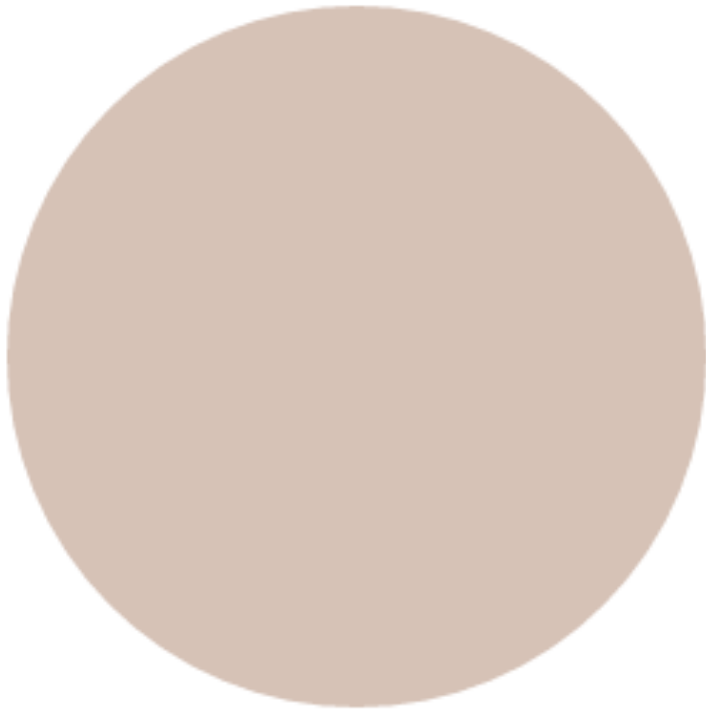




A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

..... For return-to-work and
career change mums



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If it has been a long while since you looked for a job, you probably don't quite remember where—or how—to begin. Having a clear strategy in place and using your time wisely is the name of the game.

Follow our guide to help you organise and structure your job search, and make going back to work or changing careers a whole lot quicker and less stressful.

Step 1: Get Prepared

1. Take a step back to figure out what makes you tick. The more you understand yourself and your motivations, the more informed and productive your career search process will be, and the more likely you'll find a career that is the best fit for you. Click [here](#) for a list of questions to help you identify your values, strengths and passions, and [here](#) to find out how online career assessments can allow you to make better, more informed career choices that are in line with your unique self.
2. Next get clear on what you really want. What does your ideal job look like? Be as specific as possible. What skills do you want to put to use? What tasks energise you? What type of environment would you like to work in? What hours would you like to work? Write these things down, as well as the things you definitely don't want to do or be around in your next role.

You can even create a vision board of what you want. Cut out images from magazines that reflect exactly what you're looking for in your ideal career or business. Keep this vision board somewhere where you can see it every day.

3. If you're not sure what's next, reach out to people in your network who have interesting jobs or are working for interesting companies - learn about their experiences and ask for their advice. For more support in figuring out your career direction, sign up for [Ignite!](#), our free 7-day mini e-course.
4. Set your goals and make a plan. Give yourself a deadline for finding a new job, and some realistic goals to achieve along the way. Then determine how much time each week you can commit to your job search. How much of this time will you spend on each job search activity? We recommend setting aside 50% of your job search time for networking, 25% for material preparation and the application process, 15% for online research, and 5% or less on job board sites. And finally, based on how much time you have each week for your job search, write down the action steps you're going to take to achieve your

goals. Don't forget to put completion deadlines next to each one, and write them in your calendar.

5. Create an Employer Target List. Rather than relying solely on job boards, focus your web-based job search efforts on employers of particular interest to you. Create a list of 25 or so employers for whom you would like to work. This list will allow you to identify job openings before other candidates and help you focus your networking efforts. Research the employers on your list thoroughly. Review their websites. Set up a Google alert for each organisation so you'll know whenever they are in the news. Follow them on social media. Look up key personnel on LinkedIn. Ask your current contacts (friends, family, colleagues, other job seekers, etc.) if they know anyone working at your target employer.
6. Prepare your references. Make sure you have solid references (and their permission) in order, plus accurate contact information for your references.
7. Get your support team in place. Identify the people who can help you with your job search – friends, old colleagues, or a career coach.

