

# For this vacation, pack a different hat

By Megan Tench  
GLOBE STAFF

Bored with your job? Think you'd make a great winemaker? How about a sports announcer or innkeeper?

For mid-career professionals who are too afraid to risk testing out their dream jobs, there are VocationVacations.

Instead of heading to DisneyWorld on their vacations, restless workers can take two- and three-day excursions into nearly 100 jobs spanning the United States and Britain. For prices ranging from \$350 to \$1,200, "vocationers" get to work alongside a mentor in the field they choose. The cost includes airfare and hotel, as well as time with a

career counselor who helps clients to stay focused on their goals.

The company was begun in 2004 by 38-year-old Brian Kurth of Portland, Ore., who was in a "boring" job with an Internet security provider, wishing he could take his vacation time and try out some other careers.

"A lot of people feel like they're tied to their jobs because of the money or because they got that degree," said Kurth, 38. "But it doesn't have to be that way. Fifty percent of our vocationers are what we call life changers, because they are really disgruntled and looking for change or they are being laid off. This gives them an opportunity to test the waters."

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The other half, he said, takes a VocationVacation for fun or buys one as a gift.

Marshfield resident Sue Burton, 39, a finance and marketing consultant, part-time comedian, and mother of two, said she had always wanted to be television producer. Since her VocationVacation, she's writing a TV pilot.

She signed up in March and traveled to New York City to work at a production company.

"I thought I made all of these practical decisions about my career," she said. "The good news is I was successful at it, and the bad news is that I was successful at it. But one day, you wake up in your 30s and think, 'Oh my God! Am I going to do this for the rest of my life?'"

Burton's excursion cost her \$1,200. She flew to New York, and the next day she met her mentor, Russ Best, a producer who works at Brave St. Productions, a small firm that produces reality TV shows such as "B. Smith with Style," on TV One, and "NY Knick" on E!. Immediately, Burton was thrown into the mix.

"I got to help structure the interview. I worked behind the camera while shooting the in-

terview. I got to edit, write treatments, and pitch a show to a network," she said. "I also had two to three pages of questions like, 'How much does this pay?'"

After trying to be a television producer for two days, Burton found out that it wasn't her passion after all. "It sounded cool, but in reality, not so much," she said.

Burton still wanted to work in television, but her experience showed her that she is much more suited to work in writing and development. And her mentor helped pave the way, showing her the best ways to sell her ideas. And he told her about a conference called the National Association of Television Program Executives, which took place in Los Angeles in July. Burton went, pitched a reality television show about aspiring comedians, and caught the interest of two networks. She is now working on a demonstration pilot.

"Sometimes our clients find out that the grass isn't always greener on the other side," he said, noting that dream jobs can disappoint. "But it's better to find out now than sink all your money into a degree or quit your job for a career you don't really like."

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JOSH REYNOLDS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Sue Burton tried her hand at TV production on a VocationVacation in March. Burton works as a financial consultant as well as an amateur comedian at The Office in Boston and other clubs.