

What Stay-at-Home Parents Need to Know Before Rejoining the Workforce

By [ROBIN MADELL](#)

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Your kids are growing up; they've entered school. As a stay-at-home parent, what's next for you? For some, it may mean gearing up to [re-enter the working world](#), whether part-time or full-time.

But things may have changed since you last dusted off your résumé. In your years devoted to caring for small children round-the-clock, industries have continued to evolve and needed skill sets to shift. You may wonder whether you can still compete successfully against job seekers who never took a break.

If so, you're not alone. A July study commissioned by talent acquisition and career development firm Mom Corps and market research firm Harris Interactive found more than half (58 percent) of all working adults surveyed feel taking a significant break from the workforce would set their career back.

To help transitioning parents get back in the corporate or entrepreneurial game, consider [this strategic advice](#):

How can stay-at-home parents prepare to land employment?

One way is to be flexible. Tom Gimbel, founder and CEO of staffing firm LaSalle Network, suggests parents returning to the workforce stay open to career exploration. "Don't feel confined to doing what you did before leaving the workforce," he says. "Skills can be transferable, and those that were picked up in a previous career or during volunteer work can certainly transfer to other career options."

But what options might you explore? That's where your research skills come into play. Whether you pursue an opportunity in your previous field or a new one, author April Masini recommends getting up to speed in that industry. "You've been living colic, separation anxiety and potty training," she says. "Meanwhile, the world has gone on (to everyone's surprise!) without you. Read the trades, and the local and national press, and be prepared to talk about what's been happening while you were gone as if you weren't."

During their time at home with children, how can stay-at-home parents remain competitive for the workplace?

When your day consists of [child care](#), it's easy to feel disconnected from professional life. Yet your parenting experience may hold the key to a powerful network of new business contacts and potential opportunities.

"It's important for parents to leverage new relationships through their children," Gimbel says. "Connections can be made through the parents of your children's friends, teammates and schoolmates. Some other ways to build a network are to get involved in volunteering, or make a list of everyone you worked with prior to leaving the workforce and start reconnecting."



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