40+ Careers You've Probably Never Thought About

There are so many different and unusual jobs out there, but we are often "stuck" on those careers seen as more mainstream and acceptable. Teaching, business, science, computers, etc. Consider some little-known career paths that will ensure that you stay competitive and look forward to going to work every morning. Here are some examples of fascinating careers not often thought about:

**Landsman**

Landsmen constitute the business side of the oil, gas and mineral exploration and production team. Before a highway or pipeline can be built, or drilling for an oil or gas well started on private land, a lease must be signed with the landowner. A landsman is responsible for obtaining permission to drill an oil or gas well, build a pipeline, or construct a highway on a piece of property.

Working directly with the landowners, the landsman is in charge of acquisition of oil, natural gas, and surface rights for companies and individuals. He or she negotiates with the landowner and presents an agreement for the parties to sign. The landsman sometimes conducts research of ownership at court houses to determine the true owner or owners and to get the correct description of the property.

Research skills and basic legal knowledge are important to the landsman. Those undergoing landsman training will review leasing, title work, divided ownership, dry holes, royalties, servitude work, rights of oil companies and individuals, and other topics of interest. A landsman needs to be a good communicator, with an understanding of negotiations and property titles.

Landsman Opportunities:

**Company landsmen** negotiate deals and trades with other companies and individuals, draft contracts (and administer their compliance), acquire leases and ensure compliance with governmental regulations.

**Independent field landsmen** serve clients on a contract basis and are generally the industry’s contact with the public as they research courthouse records to determine ownership and prepare necessary reports, locate mineral/land owners and negotiate oil and gas leases and various other agreements, obtain necessary curative documents and conduct surface inspections before drilling.

**Independent land consultants** serve clients on a contract basis and much effort is directed to due diligence examinations required in the purchase and sale of companies and properties.

Four Steps to Become a Landsman:

**Step 1: Receive an Accredited Degree**

While there is no specific landsman degree, accredited 4-year bachelor's degree programs can greatly help students prepare for work in this industry. The AAPL (American Association of Professional Landsmen) accredits educational degrees that it deems suitable for those aspiring to become professionally certified as landsmen. These programs may focus on land and resource management, petroleum geology, business management, or environmental law.

**Step 2: Learn Real Estate Laws and Government Regulations**
Oftentimes, landsmen use courthouse records on property deeds while negotiating lease settlements. Knowing how the law effects these settlements is extremely important aspect of this occupation. Mineral rights, surface rights and other property owner resource regulations must be considered into a landsman's business proposal. Environmental and governmental laws in some circumstances may require a landsman to renegotiate contracts to fulfill these obligations.

**Step 3: Work as an Associate Landsman**
Gaining real-world experience is essential if a landsman is to become certified and advance in his or her career. Some gas and oil exploration companies offer college graduates job opportunities right out of school. These jobs focus on traveling to client properties and working with certified professional landsmen in assessing lease values and amount of property resources.

**Step 4: Become Licensed AAPL Professional Landsman**
By graduating from an AAPL-approved postsecondary program, a person satisfies the requirements for taking the AAPL registered landsman (RL) and registered professional landsman (RPL) exams. RL and RPL designations may be required of job candidates as an industry standard.

The certification programs consist of 50-60 hours of courses that deal with business, natural resource and lease calculations. At the end of the program, the course is summarized in an AAPL administered test, which covers all areas of landsmen work. Students who pass the test become registered professional Landsmen and need recertification every five years.

**Human Rights Activist**
Consider a career in human rights. One way to do get involved is to join a non-governmental organization, or NGO. The aim of NGOs is to implement positive social change; there are multiple types of NGOs and their focus can be of widely varying magnitudes, from local to international. Most people are familiar with wide-scale service NGOs, like the Red Cross, OXFAM, and Save the Children, but don’t make the mistake of thinking NGO work is limited to volunteering! While that’s an option, organizations are always on the lookout for researchers, analysts, and other kinds of specialists, and often provide internships and fellowships. Check out sites like Human Rights Watch and Idealist.org if you’re interested in a career involving saving the world.

