

August 1, 2003  
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### **Interview Questions and Answers – Nicholas Lore**

*Question: Do you have specific advice for mid-life career changers? I have a family, not to mention kids and lots of bills, which keep me from exploring too many different options. How do you make a change when you have a very clear framework in your life?*

Nick Lore: Clearly, it is easier when you are 23 and can stuff all your belongings in a knapsack. Most of the clients I have worked with over the past 20 years have been in the same boat you are in. Many of them have found a way to make changes, often profound ones, without sacrificing much. It is not your circumstances that keep you from changing. You could leave for Tahiti tomorrow, never to return. However, you are committed to certain aspects of the life you lead now, for example your spouse, kids, and paying your bills. Most of us talk ourselves out of going for it in some areas of our lives by buying into thoughts we all suffer from, thoughts I call “yeahbuts.” (see more on this in the next question.) When you have a bad case of the “yeahbuts,” it is difficult to see how anything but the status quo is possible. The “yeahbuts” seem completely and inflexibly real. You need to learn to lighten up and play in the realm of possibility. Write down all your “yeahbuts,” all the reasons you cannot change. Look into each one carefully. Brainstorm! Do your best to come up with alternative solutions. If you go through a thoughtful, step-by-step process, sort out what aspects of your situation you are truly committed to (the spouse for example) and which ones may be more flexible than they seem now, you will probably discover that you have more room to maneuver than is apparent now.

*Question: How do you break out of what you have done, when you are trying to get into something new? I am in the process of trying to reinvent myself, but everyone I talk to just harps on everything I have done in the past.*

Nick Lore: ask ourselves "Why do I do what I do, and why don't I do what I want to do but don't?" we come face to face with an age old question we humans run into whenever we stretch out into new territory, "Who or what is really running the show?" We would like to think we are making the decisions and acting on them proactively, that we are running our lives.

Everyone who regularly adventures into unknown territory, where the outcome is unknown and where they face a great deal of uncertainty, knows that what usually runs the show is equilibrium, or homeostasis. We keep doing the same thing, over and over and over, even when we would like to change, because, like all other animals, our inner machinery is reactive, not proactive.

When we imagine making a major change in our lives, and begin to get serious about doing something about it, we experience feelings of fear and an onslaught of “yeahbuts” that are part of our internal survival system, designed to keep us safe from danger. When you dance a jig inches from the edge of the Grand Canyon, your survival system sends out feelings of fear and thoughts like, "You idiot, you could get killed! Get away from the edge." Its design function is to get you back to nice, safe equilibrium, away

from the edge of the cliff. It is programmed to make sure that your body survives.

When you start thinking seriously about a career change that would give you a much more fulfilling life, similar feelings of fear and a whole string of “yeahbuts” are guaranteed to surface. Why? Because the system is again making sure you survive. This time it is not your body whose survival is threatened, but your identity, your sense of who you are.

The way it works is, whoever you have been and whatever you have done in the past is safe and known. You will survive. Anything you have not done or experienced is unknown and a possible threat to the survival of good old, same old you. So the system does its best to get you back to equilibrium. It tries to talk you out of going for it. "There's no reason to change careers. The salt mine isn't so bad. After all you get an unlimited supply of free salt."

The problem is that our “yeahbuts” often talk us out of going for it. They always speak for the past, for safety, for the same old, same old. The way to "break out" is to have something at stake that is big enough to motivate you to keep moving forward, to not get sucked in by the “yeahbuts.”

One way to do this is to look forward into the future. What will your life be like if you keep going in the same direction? How satisfying will it be? Then imagine what your life will be like if you really go for it, if you face the discomfort and the “yeahbuts” and design your life so it will be the way you really want it to be.

If one outcome looks good to you and the other doesn't, dig in more. Get clear just how painful it will be to stay on the path you are on now, and how great it will feel to do something you really enjoy. People head toward pleasure and away from pain. If you are really rock solid clear about the pain or pleasure you will experience, depending on your choices, you will have engaged the services of one of the most powerful allies you could have. The most powerful weapon we have to expose the “yeahbuts” for what they are, is to have a definite commitment to a specific result.

This is a weapon many of us use all the time. When I get up in the morning, having made a commitment to get to the gym by 7:30 to work out, I sometimes face a huge bombardment from the “yeahbuts.” Big ones, little ones, every last one brilliantly designed to talk me into staying in bed. But, because I have a very clear commitment to the results I will get if I work out regularly, I listen to my commitment, not my “yeahbuts.” That is the most effective way I know to break out of any habit, behavior or pattern, including your career at the salt mine.

