



Point of View

Re-entering the Workforce: Proven Tips and Tools for Working Moms

Managing the myriad responsibilities of full-time motherhood, from multitasking to decision making, is excellent preparation for re-entering the workforce. Recognizing that these skills are transferable to the workplace is the key.

Any woman who has been a stay-at-home mom has had to juggle more than a calendar, a team, a project or a workload. You've juggled babies, made feeding decisions, chose schools, managed the logistics of getting them to all their extracurricular activities, attended PTA, mediated arguments, instilled values, bolstered confidence and generally prepared your child or children for whatever life might throw at them. Your re-entry to the workplace is going to be a breeze by comparison!

Multitasking in an office or an assembly or warehouse facility has nothing on raising a child! The skills required to do most of these mothering things transfer to many different jobs and industries, and they deserve a place on your resume under "skills and expertise." Following are some tips and tools other women have found effective in helping them successfully re-enter the workforce.

- **Kick-start a network.**

It's really true that networking pays off. Tell everyone you know that you are re-entering the workforce. Find out who they know. Consider developing a profile on a professional networking site, such as LinkedIn, to find the "six degrees of separation" that may help you get your foot in the door. Look up former coworkers who have remained at work while you have been home raising your family. They can provide current insights into trends, who is hiring, what technology is hot and more.

- **Research prospective employers.**

In today's global village, it's easy to put your finger on the pulse of companies, current issues and trends. Before you go on the first interview, go on the Internet. Whether on a home computer or one at the local library or copy outlet, go online to find out everything you can about employers who are hiring in your area of interest.

Prepare questions for the employer. It's surprising how many people don't do their homework before they show up for an interview. Sure, it takes time, but you can do it after the kids go to bed or while they're at school. And your research will not only position you as a knowledgeable, informed candidate during the interview, but also after you land the job, by enabling you to ramp up quickly.

- **Brush up on what's happening in your industry.**
Before you start the interviewing process, sign up for free or nominal-cost online newsletters in the industry you specialize in. Basic skills and competencies probably haven't changed much, but the issues and technology have.

Be sure you know what current challenges are facing your profession, as well as the technology and tools in use. Many technology vendors offer fee demonstrations of their software for potential buyers; but if they think you can help them because you have seen their product, chances are they'll be happy to give you a demo. Sign up for an e-learning course to refresh your computer and software skills, too. Not only will these actions update your knowledge, they will also boost your confidence!

- **Focus on what you have done, not what you haven't been doing.**
Believe it or not, most employers are not going to get hung up on what you haven't been doing. Rather, they'll want to know what you have done. Past behavior and successes are the best predictors of future performance.

Conduct a mental inventory to remind yourself of things you've done that you are proud of; tell the stories, know the details, show your passion. Time away from the workplace will only become an obstacle if you appear to be out-of-date or disconnected from current issues—or you've completely forgotten what it was like to go to work. Help yourself remember what was great about your former job, and tell stories about it to your mate, your kids or even your pet to revive your passion!

- **Update your resume.**
Be prepared to answer certain inevitable questions, such as "Why do you want to come back to work at this stage of your life?" or "How do you anticipate you will handle the dual challenge of career and family?" and "Do you think you can come up to speed quickly?" Catalog the things you have done since leaving the workforce that use key skills employers are always looking for: organizational skills, time management, event planning, community involvement, ability to meet deadlines, multitasking, teaching, mentoring and others.
- **Let a professional do the looking for you.**
Leverage every resource available to you. In addition to your network of friends, neighbors and former associates, engage a recruiting and staffing firm to help you. They are paid by employers to find and hire qualified candidates—there's no cost to you. By taking the time to register with a respected recruiting firm, you'll gain an extra pair of eyes and ears looking for work on your behalf. And be open-minded as you make the transition back to the workplace. While you may be aiming for a full-time or permanent position because it's what you were doing before, consider short-term project work or a part-time position as an interim step in your re-entry process. It will also add some valuable, current experience to your resume, and make you an even more attractive candidate for any employer!