**Fashion Consultant/Personal Shopper**
Among those who care about their appearance, many are born with amazing taste; some have to work for it. Fashion designers and consultants help those who can afford personal attention to transform their image. You can be the one to consult on hair, makeup, and fashion--and then be the one to take your clients shopping. Get career training through an associate's or bachelor’s degree program in fashion design. Top earners in the fashion design trades in 2007 took home $121,640 on average.

**Mobile Experience Architect**
The cool streaming videos and eye-popping CD covers that get delivered to the screens of millions of cell phones and PDAs each hour are designed to make you spend money. Information architects create the structure and mind-manipulating patterns (site maps) of each mobile delivery. You'll need to learn about marketing, strategy, and user testing through a degree program in computer science, Web design, or business. There’s even an IT certification for professional mobile architects. Salaries range into six figures.
Palliative Care Technician
A cross between M.D.s and hospice workers, palliative care technicians ameliorate symptoms, but don't cure disease for terminally ill patients. On top of medical training, technicians must be prepared to handle the legal, psychological, and ethical issues associated with death. Online courses like the End of Life Issues Program at the University of South Florida provide medical professionals with background to help patients and families cope with grief.

UX Designer
Trying to navigate a clunky website can be insanely frustrating. That's where a user experience (UX) designer can come to the rescue. In your capable hands, websites become more useful, usable and intuitive for every user. Average Salary: $54,000 – $133,000

Celebrity For No Reason
Let’s face it, in today's society being a celebrity is an actual career. How many times have you seen someone on the red carpet, getting the superstar treatment that has no talent or drive for anything other than a reality show? Sadly, these “celebrities” make thousands, even millions a year in public appearances. From dancing at nightclubs to going on talk shows, a check is always involved. Average Salary: $50,000 to $1 million plus

Urinalysis Observer
With the increase in urinalysis for employees and job applicants, people have found ways to cheat the system. Thus a career was born: the urinalysis observer. This career consists of handing a cup to the patient, giving directions and making sure that he fills it up with his own urine.

Knowledge Facilitator
Knowledge facilitators examine what employees need to know and the best ways to distribute that information. Online business students should prick up their ears. Corporate knowledge facilitators are using e learning to make businesses more streamlined. "Training is no longer a discrete, formal event," states Dr. David Shoemaker, vice president of learning solutions for eCornell. "The ability to deliver knowledge in increasingly granular bits enables learning to be integrated seamlessly into the work flow."

Arachnologist
Arachnologists study spider behavior, spider habitats and ecology, collect specimens, teach, and often publish research on arachnids. They must generally have a keen interest in animals, and should not mind close contact with spiders. They often must endure long hour's outdoors and travel large distances. Generally, professional arachnologists have university degrees, very frequently advanced degrees. These degrees typically involve concentration in biology, zoology or entomology. Professional arachnologists are employed as freelancers or by universities, museums, zoos, government agencies, and other institutions.

Computational linguist
Computational linguists teach computer systems how to process natural language. For example, if you're trying to order a book from Amazon in Japanese, the site will be able to recommend other relevant similar titles for you. Enter the field with a bachelor's degree in computer science and start with a salary in the high five figures.
**Roughneck**
A roughneck has to face a lot of hazards at work. Working as one can mean spending 12 hours shifts under a loud oil drilling machine. Apart from that, the job is so excruciating that roughnecks usually talk to each other through signs and not words because there is a lot of noise around. The labor involved is immense as your work can involve anything from picking up the heaviest tools to inhaling a cocktail of the most toxic fumes together. Given the health risks involved in the job of a roughneck, people need to be reminded that these fellows get a serious paycheck for the hazards they face. On an average, a supervisor can take home an annual salary of $100,000 and even more in some cases.

**Conservationist / Conservation Consultant**
Conservationists work with the government, industry associations and landowners to come up with methods for combating damage and for using land without injuring the environment. They generally hold a bachelor's degree in fields such as ecology, agriculture, biology or environmental science. There are companies who are greatly concerned with increasing energy efficiency. And there are those with a conscience, striving to reduce their carbon footprint. When Yahoo! decided to go carbon-neutral by 2007, they hired a director of energy strategy and climate change. Combine your thirst for conservation with an engineering degree to prepare for this thriving field. The U.S. Labor Department predicts a hefty 25 percent increase in environmental engineers during the 2006-2016 decade. In 2007, the top 50 percent earned between $70,000 and $106,000.