*Question: About a year ago, I transitioned into a new career. I am now finding it is not interesting to me any longer. How do you move in a new direction when you have just made a big transition? Should I stick it out longer?*

Nick Lore: First, ask yourself: Am I committed to having a career that is personally interesting to me? If you aren't, then you don't really have a problem. You have a complaint, but not a problem. If you are, I think you would be wise to move to something you do enjoy as soon as possible. Don't worry that this short career stint may not look good on your resume. It will be a lot easier to explain what happened in an interview than it will be to explain to yourself when you get old why you did not keep going till you found something you love. I applaud you for your courage in making the move to this new career. But, as we all know, life is not always fair. I suggest that this time, you dig in a little deeper in considering what career would fit you best. There are many factors to consider. Do not assume that you will be able to make a good choice without seriously immersing yourself in these questions: How can I do the best possible job of choosing my future work? How can I make sure I am both highly successful and very satisfied with my work?

*Question: I have been thinking about a new career direction. I think I have isolated something that would be perfect for me, and fit in with my abilities. I may be jumping ahead, but why would someone be interested in hiring a career changer with no experience?*

Nick Lore: It all depends on the field you have chosen. Obviously, there are many technical fields that require a very specific background. You are not going to get a job as a brain surgeon without the proper education and experience. The vast majority of people who have jobs that we think of as "professional", learned on the job. Fewer than 50% of college graduates are doing something they prepared for in college. Many of them did what you are concerned you may not be able to do. Certainly there are still many hiring managers who hire conservatively, based purely on having the right stuff on your resume. But things have changed in your favor over the last few years. Many managers have loosened up and now realize that the best candidates are not necessarily the ones with the most perfect backgrounds. They are looking to find people who will be really excellent at the job. They are looking for people who have talent, the right kind of personality for the job, and a strong drive to succeed.

*Question: Do you think that when you are making a very big career change that it should be rooted in what you have already done to be successful, or is it possible to make a 180 degree turn and still come out OK?*

Nick Lore: What you have done to be successful in a career you do not want to continue with may not be the best raw materials to construct a new one with. It all depends. Each of us is born with a unique profile of special talents that we often do not fully understand and appreciate. When well combined at work, these talents are like instruments in a band, playing a sweet song in harmony. Most likely, you have used some of these talents in the work you are doing now. They would be very important to carry over to your new career. But, if what you mean by "what you have already done to be successful" is acquired skills or knowledge of a certain field, then perhaps not. Still, you may not have to turn 180 degrees. Instead of thinking about how far you may change from your present work, think of yourself as a designer, an inventor, the author of your life. Design your new career from the ground up. Ask yourself, "What am I absolutely sure will be important components of my future career?" Keep asking that question over and over as the days and weeks pass by. Write down everything you are now sure of. Then get to work inquiring into this question and adding new components you become sure of as you design your future step by step, piece by piece.

*Question: I know I need to do something new in my career life, but I don't know what. I seem to be interested a little in a lot of things, but not a lot in anything. I am a smart person, with a lot of interests. What is my problem?*

Nick Lore: Interests are only one of many component that are important to consider in choosing your career. Maybe you should consider a career that does not focus on one narrow area. If you are interested in many things, seek a career that allows you to spread your time among many different areas.

*Question: How do you know when and if you need a career change, or if you are just tired of your job?*

Nick Lore: This is just too big a question to answer fully here, or for most people to answer on their own. The elements that make up a satisfying career are multifaceted and complex. I recommend that you go through a specialized diagnostic testing program, which we offer at Rockport Institute and is also available elsewhere. These testing programs measure innate talents, natural abilities and personality traits. They are immensely helpful - partly because they are a powerful tool to use in the design of a new direction that fits like a custom made suit - but also because they get at the heart of how and why your present work may fall short.

*Question: What do you think of informational interviewing? I have been to seminars which talk about it, but I can't imagine anyone in real life wanting to give up their time to talk to me.*

Nick Lore: It is amazing how helpful people can be, especially when you have prepared yourself fully. The reason some people are not too excited at the prospect of giving an informational interview is that they have done it in the past with people who were obviously not prepared. Informational interviews are best done near the tail end of the career choice process, when you have narrowed your choices down to a very few, and after you have done A LOT OF RESEARCH! There are much better ways to find out the basic information on various careers. The time to use informational interviews is when you have already asked and answered the most important and most basic questions through other means, and then need to talk to people in the field to answer the more complex and difficult questions.

