

CareerBuilder.com Provides Tips for Workers Returning to the Workforce After Extended Absence

PRNewswire
CHICAGO

Returning to the workforce after an extended absence doesn't necessarily put you at a disadvantage, a recent survey from CareerBuilder.com indicates. Forty-five percent of workers who returned to the workforce in the last 12 months after taking at least one year off said they found a job in less than one month. One-third (33 percent) said they found a job in one to six months while only 14 percent said their job hunt lasted more than a year.

"This goes back to the labor shortage factor in the job market today," said Rosemary Haefner, Vice President of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "Employers are struggling to find skilled labor and are recruiting qualified employees before the competition has a chance to do so. Even in a tighter job market, skilled workers re-entering the workforce after a leave of absence can find good opportunities and competitive compensation packages."

When asked about the primary motivator for taking an extended period of time off from work, workers reported:

- Medical reasons (17%)
- To raise a family (15%)
- To relax and enjoy life (13%)
- To continue education (9%)
- To move to a new location (9%)

When asked to identify the main challenge in finding a job when they returned to the workforce, 37 percent of workers reported having to prove themselves all over again while 24 percent said it was difficult to explain the gap in employment. Twenty percent pointed to a lack of required skills or education as the main obstacle in finding a job while 18 percent cited the competition with younger workers. Nine percent said they perceived a concern amongst employers that they would once again leave the workforce.

Haefner recommends the following tips to help in the transition back into the workforce:

- 1) Cover your bases. Cover letters not only help to highlight skills and accomplishments and bring more personality to your application, they are also useful for explaining an extended absence.
- 2) Reach out. Chances are you know someone who knows someone who can get your foot in the door. Talk to family, friends, neighbors, former colleagues, etc and ask them to keep you in mind for potential opportunities.
- 3) Take a refresher. Sign up for seminars and events and online programs to brush up on new technologies, current trends and developments in your desired field.
- 4) Stay active. The majority of employers consider volunteer work to qualify as relevant experience. Volunteering in your local community can help to build up your resume, show your continued drive and establish networking contacts.
- 5) Make no apologies. Keep the conversation positive. Don't dwell on how long you've been out of the workforce. Focus the discussion on your strengths and contributions and enthusiasm for the position at hand.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 6,852 U.S. employees (employed full-time; not self-employed) ages 18 and over between November 13 and December 3, 2007 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset of 314 U.S. employees, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 6,852, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.3 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies. A full methodology is available upon request.

About CareerBuilder.com

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