



Resume tips for parents returning to work

"I've done nothing for 16 years – how do I even start putting together my resume?". This is what a brilliant, busy and very active mother of three asked me last week. Nothing! This woman has probably not had a moment to do "nothing" since she gave birth to her first child!

Many parents returning to work find the process of putting together a resume somewhat daunting, and most parents do not even consider the amazing skills they have developed just by being parents! Raising kids is a full-time job, and to be successful, you need to develop lots of relevant and effective skills. Nearly all of these skills are highly valued within the workplace, and should be advertised within your resume.

If you are thinking of returning to work but are having trouble putting together your resume, the following strategies may help to effectively sell your skills to potential employers:

- Rather than attempting to put your resume together in the traditional "reverse chronological" format, consider using a "functional" format instead. A functional format resume sets out your skills and objectives in a way that focuses on your accomplishments and minimizes emphasis on job history. For an example of both of these formats visit the links provided.
- Sit down, have a cup of coffee, and do a skills inventory on yourself. List all of the skills you have picked up informally - you will have gathered plenty of skills as a parent. Consider if you have developed any of the following skills whilst bringing up your family.

- ✓ Financial Management
- ✓ Organizational skills
- ✓ Conflict Resolution
- ✓ Crisis Management
- ✓ Event Management
- ✓ Leadership Skills
- ✓ Mentoring and coaching skills
- ✓ Counselling skills
- ✓ Catering
- ✓ Team player
- ✓ Decision maker
- ✓ Negotiating skills
- ✓ Time Management
- ✓ Purchasing
- ✓ Mediating
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Research (think of the kids homework)
- ✓ Communication Skills
- ✓ Etc Etc – The list could go for pages!



- State that you have been out of the workforce because you have been raising your family. Don't assume an employer will know this is the reason for any gap – for all she knows, you could have just been released from prison! In any case, most people (even employers) have respect for the role of parent, and will accept your family duties as a valid reason for taking a break from the paid workforce.

- If you have done unpaid work or volunteered to the kid's school, your local church or sports club, or even through social clubs or playgroups, make sure you list these activities. My client who had done "nothing" for 16 years was actually the Supervisor of the school canteen, coached a Netball team, volunteered at the school to provide reading tuition, had organised and co-ordinated school fundraising events, had volunteered at a local op shop, and had previously done the accounting and bookwork for her ex-husbands business!
- Make sure your resume a "living document". Each time you apply for a new job, reassess your resume, and if you can, tailor it to the job description or criteria advertised. If you are applying for a traditional type of role, make sure your resume is simple and professional. If you are going for a more artistic or creative position, make sure your resume reflects your own "flair".
- Make sure your resume stands out. I have had the job of sorting through dozens of resumes to short-list applicants and I am always attracted by resumes that have that "little bit more". It may be the quality of the paper, a little bit of colour, or even a quote – these things do demonstrate the care you have taken, and your presentation skills.
- Create a professional email address for employers to contact you. Your email says a couple of things about you. Firstly, it demonstrates you are computer savvy (no email may demonstrate the opposite). Secondly, make sure your email address is simple and professional. If your personal email is cute or funny, leave it out and create a new address just for employment related correspondence. Go to www.yahoo.com.au or www.hotmail.com to create an email account.
- Have someone proofread your document. Spelling mistakes and grammatical errors can be interpreted as poor communication skills. Even if you have read it many times yourself, a friend may pick up something that you have missed.



For more information on putting together your resume visit some of the following links:

www.careerone.com.au
www.mycareer.com.au
www.careersonline.com.au
www.seek.com.au

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