

THIS IS NOT THE CAREER I ORDERED

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a silver tray. The hand is wearing a white shirt cuff with a dark jacket sleeve visible. The tray is held horizontally, and the hand is positioned below it, supporting it. The background is plain white.

*Empowering
Strategies from
Women Who
Recharged,
Reignited, and
Reinvented
Their Careers*

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This Is Not the Career I Ordered!

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1

LEARN TO SING A NEW TUNE

1. TRADING STAGES: FROM OPERA SINGER TO CAREER COACH

Performing is like oxygen for me – I love the energy of a live audience and honed my talents to become an opera singer. I was a professional Diva – the good kind that is, since there is no room for inflated ego or bad attitude in the ultra competitive musical job arena. I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation as well: mastering foreign languages, embracing new cultures, and being a savvy self-promoter and negotiator. My musical career took off and I was living my dream.

Over the course of several years, the lack of financial security, benefits, and living the life of the proverbial starving artist was taking its toll, financially and emotionally. It takes a lot of money to sustain a career in the opera world since the voice lessons, musical coaching, and accompanist fees are a constant part of keeping yourself fit and at-the-ready for the next gig. Additionally there is the long distance travel for auditions, being away for months at a time, and the reality of missing my husband who was back at home. So, I knew I needed more in my life to make it complete; but how does an opera Diva with degrees in music find a new career?

What's a Diva to Do?

I would be remiss if I didn't own up to the fact that my personal career reinvention journey was an emotional and difficult one. I went

through the full gamut of emotions from fear to rage when my career did not go as I had planned. I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong until I finally realized that I wasn't doing anything wrong – perhaps this just wasn't the best fit. That epiphany did not come easily or quickly so my goal is to help make your career transition a smoother one.

You're Not in Kansas Anymore, Dorothy!

As I looked back, I realized that I was the type of kid that was incredibly focused at a young age. I fell in love early with performing, and developed the requisite thick skin, honed my craft, and earned an undergraduate and Master's degree in music to complete my package as a professional singer.

I paid my dues with blood, sweat, and tears, and in my mind I was destined for a glamorous life as a performing artist who would enjoy the jet setting travel and perhaps even taste a modicum of fame. When I took off my rose-colored glasses, I realized that truly living the artistic life was not what I expected. Even though I still loved performing, continuous travel became exhausting, as did living in hotels and billeted rooms in the homes of Opera Company board members. I was lonely.

Perseverance or Denial?

The life of a performing artist for me was feast or famine and while the feasts were delicious, the famines were extremely debilitating emotionally. While I did achieve recognition and earned accolades for the work I was performing, deep down I knew something was missing. For far too long, performer's guilt kept me from admitting what I was missing. I forged ahead, trying to convince myself that my next big break would bring the recognition and solvent lifestyle I really wanted. I was not about to give up – that went against every fiber of my being. I was bound and determined to make this work, come hell or high water.

Looking back, I realize that I was ignoring the red lights in my way, not seeing them as signs that I was possibly on the wrong path. I was always taught to persevere and a performer has to suffer for her

art, right? **Let me tell you very clearly that nobody has to suffer for his/her career.** You should be joyful in your work and once I came to terms with that notion, my entire world opened up.

Giving Up Guilt

After some serious soul searching, I realized that singing opera was something I did but it did not entirely define who I was as a person. That was liberating, but how was I going to make a living? Last time I looked, opera singers were not high on the list of sought-after nonmusical job candidates. Or so I thought....

Now, years after my personal career reinvention, I consider myself Jill-of-all-Trades since I have enjoyed a myriad of career opportunities in television, radio, and theatre using my voice and stage presence professionally. My career repertoire also includes event planning, marketing and communication, public speaking, employer development, recruiting, and career counseling. Now I can add author, journalist, and blogger to that list and I am confident that I will continue to add experiences that play to my strengths since I am empowered with the knowledge that I can do many things well.

A Grateful Diva

I am still performing, but now I don't have the stress of earning my living as a singer. I founded a professional singing group, *The Grateful Divas*, with fellow singer friends and I perform solo and ensemble shows to raise money for nonprofit and charitable organizations nationally. I'm now a Diva on a philanthropic mission and I have been liberated to enjoy myself as a musician in ways I never thought possible.

Currently, I have the great privilege of serving as a Director of Career and Professional Development at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law. I am coaching the next generation of lawyers to be ready for the prime time realities of the world-of-work. I also have a vibrant career consulting practice and speak nationally on career and professional development issues. In addition to my career reinvention blog, I also write career columns for the *Huffington Post* online and *The Chronicle* newspaper.

I truly believe that anyone can learn to sing a new tune and have proven it true in my own life. Taking what I have learned on a personal level, and with the myriad of clients I have worked with, I have created a navigational system for career change and reinvention. In this book, I will introduce you to amazing women from around the world and a variety of job fields who have mastered the art of change by recharging, reigniting, and reinventing their lives and their careers.

2. CAREER REINVENTION IS AN ART

In this tumultuous economy, many women have been forced to reinvent themselves due to downsizing and workforce cutbacks. Others have realized that their careers did not honor their values and they were on a live-to-work carousel and could not get off. We have a *new normal* in our present day career world with unemployment numbers higher than they were during the Great Depression, so I know how scary a career transition can be at this time. My goal is to empower you with strategies and action steps so that you can make career choices that suit your unique situation.

I have interviewed over 150 women across the globe for this project and several of their stories appear in this book. If you enjoy learning about how other women have reinvented themselves, many of these stories are featured on my blog, www.notthecareerordered.com. After talking with so many women, I was relieved to know that many of them also struggled with the guilt of giving up one career to pursue another, especially if their education or training supported the original career. I can tell you from experience, it's a scary step to take; but once you let go of the guilt, it will be very liberating and eventually, confidence-building.

The Reinvention Journey

We all have a myriad of transferable skills that we can utilize for a variety of careers regardless of our educational backgrounds. Heidi Roizen, one of the women I interviewed, shared that a career is like a marathon over the course of a woman's life. It's rare that we have the same career for the entire journey so consider new opportunities that