/Multiple Careers](#)," Marci Alboher highlights the "slash career" phenomenon—simultaneously wearing multiple career hats that more thoroughly capture the complex identity of a professional. Accountant/Yogi/Internet Mogul and Educator/Entrepreneur are just a few examples of the "slash career" phenomenon taking hold of the modern world of work.

The phenomenon of slash careers is about more than just the titles that appear on your LinkedIn profile. As we call for an expansion of the categories of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and the many other ways that we identify, we are also pushing for inclusiveness in our work. In time, I'm confident that our organizations and institutions will reflect these new priorities.

For now, here's my advice for those who of you who want to build a slash career:

Set clear intentions for your roles and then let them evolve.

Think about the type of slash career you want and then begin developing the skills required for each role. If your slash career is Accountant/Poet, then you may want to start out as an accountant while writing poetry in your spare time. You might get a degree in accounting, follow that path through graduation and find a full-time job as an accountant. Then, once you're feeling comfortable in that role, your first goal toward becoming a poet may be to take a writing class at your local community center once per week. This will allow you to support yourself financially while moving toward your slash role.

The people you meet will push you to expand and refine your goals. The instructor in your poetry class may be so impressed with your work that she asks you to write something for a poetry collection she's created. That project may inspire you to start writing longer pieces and you may move into non-fiction writing. After you've set your goals, allow them to evolve over time.

While you won't get there overnight, I encourage you to start thinking of yourself right now as the slash career you hope for.

You don't have to wait until you've published six novels to consider yourself a writer. Titles can be aspirational.

Be realistic about the details.

Conduct careful research on each role to decide how to balance your time. You don't want any nasty surprises that could have been avoided by an hour of research. Different occupations have different schedules, projected growth rates, salary ranges and requirements. You want to make sure you're familiar with these so that you can choose two or three roles that fit together. [O\\*NET](#) is one of many sites that provide this information.

Through your research, you want to identify a suitable full-time or part-time career that will allow you to launch another role on the side. Writing and other work that can be done remotely are excellent supplements to a full-time, in-person commitment.

Leverage the time management skills you already have.

Continue to use those organizational skills you've refined in school or at home. Slash careers require the ability to proactively identify opportunities and to manage your time. Invest in a planner or a calendaring system (or several) so that you can keep the goals and tasks for each role separate and organized. This will be especially important as you're starting out and learning about each career.

Use technology to support your efforts—something as simple as integrating the calendar on your smart phone and laptop can help to streamline your work. There are a

wide variety of free productivity apps for smart phones and tablets that help keep projects organized. Try creating an Excel spreadsheet to track your freelance projects. This will allow you to organize client contact information, pay rates, and deadlines, all in one spreadsheet.

Remember the importance of baby steps as you accept new opportunities. There is a limit to how many projects you can take on and continue to produce high-quality work. Establishing a good reputation in these fields is key to making network connections and developing your skills. Don't sacrifice quality to rush toward a goal.

Use the support networks around you.

A slash career is an inherently creative endeavor, so path finding will inevitably be part of the process. Learn from the great work that's already being done. Look to people who are working toward the slash careers you're interested in. An informational interview will provide you with the opportunity to find out what their individual career evolution looked like.

To those who are in school, use your administrative departments—career services, tutoring, student life—to support your work. To recent graduates, get in touch with your career development offices. Many of them will still work with alumni, aware that career development is a lifelong process.

Reflect on your journey as it's happening.

Keep a career journal to track your evolving interests and goals. It can also be a great way to manage the complexity, and occasional ambiguity, of doing something unique. Ask

yourself what you enjoy about each role, what you find challenging and what other skills you may want to develop. You'll see patterns in your journal over time that will give you ideas about how your slash can evolve.

My own slash career evolved from a career journal I began in AmeriCorps. Over time, I saw that I needed the right mix of independent, analytical work, and social time, helping work to feel like I was using all of my skills. Simultaneously working in career development at a university and doing my own creative writing allow me to accomplish both of these goals.

As a Millennial myself, I certainly understand the drive toward engaging work. I also see professionals in other generations pushing for this same fulfillment. We're ready to take on complexity in our work, just as we grapple with complexity in our political and economic landscapes.

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