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3 Ways to Make Career Change Easier for ISTJ IT Professionals

By Meridith Levinson

Career change often involves risk and uncertainty--two things that tend to make people identified as ISTJs uncomfortable.

In May, I explored the reasons why layoffs and career change can be so tumultuous for IT professionals who are ISTJs. In brief, ISTJs, according to the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, tend to be risk-averse and uncomfortable with ambiguity. (ISTJ stands for Introverted Sensing Thinking and Judging.) Since career change always involves some amount of risk and uncertainty, it can create anxiety for ISTJs. (See my blog entry, [Why Layoffs Hit IT Professionals So Hard](#), for more information about the ISTJ personality type.)

But ISTJs can adjust to risk and uncertainty, says Sherrie Haynie, an organizational consultant with CPP Inc., an HR consultancy and the exclusive publisher of the Myers-Briggs personality type indicator assessment. In the process, ISTJs can learn to embrace career change—a vital lesson given the number of IT professionals who've been laid off during the recession and who may be forced to pursue different work by the tight labor market.

Here are Haynie's tips for ISTJs who are having trouble adjusting to a career change.

1. Accept that change will be difficult for you.

The primary reason ISTJs hesitate to make any kind of a career change is because they want to be ready for and comfortable with whatever change they make, says Haynie. The problem with that mindset is that ISTJs might never be 100% ready. Thus, they need to accept the fact that their stars may never fully align, and that change will be uncomfortable. If they accept this fact and find the courage to act despite their uncertainty, says Haynie, the benefits will follow and comfort will come.

2. Tackle change your way.

Haynie advises ISTJs to leverage their natural talent for planning and organizing. She recommends they make a list of all the challenges or problems related to their career change, then rewrite each problem as an objective or goal. Create action plans for achieving each objective and assign due dates.

3. Cut yourself some slack.

Haynie says that because some ITSJs have such high standards for their performance, they're more likely to beat themselves up when they make a mistake. This helps explain

to a degree why some ISTJs are risk-averse: If they "play it safe," they're less likely to make mistakes, notes Haynie. "They may have a track record of excellence, but they aren't trying new things," she says.

By contrast, Haynie adds, people who are more forgiving of their mistakes are generally more likely to take risks.

Since career change often involves doing something new and different (and therefore uncertain), perfectionist IT professionals who are ISTJs would benefit from cutting themselves some slack. Instead of berating yourself for making a mistake, view making a mistake as a learning experience—or better yet, as a success, since it's evidence of breaking out of your comfort zone.

Are you going through a difficult career transition? How are you coping with it?