

Do you need a degree for career freedom?

By Cathy Goodwin

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Q. I hate my job as a computer consultant. The aptitude tests say I should be a recreation specialist. I like the idea but I dread returning to school for a new degree.

A. Before you invest in a degree, take a test drive. Find two or three people who are doing what you want to do and ask to spend a day or a week with them.

If you're still interested, visit a few schools or universities that offer degrees in your area of interest. Ask for names of people who have graduated one, three and five years ago.

Ask the alumni, "Did this degree help you get your job? Advance in your job?"
"Would you have done better with a degree from another school? Or would you have done as well with a degree from a lower-ranked or less expensive school?"

Ask students and alumni, not faculty. I've been there. Professors must support their own programs, even when they want to say, "You can do better elsewhere," or, "This program is a waste of your time and money."

And these days, anyone with a title like "Admissions Director" or "Enrollment Management" may be trying to make a sale, not offer objective guidance. If you believe your new career requires you to quit your job and begin a full-time degree program, investigate alternatives.

You may find an equally satisfying career that offers on-the-job training. No degree program offers a magic bullet. Ultimately you may win the job and career success by your power networking as well as your social, interpersonal

and technical skills.

Don't like one option? Try another.

There are many paths to career fulfillment, not just one.

There is no way for a single career coach, consultant or counselor to know the ins and outs of every career. You should be guided through an exploratory phase, not steered in one direction.

Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D. author, speaker, career consultant

"When career freedom means academics"

<http://www.movinglady.com/academics.html>

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