

# The big switch

From suit-filled boardrooms and executive decisions to festival stages and stand-up gigs: Cally Beaton delves into her life-altering career change, and what led her to taking those frightful steps. Words: Anna Evdokimou

If you've ever dreamt of changing careers, but have been fearful of making that step, Cally Beaton is here to tell you to go for it. Having left her position as senior vice president at ViacomCBS – one of the biggest television studios in the US – to try her hand at stand-up comedy at age 45, Cally is well acquainted with that fear. But despite the hard work that came with rebuilding a career as a parent with financial obligations, the comedian describes the reinvention as her best yet.

During her 10-year stint at the studio, Cally oversaw million-dollar budgets for brands like Nickelodeon and Comedy Central, and was even responsible for shows such as *South Park* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*. As a result, it comes as a surprise to learn that she stepped away from such power (and paychecks) to convert her frequent hobby into a full-time career. So, why did she?

"If it's only the money keeping you in a job, it will reach its sell by date," says Cally. "Financial security simply wasn't enough for me." Despite acknowledging that she was not in a fiscal position to quit her job and pursue her passions, the comedian

realised that she was only working to obtain her income, and it wasn't what she wanted her life to look like.

"We all need our jobs to pay the bills, but if there's no enjoyment in it, it becomes more about survival," she explains. "I felt like I couldn't keep putting myself through something that I didn't have a passion for anymore, and I decided that I was willing to risk certain things in my life to change that."

And while some people may feel that it's too late for them to change careers, particularly if they're a parent, or are already in a secure and financially stable position, Cally describes reinvention as a beautiful and energising thing. "It's never too late, and I hope that this isn't my last reinvention. So if, at 54, I still don't think that 'this is it' then why should anyone think that it's too late?"

But even so, the decision didn't come lightly for Cally, and she notes that the journey to reinvention is just as lonely as it is exciting. "It wasn't easy, and I learned that you don't need to have a perfect plan, because it's not going to happen. Your story is going to be messy."

Having now appeared on countless comedy programmes, such as

*Pointless Celebrities* and Northern Irish panel series *The Blame Game*, Cally advises people to play to their key strengths when considering changing career. "Don't simply throw away everything you've learnt. You need to figure out what your strengths are, and how they can translate in this new position."

In addition to her comedy gigs, Cally is a well-regarded keynote speaker and awards host, which she attributes to her frequent bouts in male-dominated boardrooms. She also encourages anyone considering making a change later in life to look to others for support and find a mentor who they can relay their thoughts to.

On her weekly podcast, *Namaste Motherf\*\*kers*, Cally now welcomes celebrity guests to share their life lessons and impart their wisdom to listeners. When asked about her favourite piece of advice that she has been given, Cally references her chat with British psychotherapist and author, Philippa Perry, who simply said: "Feel the fear and do it anyway."

*Namaste Motherf\*\*kers* is a weekly podcast hosted by Cally and is available on Apple, Spotify and all podcast platforms.



▲ Cally Beaton PHOTOGRAPH: NATASHA PSZENICKI

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