**Golf Ball Diver**
It's a job that pretty much sounds exactly like what it is. Divers strap on scuba gear and wetsuits and boldly go where most golfers try not to: the water traps. The income varies — many divers work on commission, so the more challenging the course, the better the pay. Golf-ball divers can make anywhere from $30,000 to $100,000 a year, depending on how much time they are in the water. Divers are typically paid eight or nine cents per ball and bring in between 2,500 and 5,000 balls a day. Diving experience and scuba certification is necessary. There are a few hundred people who dive for golf balls full-time, while several hundred more do it occasionally or just during the summers, according to several golf diving company estimates. Typical employers would be large Golf Courses, golf resale companies, etc.

**Doula**
Birth doulas advise on birthing techniques and serve as the mother's advocate during labor. Postpartum doulas assist with emotional and physical recovery from childbirth and teach coping skills to new parents. You don't need a college degree to become a doula, but to be competitive in the field you should be certified by Doulas of North America (http://www.dona.org/). The median fee for a birth doula is $700 per birth.

**Professional ("White Hat" or Ethical) Hacker**
Put your tech skills to work and start hacking into computers — legally! Instead of trying to steal information from computers and use it to make money, ethical hackers help companies find security holes in their computer systems. These so-called "white hats" will spend days or weeks searching company systems to come up with recommendations for fortifying corporations against such threats. The top certified ethical hackers earn over $100,000 per year, and need a bachelor's degree in computer science or information technology.
While Penetration testing concentrates on attacking software and computer systems from the start – scanning ports, examining known defects and patch installations, for example – while ethical hacking, which will likely include such things, is under no such limitations. A full blown ethical hack might include emailing staff to ask for password details, rummaging through executive’s dustbins or even breaking and entering – all, of course, with the knowledge and consent of the targets. To try and replicate some of the destructive techniques a real attack might employ, ethical hackers arrange for cloned test systems, or organize a hack late at night while systems are less critical. A white hat hacker may work as a consultant or be a permanent employee on a company’s payroll. A good many white hat hackers are former black hat hackers. The United States National Security Agency offers certifications such as the CNSS 4011. Such a certification covers orderly, ethical hacking techniques and team-management.

**Flavorist**

If you wish to become a flavorist, or food chemist, you will first have to begin by obtaining an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university. Most flavorists study biology, food science, or chemistry at the undergraduate level, and then move on to food-specific studies at a postgraduate level. In some instances, a PhD may be required in order to obtain a job as a flavorist. These scientists spend their days mixing and matching specific chemicals in order to create unique flavors. Therefore, someone who works within the food science field must be creative and intuitive. Even though an academic background is important in order to gain a job as a flavorist, curiosity and creativity are two qualities that cannot be taught.

Food scientists must also have a general understanding of food composition. Many flavorists thoroughly enjoy the cooking process, since cooking can be a large part of working as a flavorist. Most spend a great deal of time working in laboratories in order to find unique flavor combinations. These laboratories are frequently equipped with standard kitchen equipment such as microwaves, stoves, blenders, and even complete kitchens.

It is important that a flavorist knows how to create specific and desired reactions. Not only is it crucial that foods taste good, but any food developed by a flavorist must also be safe for human consumption. This type of knowledge can only be gained through academic work and through an intimate knowledge of food.

**Social Media Director**

This innovative career has shown up on the payroll of companies a lot more in the past decade. The role of a social media director is to maintain the web presence of a company through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. In essence all these people do are spend the day on sites to find out what’s trending, make status updates and get an idea of who is the customer for the brand they represent. Directors also create media campaigns and address questions or concerns that people post. But ultimately, the goal is brand promotion and a quality user engagement experience. Average Salary: $55,000

**Futurist**

Futurists share a concern about humanity and the future of the planet and society. Their work focuses not on predicting the future, but in helping people better understand their choices about the future, and the futures that we can create. Using data from the past and present, futurists study how the present will evolve into possible alternative futures and how humans will adapt to the resulting technological, demographic, political, environmental and sociological changes. The majority of jobs require an
undergraduate degree in a liberal arts or business discipline, and consulting futurists for companies and governments often command a six-figure salary within a few years.

