

# Time for a Career Change

## Suki Sou, 9 March 2022



Suki was Executive Assistant to the Chief Operating Officer at an international publishing house. When her manager moved on, Suki was offered a number of different roles at the company but knew it was the stage in her life when she had to make a change. Although there were attractive options on offer, she wanted something that was more about the essential. She had worked as PA for 15 years plus, all her working life.

In essence, Suki took a giant leap of faith a year ago and decided to leave London and her 9 to 5 corporate job.

She moved to the Peak District partly as a result of needing to make adjustments for the sake of her mental health; Suki suffers from anxiety disorder. She acknowledges that living in London was a big anxiety trigger. In addition, she had spent her career nurturing other people's careers, as a PA that's what you do.

### Weighing up the options

Suki knew it was time to reset. She had always tried to make time to make music because it was central to her sense of self and her wellbeing.

On leaving publishing, she was offered a severance package and worked with her career transition coach, Kris to determine her future career path. Suki didn't really know where to start in thinking about where her career might go. She had a particular interest in experimenting with different ways of arranging sound and tuning systems. She started by looking into how to become a piano tuner as a potential career change.

10Eighty coach Kris helped Suki to break down her goals with mind mapping, exploring her feelings about what she really wanted to do and the careers she might investigate.

One thing led to another and Suki came across the concept of commercial sound design; it's hard to make an income as a musician, but Suki had long been aware of how under represented East Asian music was in the sound design work. She did some research to see if there was space there for her perspective; the more Suki looked into it, the more she realised she had contacts who might be able support her projects.

Suki's sound design for Google



Suki's sound design on Instagram



Suki's vlogs on YouTube



## A fresh start

Kris encouraged Suki to contact people she knew and see what networking could achieve in terms of kick starting a new, experimental phase in her career. Work was out there and Suki soon won three exciting projects. The first was for a major international furniture brand to put together a piece work for a festival. This involved putting sound to animations - a fairly easy project Suki says, but a really great start to her new career.

More work came in and the scope of her projects widened. Working on a video concept involved sound design but then it split over into video and Suki was hired to put together the whole project, she was given a budget to make a piece incorporating both visuals and sound.

She was able to leverage her network to pitch for further work. Her next project for a consumer electronics launch meant she was asked to do sound design for the animation. It is a competitive field but unique perspectives are needed in sound design, and Suki has a good understanding of different cultural perspectives.

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## The challenge of change

It's a new way of working, Suki says: "You have to be out there and telling people what you are doing; it's a big change. I thought it would take a long time but it all kind of fell into place".

Suki's success shows the power of networking and the power of a compelling narrative. Career change is about being brave and resilient, not afraid to bounce back if something doesn't happen. Suki looked at lots of options, examined her goals and whether she would be able to sustain herself with this career. There were a lot of different steps to finding something that worked for Suki, and the guidance and encouragement of her coach helped her to find a logical route.

Suki loved her EA job, it was hard to give up a good role with a well-known brand, hard to let go and head into the unknown without a safety net. Managing that change was enabled by coaching Suki says: "it was like therapy for my career". Having made the decision, she put together a plan to help guide the process and encourage exploration.

## Building a business

Suki is building up a portfolio, making music and getting her sound heard so people can reach out to her. Suki's reputation is spreading via word of mouth, recommendations come in from work she has completed. It is difficult to keep the momentum going, you have to maintain motivation when you are looking for more work, and you have to keep working so that people see you and your art.

Suki started sound design at the end of 2021 and her income has been comparative with her full time job; but, her time is her own, she is happy to be working as her own boss, living in the countryside in a nicer place than she would have in London.

The lifestyle of a creative freelancer is a two way street, you have to show work and network to justify your existence, and self-marketing is important. In her previous role Suki was backstage but now has to put herself forward.

## The good life

Suki always loved music, studied piano from a young age, and spent a lot of time experimenting with different formats. Whenever there was time she made music, was in a band for ten years, travelled abroad touring and absorbing knowledge about music and new ways of making music, developing an interest in sound effects.

For Suki, storying telling is really important - what is it that you want to tell about yourself to the world, what do you want to tell about the world? She does this with music.

Suki describes her synaesthesia as amplifying the senses, making music from everything, engaging a new way of seeing the world and recording observations with sound. She didn't know that sound design could be a career and was afraid she would not be taken seriously, because as with all art -sound is subjective, but her new career has turned out to be surprisingly ok!

A blending of the senses, where imagery, colour and music/ sound translate into new concepts which can be challenging to understand, Suki finds ways to show people her unique vision. She finds working with other creatives really inspiring, the stimulation of new ideas and perspectives and she told us: "Now people see what I do and I am at the forefront of my own brand".