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What I learned as a hiring manager and from working with many other hiring managers and HR personnel might surprise you – having a gap on a resume isn't as big of a deal as most people would think. In fact, the stay at home mom resume gap makes very little difference in obtaining an interview. What matters more is how women explain the gap, be it in their resume, cover letter, telephone interview, or in-person interview.

As many women have, one of my clients, Amy, took time off to raise her two children. Once they were in elementary school, she decided to re-enter the workforce, but was feeling uncomfortable with how she should explain the almost seven-year gap in her resume. During this time, Amy stayed active with volunteer work and had even served as president of the PTSA at her children's school. Instead of not addressing the time she spent at home, we maximized it by creating a *Community Service* section that pointed to this experience. We also practiced how Amy would discuss her time away from work by focusing on the volunteer service projects she led. What surprised Amy the most was that during job interviews the gap turned out to be a non-issue.

Even if you didn't have time for volunteer work while you raised your children, there are still skills you learned or improved upon that are transferable to the workplace. Were your kids in sports or other activities? Then I bet you further developed your ability to prioritize and also improved your time management skills. Were you in charge of your family's budget and major household purchases? Budget creation and management are important business skills. Raising children also tests your negotiation abilities, improves your conflict management skills, and, most likely, tested your communication skills on a daily basis.

Moms are experts in conflict management, multi-tasking, effective feedback and quick decision making. All of these skills can be used to demonstrate why you're qualified for the job you're seeking.

Still need some advice? Check out some dos and don'ts that I cover in my book, [Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach](#).

Do...

- Analyze what you were doing during the gap. Could it be included on your resume as additional experience you gained, even if you weren't paid for your services?
- Use your cover letter to briefly explain your employment gap if you're worried the gap will be an issue.
- Be prepared to discuss the work gap during job interviews. What did you do during that time? What new skills did you learn or improve upon? What did you do to stay current on what is happening in the industry
- Address employment gaps honestly, but make sure you understand your legal rights as to the topics you DON'T have to discuss (such as those falling into "protected classes" or under equal opportunity employment rules).

Avoid...

- Using a functional resume format that explains skills instead of listing positions in reverse chronological form to hide employment gaps (the traditional format). Good hiring managers and recruiters always see through these attempts and it could keep you from getting the job. Instead, add a *Skills Summary* section at the beginning of your resume even before you dive into your work experience. This draws the recruiter and hiring manager's attention to the key skills you would bring to the position.



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- Omitting employment dates or state only the years of employment to hide information. Ask any hiring manager or recruiter and he or she will tell you that omitting dates or providing only employment years is a dead giveaway that a job candidate is trying to hide employment gaps. Past employment (months and years) is verified as part of employment history verification or a background check, so the employer will eventually find out anyway.
- Using the term "sabbatical" if you didn't actually take a paid leave of absence.
- Lying on your resume. I know it's tempting, but it doesn't take long to contact previous employers to verify past jobs, titles, and employment dates. Finding out a candidate lied on their resume is a quick way to get eliminated from the hiring process.



Lisa Quast is a women's career coach and award-winning author who's just released her newest book *Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach*. In it, she shares a step-by-step guide on everything you need to do to find and get a job – from writing a cover letter to acing an interview and negotiating a starting salary. For more advice from Lisa on how to find and get a job you love, get your own copy on [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#).

Enter to win a copy of Lisa's book, *Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach*. Two winners will be selected.



5 Things You Will Learn from This Book

1. Whether or not they need a new job at all. Quast starts out asking, "Why do you want to change jobs?" making the point that when facing unhappiness or difficulties in your career, a new job isn't always the answer.
2. Tactics to effectively brand themselves. A former marketing executive, Quast has poignant advice for utilizing personal branding to position oneself as an expert. She details in the book how she helped one client transform her career in one year using these tactics.
3. How to evaluate themselves objectively against job postings. Quast details how this is a key step for standing out amongst other job applicants, yet so few do it. She walks readers through conducting this analysis and how it can improve their resume, cover letters and interview preparation.
4. Strategies for answering the really tough interview questions. Instead of providing canned answers to the hard-hitting questions like "what's your biggest weakness"; "how much money do you make" or "why is there a year-long gap on your resume," Quast gives advice for creating a thoughtful, personal response to these questions so job seekers don't freeze up mid-interview.
5. What to do after the job interview. Many job seekers wrongly think the work is done after the interview is over. Quast disagrees. She shares her strategies for closing an interview, finding out whether or not you got the job and what you can do right after an interview to immensely improve your job seeking skills.

