

BEEN OUT OF THE WORKFORCE FOR A WHILE
AS A CARE-TAKER OR STAY-AT-HOME PARENT:
How To Control The Employer's First Impression
As You Successfully Re-Enter Your Career Path With A
Killer Re-Careering RÉSUMÉ

You've been busting your chops for the last several years. Your multi-tasking skills? Unrivaled. Ability to handle adversity and solve problems? Top notch. Project management capabilities? Unsurpassed.

You've got a million amazing skills—this is indisputable. The problem? Many of your talents have been refined over the past few years through your most recent job as a stay-at-home parent/caregiver.

And while no one is going to argue that your job isn't among the hardest on the planet, your "at home" time can present serious challenges as you prepare to venture back into the 9-to-5 workforce. How in the heck do you market yourself when you've not held a paid 9 to 5 for several years? How do you remedy the gaps in your career chronology? How do you convince a corporate employer that, in spite of your hiatus, you're excited and ready to work—and that you're the ideal candidate for that position?

Don't panic. People are jumping back into the workforce all the time, and so can you. Are you kidding me? You're a gourmet chef and can prepare dinner while correcting algebra homework while officiating goldfish funerals while polishing furniture. So even if you're scared, remind yourself that you've got everything you need to pull this off.

And the first step, of course, is updating that résumé. Here's what you need to know.

Don't: Use a Functional Résumé

The problem with this style of résumé is that most recruiters instantly realize that the candidate is attempting to hide something. This is the most common "*I'm trying to divert your attention away from my employment history gap*" trick, and HR Directors and recruiters are savvy enough to see right through the redirection attempt. Although I see this all the time when reviewing re-entry candidate résumés. The functional résumé is an outdated format that highlights skill sets and personal attributes totally 'divorced'

from work history chronology. Some people even leave out the dates-of-employment all together. When reviewing a functional résumé, most hiring authorities come to the same conclusion: “*What is this candidate trying to hide?*”

Additionally, functional résumés rarely integrate well with an applicant tracking system, so if you’re applying for jobs via online application tools (e.g., on job boards or through company websites), your résumé could get lost in the ether’s La La Land before it’s even reviewed by a human being.

You Should: Utilize a Hybrid Chronological Résumé *with* a Summary That Sells

The best résumé style for re-entering professionals is more of a hybrid between “highlights my expertise and core proficiencies” and “chronological employment history.” The most effective résumé style (for all types of job seekers) is exactly this. You highlight the experience that: you’re most proud of; best known for; and can definitely excel at in your next job, in a “Professional Summary or Executive Summary” section at the top. Then, you create a “Core Proficiencies” section that sketches out the things you know how to do (such as “Inventory Control,” “Work-flow Optimization,” “Client Relations,” and “Cost Controls”). Finally, you get into your career chronology, listing the most recent positions first and working backward.

Definitely: Document Volunteer Assignments and Part-Time Work With Your Professional Experience

On that note, there’s no law that says that you can only reference full-time or paid employment in your career chronology. So, if you’ve participated in a major volunteer role or worked part-time while at home with your children? Absolutely list these things as their own “jobs” within your professional experience section. And showcase the noteworthy stuff you’ve done in these assignments: Depending on the types of positions you’re applying for, anything from planning charity auctions to recruiting volunteers to bookkeeping for an after-school club can be relevant.

That said, do not, under any circumstances, create a cutesy section on your résumé that lists your time as a stay-at-home parent as an official job (complete with bullet points like, “Adeptly managed the growing pile of laundry” or “Leveraged organizational skills to make sense out of a 13-year-old’s bedroom closet”). While you and I both know that parenting is about as demanding and intense a job as any out there, most corporate decision makers aren’t going to take this section of your résumé seriously.

Don’t: Rely Solely on Your Résumé

There are definitely times when it’s better to scrap online applications and instead make use of effective networking strategies to get a foot in the door at your target companies—and this is one such occasion. If you’ve been out of the workforce for more than a couple of years, you may well be a “non-obvious match” for any given position you apply for. You’ve got a much better shot of landing an interview if you endear yourself to someone on the inside of whichever companies you’ve got your eye on rather than hoping you’ll make it through the online screening process. You need an opportunity for the decision makers to meet you personally and see that you really are extraordinary.

Finally, remember that your re-entry may take time and trial and error. Many employers, at face, prefer candidates who are currently employed, ... but don't let this discourage you. Instead, pay close attention to how people are responding to you. What's working? What's not? Assess (and celebrate) your progress and adjust your approach along the way.

And when you do land that position? Give yourself a huge high-five. (Then promptly teach the kids how to do their own laundry.)

Mark Berkowitz, NCCC, CPRW, IJCTC, CEIP is president of **CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES**, a full-service career management firm with a demonstrated, decades-long track record in helping job seeking candidates maximize their career potential. The firm assists clients in successfully managing their careers through state-of-the-art, professional assistance from start to finish in an effective career change and/or job search campaign, providing such services as: Résumé Development; Cover Letter Writing; Job Search Coaching; Career Counseling; Peak Performance Interview Training; Salary Negotiations; and Career Testing & Assessment.

Mr. Berkowitz holds a Master's Degree in Career Development and is a **National Certified Career Counselor**, **Certified Professional Résumé Writer**, **Internationally Certified Job and Career Transition Coach**, and one of only one hundred individuals credentialed as a **Certified Employment Interview Professional**. His work appears in nearly two dozen books on résumé /cover letter writing and winning interview strategies. He has been spotlighted on WCBS television in "***Acing The Interview***" and has been named as the "***Professional of the Year***" by the **PODCAST BUSINESS NEWS NETWORK**.



Berkowitz has been recognized as “... *one of the leading résumé writers in the U.S. today*” in Professional Résumés for Executives, Managers, and Other Administrators. Wendy Enelow, President of the Career Masters Institute has acknowledged Mark as “... *one of the most talented career counselors I have ever met.*”

He can be contacted at +1 (910) 833-5013 or CarDevRes1@gmail.com.