*Question: What do you think of career testing as a means of figuring out what you want to do? What should you expect from it?*

Answer: The point of any sort of assessment or inquiry you use in deciding what to do with your life is to help you see something very important about yourself that you do not see. Most career testing used by traditional career counselors focuses on interest testing. You have to know what you are interested in to be able to answer the questions. So, you do not really learn anything very useful. There is a kind of testing that I referred to in a previous question that is extremely helpful. This sort of testing program measures natural talents and innate abilities as well as personality traits. I think every person thinking about changing their career or fine tuning their present career should do this kind of testing, because it is so potent a tool in designing the best possible future career. We humans are so adaptable that it is quite possible, even common, to be successful in a career that doesn't really fit a person's talents and personality. But, if you want your career to sing and soar, you need to have a very clear sense of your own unique combination of abilities, how they fit together and what careers would be the ultimate best expression of them. This is very difficult to self assess. So, for that reason, I strongly encourage all of my clients to use this sort of testing.

*Question: Once you know what direction you want to go in, what do you see as the most successful way to get there? I'm especially stuck on how to handle my resume as someone in career transition.*

Nick Lore: Once you have decided on your direction, and can describe it clearly, you have completed your "What will I do" project. Your new project is to market yourself successfully and land the job. Your resume should be just one part of a well thought out marketing strategy. Your resume is NOT your employment history autobiography, it is an ad. That is all it is. A great resume does the same thing a great ad does. It communicates and demonstrates the following statement: "If you buy this product, you will get these direct benefits". I wrote a resume writing guide entitled "How To Write A Masterpiece of a Resume" which is on the Internet at < a href="http://www.rockportinstitute.com/resumes.html">the Rockport Institute. I think you will find it to be helpful.

*Question: For the last couple of years, I have been thinking about what I really want to do with my life, but I get overwhelmed every time I ask the question. Is there some other way to approach this? Am I asking the wrong questions?*

Nick Lore: You are asking one of the best questions anyone could ask. The problem is that you are asking a question that is too big to answer all at once, like "what is the meaning of life"? You have to break it down into smaller and more specific chunks.

*Question: I have read a lot of books that talk about reading things in the library about your new career. I want to do Internet work, but know that it changes all the time. How can I get the up-the-minute real story on my chosen field?*

Nick Lore: You just have to hunt around, master the art of using the Internet for research. The Web has more information about the Internet than it does on any other topic (except, of course, sex). Participate in appropriate newsgroups. There is one for nearly everything. There is probably one especially for left handed bagpipe repairmen. There is also a huge and constant flow of new information in books and magazines on the subject. Yes, everything changes at lightning speed. But, what you need to know about your career field is not moving so fast that it isn't in print.

*Question: I decided to become a consultant in my own business. The problem is that this hasn't been working out well, although I have been working hard. If a big career move doesn't seem to work, does that mean it's the wrong one?*

Nick Lore: That depends on why it isn't working. Ninety five percent of the problems people face when they become consultants is that they don't have enough work. They may love the subject matter and be enormously talented at providing solutions in that area, but not have a natural mastery of or much experience in marketing. If that is the case, and you want to be successful in consulting, you may just have to just buckle up your boots and learn to be an expert in a new field: marketing (or whatever is the missing part).

*Question: I am a new graduate, (this past December) and I have majored in computer science. Now that I have the degree, I am not sure it is really what I want to do. Is this something normal? Where do I go from here?*

Nick Lore: Yes, it is normal. In fact, if you asked a large sample of new graduates if what you say describes how they feel, more than half would agree. The big question before you is, what are you going to do? What to do next is decide to make a decision. Don't just head off in the direction you prepared for to avoid the uncertainty and difficulty of changing direction. You need to find a way to really dig in and design what you will do with your life. I feel a bit uncomfortable touting my own book "The Pathfinder" as the answer, but it or another book of your choice may be worth using as a guide to coach you through the process of deciding.

*Question: I am very good with numbers and math, and everyone has always said that is what I should do with my career. I don't think that is the direction I want though. Am I heading for trouble if I don't do something which fits in with my innate math ability?*

Nick Lore: What you call "math ability" is really a collection of aptitudes working together, just as "basketball playing ability" is a collection of various innate abilities working together in synch. You certainly do not have to do math to use your abilities fully. Many careers could make use of your abilities.