

Top Tips for Mums returning to the workplace

Increasing numbers of women are now returning to the workforce after taking a career break to rear their families. Whether it is through financial necessity or simply wanting to challenge themselves and develop new skills,.....returning to the workforce after an absence can be tricky. So what steps can you take to get back on the career ladder?

Stay connected

Many employers recruit people they know or have met through networking or connections. Stay-at-home parents are sometimes out of the networking loop and need to make or re-establish their connections. So if you are considering going back to work, why not join a professional group or association and go to meetings once a month? This way you will be staying abreast of changes in the industry and may even discover opportunities to do some freelance jobs that work with your schedule. Also why not consider getting a subscription to professional journals to re-familiarise yourself with industry trends.....?

So, what have you been doing since your last role?

You need to be ready to answer the question “So what have you been doing since your last role?” In anticipation of starting your job search you should consider volunteering as a way of updating your skills and establishing professional contacts. This could for example involve writing an article for a newspaper/website, joining committees of local charities or getting involved in the Parent Teacher Association.....the possibilities are endless. Don't apologise for your time out of the workplace...instead focus on the work-related skills you've developed during your time away from the office.

Networking

Remember, most professional women re-enter the workforce through their own contacts. Don't be afraid to let people know that you are looking to rejoin the workforce and don't underestimate anyone in your network. Attitude is key here – you need to be positive and enthusiastic to create a favourable impression. Don't overlook the obvious – contact your old employer. If you had built up a strong track record with them they will be either keen to rehire you or will help put you in contact with others that may be in a position to help.

Interview

If you have been out of the workforce for a while, your confidence will have taken a dip and you may be out of practice in promoting yourself. Invest in a professional interview coaching session – they will quickly identify the areas you need to focus on to get you over the line.

Employers, particularly in the SME sector where the economic environment is very tough, may be concerned about conflicting priorities and will need to be assured that you had good child care arrangements in place. I suggest pro-actively addressing this issue, explaining that you have childcare arrangements and backup systems in place which gives you great flexibility.

Confidence

This is something that is difficult to define but is an essential ingredient in the interview process. You need to present yourself as somebody who can hit the ground running. You need to convince an employer that you are highly motivated, driven and committed to bringing value added to the new role. Your body language needs to communicate this energy and passion.....how you sit, good eye contact, total engagement in the process.

Conclusion

Re-entering the workforce having been at home for a number of years can be challenging. Success won't come overnight but by taking a planned, structured approach you will be well on your way to a rewarding new career.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of *Interview Techniques*, a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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