



Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career

By Herminia Ibarra

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How Successful Career Changers Turn Fantasy into Reality

Whether as a daydream or a spoken desire, nearly all of us have entertained the notion of reinventing ourselves. Feeling unfulfilled, burned out, or just plain unhappy with what we're doing, we long to make that leap into the unknown. But we also hold on, white-knuckled, to the years of time and effort we've invested in our current profession.

In this powerful book, Herminia Ibarra presents a new model for career reinvention that flies in the face of everything we've learned from "career experts." While common wisdom holds that we must first know what we want to do before we can act, Ibarra argues that this advice is backward. Knowing, she says, is the result of doing and experimenting. Career transition is not a straight path toward some predetermined identity, but a crooked journey along which we try on a host of "possible selves" we might become.

Based on her in-depth research on professionals and managers in transition, Ibarra outlines an active process of career reinvention that leverages three ways of "working identity": experimenting with new professional activities, interacting in new networks of people, and making sense of what is happening to us in light of emerging possibilities.

Through engrossing stories—from a literature professor turned stockbroker to an investment banker turned novelist—Ibarra reveals a set of guidelines that all successful reinventions share. She explores specific ways that hopeful career changers of any background can:

- Explore possible selves
- Craft and execute "identity experiments"
- Create "small wins" that keep momentum going
- Survive the rocky period between career identities
- Connect with role models and mentors who can ease the transition

Make time for reflection—without missing out on windows of opportunity
Decide when to abandon the old path in order to follow the new
Arrange new events into a coherent story of who we are becoming.

A call to the dreamer in each of us, *Working Identity* explores the process for crafting a more fulfilling future. Where we end up may surprise us.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Aimed at mid-career professionals who have invested much in careers that may no longer fully satisfy, Ibarra's book challenges the traditional belief that a meticulous assessment of one's skills and interests will automatically lead one to discover the right job. In reality, she argues, "doing comes first, knowing second." This is not to say that a marketing director should abruptly resign to become a modern dancer; instead, defining the arc of the future is a "never-ending process of putting ourselves through a set of knowable steps that creates and reveals our possible selves." Most people will navigate a career shift at some point in their lives, and in this smart, positive guide, organizational behavior professor Ibarra shares the stories of 23 people who did it successfully. It's no 10-point plan for figuring it all out, Ibarra says, but rather a well-reasoned guide to making the decision of whether or not to stay in a career or move on. Readers who study the stories and their accompanying analyses will take away some valuable lessons on changing their way of thinking and being, going out on a limb, and building in a much-needed "transition period" during a career shift.

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From [Booklist](#)

Recent changes in the economy have left a large segment of the workforce at odds with their careers, with downsizing and disillusionment causing many to rethink their place in the corporate world or even consider abandoning a profession they no longer find fulfilling. Ibarra believes that, contrary to conventional thought, there is no "one perfect job" for each individual. We each experiment and find our way through trial and error, hopefully on the path of becoming who we really are. This book is designed to help those who are on that path but feel stuck because they feel they should be doing something completely different but don't know what it is yet. Rather than giving glib advice, Ibarra illustrates how to make radical transitions one day at a time through the examples of 23 people who have successfully made the plunge from just a career to a whole new lifestyle. This is about a transition to something more personal, more creative or spiritual, but always liberating. *David Siegfried*

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From the Inside Flap

"Herminia Ibarra has written one of the year's most important business books. Sophisticated and savvy, it challenges much of the conventional wisdom about how and why people change careers—and illuminates the experimentation, struggle, and joy that are essential to the process. For professionals contemplating a career change, *Working Identity* is essential reading."

—Daniel H. Pink, author of *Free Agent Nation*

"Through countless stories that inspire because they come so close to our own, Ibarra provides a world-shifting breakthrough in how we can go about refining our lives and changing our careers. She has given us long-awaited, enormously practical, and deeply insightful wisdom about the improvisational nature of our selves and our professional development."

—Ronald A. Heifetz, Cofounder, The Center for Public Leadership, Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government and coauthor of *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*

"Career and life transitions are as certain as death and taxes, and we are prone to face them with the same fear and anxiety. *Working Identity* affords us the courage of common sense. Ibarra's in-depth research and

sharp insights show that successful transitions occur one step at a time, by trial and error, experimentation, and incremental experience."

—Randy Komisar, Virtual CEO and author of *The Monk and the Riddle*

"Working Identity is one of those rare and wonderful books that combines deep knowledge drawn from careful research with practical ideas that can be put to immediate use. The book's message of hope and possibility—that it is possible to reinvent careers and lives—should be embraced by everyone thinking about transitions in today's turbulent world."

—Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard Business School, author of *World Class* and *Evolve: Succeeding in the Digital Culture of Tomorrow*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bertha Franke:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Along with book everyone in this world can share their idea. Books can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their own reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the storyplot that share in the publications. But also they write about the information about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some research before they write for their book. One of them is this Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career.

Paula Adame:

In this era which is the greater person or who has ability in doing something more are more treasured than other. Do you want to become certainly one of it? It is just simple method to have that. What you should do is just spending your time little but quite enough to experience a look at some books. On the list of books in the top collection in your reading list is usually Working Identity: Unconventional Strategies for Reinventing Your Career. This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Inclines can get you closer in getting precious person. By looking upwards and review this reserve you can get many advantages.

Theresa Tompkins:

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Kimberly Martin:

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