**Image Consultant**
Image consultants advise people with discretionary income how to make positive impressions -- through appearance, wardrobe, etiquette and communication skills -- in order to get ahead in their careers and social lives, and boost their self-confidence. You don't need a college degree, but organizations such as the Training Institute School for Image Consultants (http://www.newyorkimageconsultant.com/) in New York City offer course work in color analysis, wardrobe and style analysis, and personal shopping.

**Sleep Consultant**
In a constantly moving world, there are many people who actually have issues falling asleep. Sleep consultants, usually hired by corporate clients, help the overworked fall asleep by mind/body exercises and environment shifts. Some consultants practice in luxury locations like day spas, retreats, and even resorts. Average Salary: $66,000

**Crab Fisherman**
Many will be surprised on hearing this, but the vocation of a crab fisherman is a highly paid profession. It is a known fact that the job of a crab fisherman happens to be one of the most hazardous career options in the United States of America. However, despite the risks involved many people passionate about this vocation earn a living out of it. The people involved in this trade have to stay away from home for months at a stretch on times and have to brave the chilling wind blowing over the Alaskan waters. The worst part is you have to dive into the frigid waters to grab hold of the catch. Now, after looking at the risks involved one needs to keep in mind that this is a very lucrative profession and according to estimates, a seasoned crab fisherman can catch crabs worth $50,000 over a period of just eight weeks.

**Life coach**
Coaches love talking to people, figuring out what makes them tick and developing plans to help them succeed in their personal and professional lives. They meet with clients in person or over the phone on a regular basis and listen to challenges, set goals and monitor progress. While anyone can call himself a life coach regardless of education, it's best to be certified by the International Coaching Federation (www.coachfederation.com/ICF). 

**Professional Organizer**
Organizers provide personal assistance, planning and products to help people de-clutter their homes and offices. While the National Association of Professional Organizers (http://www.napo.net/) does offer a certification program involving a mix of paid work hours and course work, most organizers agree that formal education isn't necessary. The average organizer is paid $50 per hour, with individual projects taking a full day or even several days.

**Gold Stacker**
The United States Bullion Depository — better known as Fort Knox — is not the largest gold repository in the United States. That distinction belongs to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in lower Manhattan, where approximately $194 billion worth of the trapezoidal gold bars are stored.
Occasionally, those bars will need to be moved, and gold stackers are the people who do it. Each 27-pound bar has to be moved manually, and the repetitive strain is so significant that they work in teams so shifts can relieve one another.

**Bed Tester**
No matter who you are or what you do for a living, you occasionally have days where you’d like nothing better than to blow off work and stay in bed. Some people have taken that urge and parlayed it into a career as a bed tester.

This job involves bouncing on beds to test comfort. It may sound cushy, but it’s serious business to professional bed tester Natalie Thomas, who works for the Premier Inn hotel chain in the U.K. She and her team are tasked with testing all of the chain’s 46,000 beds. In 2011, she reportedly had her behind insured for $6.3 million.

**Field Test Analyst for Recreational Equipment**
Recreational Equipment Inc. sells sporting goods and recreation gear in over 100 retail locations around the U.S., and in 2011 the company reported sales of $1.66 billion during the previous year. Part of its success is due to an intimate knowledge of the products it sells, gained through extensive testing.

Until October 2011, the testing was performed by field test analyst Adam Hockey. When he wasn’t testing the equipment himself, he farmed out the research to the company’s 9,500 employees. But in a 2011 interview, he confessed that testing the products was his favorite perk.

**Waterslide Tester**
Shooting down an amusement park waterslide is an exciting way to cool off in the summertime. But to offer the maximum amount of fun, it has to work properly, which means testing it for stress factors and aerodynamics. For Tommy Lynch, it also means traveling the world and riding down the waterslides to make sure they’re up to snuff.

