

Gaps in Your Resume?

Not everyone works a full-time job their entire life. Many people find themselves with gaps in their resume — breaks between employment for a wide variety of reasons, from layoffs to personal choices.

Some hiring managers see these gaps as a problem. If you've had a lot of breaks from your work, they'll wonder why you couldn't keep a job and would assume that you're not going to last at their company.

Having breaks in your employment record isn't necessarily a bad thing, though. You might have been highly skilled and a great employee but, for whatever reason, didn't need or want a job at the time. Some things in life are more important than work, after all.

Here are some things to think about.

BE CLEAR ABOUT THE REASON

When there are gaps in your resume, there's usually a good reason, and you shouldn't hesitate to point that out.

Employers don't need to know all the drama and details about it — just a reasonable explanation for why you were out of work for a period of time.

If you don't have a logical, concise answer, it will raise red flags. If you do, it will give them some comfort about it.

FOCUS ON YEARS

One way to direct the focus away from the employment gaps is to focus your resume on your total years of experience in the industry, not necessarily the specific dates of employment.

Probing questions from the interviewer may force you to be more specific about it, but you don't need to intentionally shine a spotlight on your periods of unemployment.

SHOW OTHER EXPERIENCE

When people are unemployed, they aren't sitting around doing nothing.

Did you do consulting work? Try starting your own business? Devote more time to your favorite volunteer groups? Take time off to care for an aging parent?

If you explain what you

JOB TIPS

Don't be too pushy

Different employers follow all different time scales for hiring workers, so never assume that you'll hear back from them within a few days. Some companies may make a hiring decision in 24 hours while others could take months to fill a job. Following up too often or too soon could be irritating.

were actually doing, it could turn those gaps into positives for the future employer.

If the skills you gained during those gaps could be applied to your new job, that's even better.

Taking time off to raise a child, for example, might have helped you discover new skills or interests. Designing the newsletter for your local PTA could easily translate into designing a company newsletter.

If your interests and hobbies led to any new skills you could use in the workplace, be sure to highlight those in a job interview.

