



YOUR CATALYST TO
SUCCESS

Re-entering the Workforce - Enhancing your marketability despite those employment gaps

Involuntary career breaks, or dare we say it, 'unemployment', can often be a frightening situation for anyone to be in. After the initial shock of unexpectedly finding yourself without a job, it doesn't take long before disillusionment sets in, particularly when days turn into weeks, then weeks into months or even longer, and you begin to panic: how you are going to handle the ever-increasing employment gap on your resume?

The belief that the longer you are out of work, the more difficult it will be to regain employment is understandable. However, it is important to stress that many people at one time or another have found themselves jobless whether through their own doing (such as taking a career break to raise children or scheduling a well-deserved holiday), or in situations that have been beyond their control such as with layoffs, redundancies or company closures.

So if you currently find yourself unemployed, don't be discouraged as many have experienced job losses and have eventually re-established successful careers. Rather than letting fate take its course, they have implemented various strategies that increased their marketability to a potential employer, and believe it or not you too can follow these tactics and hopefully shorten the gap that lays between where you are now and the light at the end of what –seems like a never-ending tunnel.

Following these initiatives should assist you in transforming a potential employment gap into a learning experience, and provide you with marketable solutions for use in your resume.

- Demonstrate your commitment to remaining current with industry trends through reading publications, periodicals or trade journals, or even researching the internet.
- Join a professional association within your field and get involved. Not only is this another way of keeping current with industry trends, but also a fantastic opportunity to grow your network; meet and develop relationships with potential employers; and even generate/source some great job leads from other members of the group.
- Take a class or a professional development course to enhance your knowledge. You may even find yourself developing new skills that can open doors to a new and more challenging career path.
- Consider the possibility of providing advice in your line of expertise through consulting or projects/assignment work performed as part of your own business. This will allow you to develop strategic relationships with other companies, which could possibly lead to full-time employment, and/or allow you to continue developing your network of contacts.

- Provide your knowledge/services on a voluntary basis. Just because this is on a non-paid basis does not discredit any great results or contributions you may have made within an organization.
- Become a mentor and support someone else's knowledge growth. Knowing that you have facilitated or contributed to another person's journey of knowledge enhancement can be extremely rewarding.
- Write articles for a publication in your industry – a great way to portray your expertise and raise your credibility and profile among your peers.
- Offer your services within family/associates' businesses either on a voluntary or paid basis. Not only will you be contributing to the overall running of their business, but ensuring your skills remain up-to-date.

There are also various techniques you can use when developing your resume in order to draw attention away from potential gaps.

- Rather than presenting your resume in a reverse chronological format (which is the most common) providing contact details and professional experience with the most recent at the forefront, try the combination or functional formats, which list your transferable skills, competencies and accomplishments relevant to the position at the forefront. This way you are demonstrating at the outset what you can contribute to the position.
- Another strategy is to omit the months when providing dates, so that instead of stating 10/1997 – 5/2002, you would just write 1997 – 2002.
- List any education or professional development courses at the forefront as this will demonstrate your initiative and commitment to expanding your knowledge.
- Treat consulting, assignments, or self-employment as professional experience, as with any voluntary work performed within the community or even for the family business. There is no need to disclose that this was unpaid, nor even the fact that you were related to the manager; only concentrate on your accountabilities and accomplishments.

Your job search should be treated as your full-time job and each day should be organized and prioritized with time allocated to sourcing suitable positions, sending off applications, following up, and continually working and expanding your network of contacts to maximize your overall job search campaign.

Maintain your health, physical fitness and personal appearance to ensure your positivity and enthusiasm do not diminish. Therefore, when finally called into an interview, you will not bring with you a blanket of self-doubt and disenchantment. During the interview remember to portray all of the relevant experience and achievements (gained through the above strategies) with enthusiasm, while demonstrating your ability to continue contributing your expertise toward the ongoing success of their company.

Annemarie Cross is a triple-certified/award winning Resume Writer, Career Coach and NLP Practitioner, and founder/principal of Advanced Employment Concepts, a career consultancy offering specialised solutions for people striving for success and fulfilment in their careers while maintaining work/life balance. Annemarie can be contacted at www.annemariexross.com
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