Step 2: Polish Your Personal Brand

1. These days, the first thing a potential employer will do before hiring you is head straight for Google. Google yourself. Do you like what you see? Then think about what your personal email address and social media presence (Facebook, Twitter etc.) says about you - what will they look like to a potential employer?
2. Refresh your job search materials. Make sure your CV, cover letter, and LinkedIn profile are up-to-date. While your resume and cover letter will need to be customised for each job application, having the bulk of the updates done ahead of time will allow you to apply quickly when you find positions of interest. Before you start making changes to your CV, make sure you know

how CV's have changed in recent years, and read this article if you're not sure how to explain "the gap".

When you're applying for jobs, it's important to send out materials that are perfect. Use Grammarly to instantly check your writing for grammar, punctuation and style. Also consider having a trusted professional mentor or coach look over your materials and provide feedback.

3. If you would like to take your personal brand one step further and attract recruiters by sharing more of your personality and passion for what you do, try branded.me to create a free personal website in minutes (or less) using the information in your LinkedIn profile.

Step 3: Start Networking

1. Activate your current network. With 80% of jobs never being posted publicly, you want to get on the inside track to job openings. The first step is to activate your current network. Begin strategically reaching out to members of your network. Don't simply email asking if they know of openings. Rather, set up a brief, 15 minute meeting or phone call. Explain where you are professionally, where you are hoping to go, and ask for advice. This leaves the door open for an ongoing communication.
2. Refresh your LinkedIn profile, get active on the platform and make sure you understand how to use it effectively in your job search. Consider if the free or paid job seeker version of LinkedIn is right for your job search.

Step 4: Apply For Jobs & Keep Organised

1. Apply to open roles, ideally committing to between 3-5 applications per week. If you have decided that your job needs to be part-time or flexible, don't be put off applying for full-time roles. Many employers will consider flexible working 'for the right candidate' even though they don't state it in their job

ad. Read more about the best way of finding a part-time or flexible role [here](#), and our guide to when and how to ask for flexible work arrangements during the job search process [here](#).

2. Your job hunt will be much smoother if it's organised. Try [JibberJobber](#) for a quick and easy way to organise and manage your career contacts and job search.

Step 5: Interview & Follow-Up

1. The better prepared you are for interviews, the more confident and in control you will feel. Practice how you'll answer the most common interview questions and come prepared with several good questions to ask at the end. This is your chance to show the hiring manager who you are and why you'd be a great fit for the company.
2. Always write a personalised post-interview thank you note. And if you still haven't heard back after two or three weeks, try following up with the hiring manager to show you're still interested in the position. If you don't receive an offer, ask for feedback on what you might have done differently in the interview. This can keep the door open to future positions that may come available with the company.

Step 6: Analyse Your Job Offer & Decide

1. Ensure you understand all components of your job offer including base salary, bonus opportunities, benefits etc.
2. Revisit your description of your 'ideal job', and make sure the role you're considering truly meets your criteria.
3. Officially accept and sign your paperwork, and give yourself a pat on the back!

JOB SEARCH GUIDE

As you're going through the job search process, remember that it takes time - 3-6 months on average, perhaps longer in a down economy. Finding jobs that you are excited about, networking and interviews are all things though that deserve celebrating. Each step is getting you closer to your ideal job.

And if you ever feel like quitting (which we're sure you will!), remind yourself you're a valuable asset to an employer, so it's just a matter of perseverance before you get something.

Getting an outside perspective can also be useful when you are in the depths of the job search. Feel free to check in with us for advice and encouragement.

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Work Happy Mums is the go-to resource for return-to-work professional women and career advancers. We help women get clarity on what they really want from their career after having children, enhance their skills, rebuild their professional confidence, and successfully navigate career and family to be the best they can be at work and at home.

Visit [Work Happy Mums](#) to find out more about us, and get in touch today to schedule your complimentary Career Assessment to see how we can support you on your back-to-work journey and beyond. We're with you every step of the way!

*Best wishes,
Melanie Fieseler*

*Director, Work Happy Mums
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