



Work It!

Re-entering the Workplace

By Kimberly Monaghan

Returning to work after a prolonged absence can sometimes be challenging, but is often coupled with numerous financial, emotional and career enhancing rewards. The key to re-entry success lies in a positive disposition. Once you've made the choice, stick with your decision, choose the right opportunity, adopt a healthy attitude and always be flexible. After all, these are the very same factors that contributed to your career success in the first place. Now, at a different time and under different circumstances, you have the golden opportunity to recapture your achievements from a fresh and experienced perspective.

Be firm in your decision.

Choosing to return to work will have an impact on your family and friends, yet it's important that once you've made the decision, you're committed to it. Indecisiveness can lead others to unintentionally take

advantage of your uncertainty, cause you to second guess your goals, or may impact your productivity. Initially, you'll face emotional challenges often coupled with dual-sided separation anxiety. Focus on working toward the comfort level that will ultimately arrive. When it does, it will bring a balancing of schedules and overall satisfaction within the family dynamics. Children, spouses, parents and pets will all learn to adapt, and in many cases, benefit from this time apart in the long run. In their book "Back on the Career Track," Carol Fishman Cohen and Vivian Steir Rabin provide a wonderful Re-launching Readiness Quiz and Motivator List to help you keep focused and firm in your decision.

Find the opportunities.

Whether your goal is to resume your previous position or a new opportunity; work full time or flextime; volunteer or consult; or even start your own business, the opportunities abound. Tell friends, previous co-

workers and anyone who will listen that you are ready to return, and ask them to keep you in mind for opportunities. It is important however, that you identify to yourself, your network, and to your employer just what unique values you bring to the table, how you can successfully compete, and always be ready to assuage any concerns that you are a risky investment. If you are planning to change careers, take measures to ensure your resume reflects your skills and talents and de-emphasizes any gaps in employment. Illustrating how you kept your skills fresh or completed additional training during your absence will smooth the way for a successful re-entry.

Overcome insecurities

Move past first day jitters by projecting an attitude of confidence. In doing so, you will be prepared to successfully navigate past insecurities and self-doubts that may arise once you are back in the workplace. Be prepared to face invasive questions from co-workers regarding your gap in employment or readiness to return. Visualize these encounters in advance, along with your confident replies, so that you can quickly move beyond any emotional stumbling blocks and focus on the fact that you were the one chosen for this challenge. Mentally reaffirming all that you accomplished on and off the job will also help you renew confidence in your abilities.

Be prepared for changes

Sometimes it can be a culture shock when returning after a prolonged absence. New technology, different faces, and perhaps unexpected responsibilities are all part of progressive organizations. Coupling these with your own personal changes including leaving the comfort of your home, giving up schedule freedom, and a nine-to-five away from family can be daunting. But in no time at all you will be able to accept the trade-offs and successfully embrace change. Trust your instincts and remember all the positive reasons you decided to return in the first place, which undoubtedly included new challenges. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn and grow as it may be the stepping stone for promotions or exciting business ventures. Set short- and long-term goals for yourself and observe how adapting to change can help you meet these objectives while opening new doors. Whether you realize it yet or not, separation from the workplace gives you the advantages of a more mature and refreshed perspective that prepared you to venture into new territories, as well as pave the way for countless years of career success.

Kimberly Monaghan is a Certified Professional Resume Writer, freelance copywriter and owner of Career Connections, a career consulting firm. For more information, visit resumes-writer.com.

Resources:

"Back On the Career Track: A Guide for Stay-At-Home Moms Who Want to Return to the Workplace," by Carol Fishman Cohen and Vivian Steir Rabin; Warner Business Books, May 2007.

"Expert Resumes for People Returning to Work," by Wendy S. Enelow and Louise M. Kursmark; Jist Publishing, 2008.

"Flex Time: A Working Mother's Guide to Balancing Career and Family," by Jacqueline Foley; Marlowe and Company, 2002.

"Going Back to Work: A Survival Guide for Comeback Moms," by Mary W. Quigley and Loretta E. Kaufman; St. Martin's Press, August 2004.

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