**Private Detective**
Private detectives or investigators work for themselves or agencies to investigate wrongdoing such as adultery, employee theft and false insurance claims. They also provide background checks, find people and offer surveillance or private security. To become a private detective, you must receive a license and training; in some states you need military or law enforcement experience.

**Biological Science Tech (Bison)**
People interested in working outdoors and observing animal behavior should consider a job as a Biological Science Tech, observing bison for the Department of Interior. The job location is in Yellowstone National Park, a breathtaking locale with not a cubicle in sight, and the salary is $15 an hour.

Potential applicants should consider that the occupation “requires physical exertion” from constant hiking all over the park. The job description also warns that “coyotes [are] very likely to be encountered, with a possibility of grizzly or black bears.”
**Hair Simulation Supervisor**
Believe it or not, those proficient in the art of creating 3-D hair are hot commodities in the world of animation. Just ask Mark Thomas Henne, the man responsible for every follicle flip in Pixar's CGI blockbuster, 'The Incredibles.' According to Nathan Pieratt, Director of the Online Animation Program at Westwood College, the industry has shifted from 2-D design to 3-D digital media, giving rise to highly specific jobs. "This industry is huge," Pieratt says. "Students are blown away by how hard it is and how exciting it is, too."

**Teddy Bear Repair Technician**
Build-A-Bear Workshop in St. Louis does more than just sell teddy bears. Visitors to its website can customize a cuddly toy companion of their own, and it's made it a company that currently boasts revenue of $395 million.

Since it creates one-of-a-kind items, one can't simply go into a store and buy another teddy bear if one becomes damaged, so the company employs two teddy bear technicians, Robin Brussell and Maria Kaiser, who fix the damaged toys and return them to their owners. Brussell told CNBC.com that the most frequent trauma suffered by the toys is dog attacks.

**Face Feeler**
Companies that manufacture razor blades claim that their products offer the closest shave you can get. One way companies can test the veracity of this claim is to have someone use their product, then have someone else touch the newly shaved face and testify to its silky smoothness.

The person who performs this duty is known as a face feeler, who will also perform this service on someone who has used a moisturizer or other skin care product.

**Volcanologist**
A geologist specializing in volcanoes. They make observations of a volcano from the ground and/or a helicopter – where the lava dome is growing, where rock fall activity is occurring, any new fractures or gas vents that have developed. They also do a lot of office work. None of the data collected is of much use until it is processed and compared to earlier measurements made, so they spend a lot of time working up data, plotting graphs and drawing maps. Some of the most valuable data is "real-time." This is information that is continuously recorded by instruments installed over the volcano (principally seismometers and tiltmeters) and transmitted back to the observatory. These provide an immediate view of earthquake activity and deformation. Volcanologists also have to relate their monitoring information to the public and the authorities in terms of advice about hazards from the volcano. They have meetings with senior people from the government to keep them abreast of developments on the volcano and their monitoring work. The Chief Scientist has more frequent meetings to keep them fully appraised of the volcano's status.

**Concert Promoter**
Remember when you were a kid and mom let you plan your birthday party? You picked the venue (your living room), the decorations, made the invites, and hoped your friends would come. Well a concert promoter does something similar, but the amount of people that show up are their bread and butter. Promoters coordinate with performers, venues and sponsors to create a quality live music experience.
Average Salary: Minimum wage to $1 million (salary contingent upon the artist, concert’s success, and/or commission wage)

TV Show Writer
Writing for programs that millions could potentially watch is no easy job. Writers usually work in teams for television shows, and getting one of the staff writing positions is extremely difficult considering that there are less positions than there is talent. But getting the job comes down to 1) who you know and 2) winning a contest or wowing an agent with a great sample script. One of the added benefits is that you have your summers off when television season ends. Average Salary: $40,000 to $80,000

Mermaid
If you’re more comfortable underwater than on dry land, and you don’t mind having the bottom half of your body confined within the 35-pound lower torso of a sea creature, then a career as a mermaid performer may be for you.

The job is a perfect fit for anyone who loves swimming and can hold their breath for a long time. Mermaids in Motion is a Los Angeles business owned by Linden Wolbert, an underwater model, diver and ocean conservationist, and the business rents out professional mermaid services for theme parks, parties and advertising campaigns.

