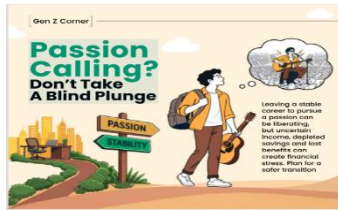


Passion Calling? Don't Take A Blind Plunge: Plan Your Finances Before You Quit

By Manas Malhotra, Outlook Money, Published on October 2026



Many Indians are now prioritising their passion, purpose or personal beliefs over regular jobs and are even ready to change their career trajectory accordingly. The Deloitte Global 2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey shows that 11 per cent Gen Z and 12 per cent millennials in India prioritise flexibility and purpose over title or speed of advancement.

Moreover, 48 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively, rejected an assignment or a potential employer due to personal beliefs.

Arpit Dubey, 27, and Shakti Singhaniya, 26, journalists-turned-social media creators based in Mumbai, left stable media jobs in Delhi to pursue acting and content creation in December 2023.

Says Arpit: “We always wanted to pursue acting and content creation. Journalism gave us an opportunity to be on camera and understand people and stories, but we wanted to turn our creativity and passion for acting into a career.”

Changing the course of your career or life to pursue a passion sounds good, especially when you are younger and have the time to experiment, but it's important to understand what it can entail before taking the plunge.

Vishal Dhawan, founder and CEO, Plan Ahead Wealth Advisors, and a Securities and Exchange Board of India-registered investment advisor (Sebi RIA), says young age can be the right time to experiment as responsibilities may be lower, but one needs to take several things into consideration. “When someone leaves their regular job, income stops immediately, but building a profitable venture usually takes longer than expected,” he says.

Here are some hard realities that can become roadblocks, how to enter prepared and what you can do if you are already in a crisis.

Know Hard Realities

Initial Income Shock: Leaving a regular job to pursue another career could mean giving up a fixed monthly salary or earning much less than before.

Arpit and Shakti were earning ₹40,000-45,000 each when they left their jobs in Delhi. They left for Mumbai with savings of around ₹2 lakh combined, which they estimated would last them for a couple of months. Once their savings ran out, they relied on casting work and small acting assignments to cover expenses. Initially, they took up small acting and related roles, including one-day and two-day assignments, earning roughly ₹10,000-20,000 each per month, depending on the work they got. This was far lower than their regular salary they left behind. They somehow managed by prioritising rent and electricity, using public transport and cutting unnecessary expenses. “The first year was very tough for us,” says Arpit.

Though they were able to set up their social media platform for entertainment Funtantraa soon enough, their first meaningful brand collaboration came after around one-and-a-half years and paid a onetime combined payment of ₹35,000.

Launched in 2024, Funtantraa has since grown to around 286,000 followers. The combined monthly income for Arpit and Shakti is now roughly ₹3.50 lakh-4 lakh.

Plans Going Astray: Things didn't pan out the same way for Prince Nagarwal, 30, who left his job at an e-commerce firm in 2023 to pursue his interest in the food and beverage business, and is still struggling.

He gave up the job that gave him a regular income of more than ₹50,000 to start a cafe in which he invested around ₹4 lakh using his own savings and with some family support. The cafe became fully operational in August 2024.

After around two years or so, the cafe is not returning much. "There are some months when I have to bear losses, and others where I barely take around ₹5,000 for my personal expenses, and rely on my savings instead," says Prince. In a business, rent, supplies, salaries and other operating expenses have to be managed before one can take money out for oneself.

He has now realised the cafe would take much longer to take off and is looking for a regular job again.

Savings Getting Eroded: Prince's experience shows how quickly savings can come under pressure when a new venture does not generate enough personal income.

Says Abhishek Kumar, Sebi RIA and founder at SahajMoney, "If the new venture does not bring steady income in the initial years, one may be forced to liquidate long-term investments prematurely or borrow money at high rates of interest to cover basic living costs."

Kumar adds that beyond losing a monthly pay cheque, they may also pause investments, such as systematic investment plans (SIPs) or contributions to Provident Fund, which can slow down long-term wealth creation.

Leaving a salaried job can also mean losing employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance, retirement contributions, and paid leaves. All of this has a cost that will add pressure on your existing savings and investments.

Prepare In Advance

The above risks do not mean you never take the plunge to follow your passion. What can work is being adequately prepared.

Build A Financial Cushion: For those considering a move away from a regular income, the question is not whether they have savings, but whether those savings can support both their household and the new venture for a few years.

"It would be helpful to split the savings into two distinct pools rather than using one combined fund," says Dhawan. He suggests keeping 12-24 months of living expenses in one pool and maintaining a separate 18-24 months of runway for the venture's operating expenses and basic personal needs. "Keeping these separate ensures that initial business struggles do not affect your household stability," he says.

Manage Your Debt: Before making the move, Dhawan recommends clearing high-interest personal loans and credit card balances and setting aside money for long-term commitments, such as home loan equated monthly instalments (EMIs).

Test The Waters: Prince says he would have preferred to start the business alongside his job and test it first. But the testing needs to be done, not just on the financial premise, but also the scope of the career you want to pursue.

First, check your aptitude. Says Jitin Chawla, founder and director, Centre for Career Development, a career counselling and guidance firm: "Do you have the required skill set? Do you actually enjoy solving problems in that domain? And, perhaps most importantly, is someone willing to pay you to solve those problems?"

A person may have an interest in a particular field, but if the market does not recognise the problem they are trying to solve, turning that interest into a dependable career can become difficult. Chawla says the relevance of those skills can change too. The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has made it important to consider whether the work a person is building a career around could eventually be automated or become easier to perform.

Chawla says the new career can first be explored alongside the existing job. This can help them experience the work with deadlines, client expectations, and professional accountability before making it their primary source of income. “People sometimes discover that once they are being paid to perform an activity, their relationship with it changes,” says Chawla.



How To Manage The Crisis?

If you find yourself in a tough situation, you must act immediately.

First, acknowledge the problem and be open to changes. Says Dhawan: “It is important to set parameters to measure progress on the entrepreneurial journey and decide how much capital can be put into the venture. If it does not work out in around three years, going back to a job should still remain an option.”

Second, take stock of the money left with you. Kumar says spending should be reviewed immediately, and discretionary spending should be paused. If EMIs become difficult to manage, he suggests approaching the lender to discuss restructuring the loan, including extending the repayment tenure.

“However, one should never compromise on essential spends, such as health and term life insurance premium,” says Kumar. An unexpected crisis during an income dip, he adds, can put further financial pressure on the household.

Third, assess what you need to get back into a regular job. The transition may depend on how long you have been away and what you did during the break.

Chawla says the skills required in an industry can change quickly. Someone returning after several years may find that the expectations of employers and the skills required for their earlier role are no longer the same.

The difference between the old and new careers matters, too. “The further apart the two careers are in their nature and skill requirements, the more challenges the professional is likely to face upon returning,” says Chawla. He gives the example of someone who leaves consulting to become an artist, compared with someone who leaves, say, a Big Four consulting firm to start their own consulting practice. In the latter case, the entrepreneurial experience within the domain may broaden a person’s skills and add to their professional value.

Those who have moved too far from the careers they left behind must first update their skills and knowledge. Says Chawla: “Reconnecting with former colleagues, mentors and other professional contacts can also help, while a short course or certification may be useful if the gap is long or the industry has changed significantly.

Your gap isn’t something to hide. It’s a phase that added perspective or skills. Frame it with intention.

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