Barbie Dress Designer
Want to get involved in the fashion industry? What about designing trendy clothes for our good friends at Mattel? This is a real job and it requires a degree from a fashion design school. Check out the article “All Dolled Up” to read a personal account of a Barbie fashion designer. Mattel isn’t the only company hiring for this job — consider others like Bratz and American Girl, too. You may also want to look further into a career in fashion.

Storm Chaser
With the Discovery Channel’s new show “Storm Chasers,” this unusual career is actually becoming a little more mainstream. There are many amateur tornado hunters who work solely for recreational purposes. However, storm chasing can also be made into a professional career, whether it be as a weather forecaster in the media or as a meteorologist conducting research. While tornadoes are the “goal” of storm chasing, most chasers enjoy studying things such as cloud formations and end up chasing more severe thunderstorms than tornadoes. Check out stormtrack.org for some helpful FAQ about storm chasing. Just keep in mind that storm chasing can be a dangerous job, but perhaps the perfect unusual career for a thrill-seeker with a scientific mind. If this too much of a weird job, you may want to investigate other careers in weather and meteorology.

Brewmaster
Beer is easy to drink, but isn’t half as easy to create. Being a brewmaster doesn’t necessarily require a degree, but does require years of experience and knowledge of the fermenting process. You can always start at the homebrew level, or get training from the several programs offered at brewing institutions throughout the country, and possibly having a degree in chemistry/biology may be of benefit. To be considered a brewmaster one must have five years in the field, supervise the complete brewing process, and manage a brewery. Brewmasters work in one of the 1500 microbreweries in the country. Average Salary: $25,000 to $100,000 (depending on size/exclusivity of brewery)
Food Chemist
Ever dreamed of creating a perfect piece of sugar-free candy? Or the most scrumptious microwave dinner? In this job, you experiment with the chemical makeup of foods to make them tastier, longer lasting or easier to ship. Average Salary: $34,000 – $106,000

Video Game Designer
This multi-billion dollar industry isn’t going anywhere so aspiring game designers rejoice! Game designers develop the concept and gameplay of a video game. Although no degree is necessary (but encouraged for full-time work and to receive proper training) designers need to have a good visual grasp of the virtual world, unique design skills, and be technologically savvy. Many design schools offer programs in video game designing. Average Salary: $40,000 to $60,000

Greeting Card Writer
All those mind boggling, emotional yet simple poetry or short write-ups are not done by the card manufacturers. Just take a minute to think about the profit made if the card manufacturers have to pay a fraction of the profits to only a handful of card writers. Now that qualifies to be called lucrative.

Coffee/Tea Tasters
Tea and coffee manufacturers spend millions on researching and perfecting blends that would make their brands blockbusters. And how will they know which blend is the perfect match to the research predictions? Brewers make hundreds of samples and professional tasters taste each one of them and report back to management based on their impressions and notes.

Science and Technology Policy Analyst
If you’ve got a strong science or tech background—plus an interest in politics—this career could be the right fit. You put your expertise to good use helping shape science and technology-related public policies. Average Salary: $48,000 – $155,000

Songwriter
Although songwriting is a lucrative profession, it isn’t easy to get into the industry. Songwriting is a combination of self-study, examining the instrumentals of songs, and factoring the singing capabilities of the performer—basically you have to have a good ear. Those who make it big get the opportunity to hang out with famous singers, producers, and industry execs. The best part: the royalties from songs tend to make more money for songwriters than the actual performers. Average Salary: $40,000 to $110,000 plus

Arts Therapist
As an alternative to tradition psychiatric medicine, art was introduced as a way to help patients back in the 1940’s. Since then, the profession has developed into a widely practice form of therapy. Art therapists use the creative process of artmaking to enhance and asses the mental, emotional and physical prognosis of patients. There are masters programs for art therapy and an undergraduate degree in psychology or health care is most complimentary. Average Salary: $38,000 to $50,000 (private practice can earn between $85 to $120 per hour)
Sources:

Article By Alexandra Levit, author of "How’d You Score That Gig: A Guide to the Coolest Careers -- and How To Get Them"

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