



Ready, Set, Relaunch!

**A Guide for Moms
Returning to the Workforce**



Welcome

As one of the largest creative staffing agencies in the U.S., Creative Circle works with thousands of job seekers every week, many of them exploring new paths after a career gap. Mom Relaunch empowers moms returning to their careers with training and hands-on skills to optimize a successful relaunch into the workforce.

Together, we've created Ready, Set, Relaunch for women in the process of re-entering the workforce after an extended period of absence.

This 'go at your own pace' guide walks you through the most important steps of relaunching your career – from taking those first steps of discovery to the first day of your next job. It was written with moms in mind, but much of this advice applies to anyone needing extra assistance navigating today's job market and workplace.

As you make your way through this manual, do not hesitate to reach out to **Creative Circle** and **Mom Relaunch** with any questions or for help with the next step of your career.

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01

Get
Ready



Take The First Step

Set your expectations

The first step to getting back into the workforce is making sure you're prepared. That means knowing what you're looking for as well as what to expect at every stage — from your initial search to the interview process to your first day at a new job.

To determine what's next, think about:



Your past work experience



The length of your break



Your goals moving forward



What you've done to keep your career skills fresh



How much time you can spend each week on your career goals

If you don't know where to start, turn to Mom Relaunch's [Career Readiness Assessment](#), which allows the Mom Relaunch team to get to know you. This is your chance to define and articulate what you're looking for and meet other moms who are also taking that next step.

This personalized assessment is your first step to relaunching a fulfilling career and finding a supportive community that encourages, motivates, and celebrates with you.



Set Your Career Goals

After determining you're ready for this journey, the next step is deciding if you want to stay in the same type of role you held previously, or if it's the right time to make a bigger change. Be honest with yourself about your previous work history and current skills, as well as what you need from a career now.




Set Your Career Goals

If you want to keep going down your previous path

Whether you were a freelancer, consultant, or full-time employee, getting back on track can be as simple as updating your skills and freshening up your portfolio.

To get started, look through job sites like Glassdoor, Creative Circle, or Mom Relaunch to find a few sample jobs you're interested in.

Review the job postings and ask yourself:

-  Do you have the skills and experience required to step in and hit the ground running?
-  Are you proficient in the right programs and technology (such as the latest versions of the Adobe products)?
-  Do you have relevant work samples in your portfolio?

If you need a new path

Learning to leverage your previous experience and related skills will give you a significant advantage.

Start by listing the hard and soft skills you've acquired throughout your career. Then find job postings in the field you want to transition into that include similar skills.

Even if your skills don't directly translate to the job you want, you'll learn about the skills required. You'll also have a better idea of how you can showcase your existing talents.



Find a Mentor or a Coach

Finding a job is a job in and of itself, so why not have someone on your side? Whether you choose a career coach or mentor depends on your goals, your timeframe, and how much money you have to spend on the process.

Why choose a career coach

Typically, a coach offers a short-term arrangement for when you need to focus on a particular area: e.g., leadership/management, negotiation, or public speaking.

To get the most out of working with a career coach (for the least amount of money), go in with a specific goal in mind and know how much you're willing to spend on it.

Why choose a mentor

If you're looking for an ongoing relationship, mentors can be an invaluable resource for continued career growth. Your mentor may focus more on your career trajectory, providing knowledge and support that's specific to your job or industry. They may even be able to provide guidance on work/life balance.

Looking for a mentor is an excellent reason to call on professionals you like and respect, or join organizations like Mom Relaunch, who offer advisors/mentors.

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Get Set



Build Your Network

Seventy percent of all new jobs are found through **networking**.

Not to mention, networking in person is far more valuable than online networking, and 55 percent of someone's first impression of you is formed from body language and your facial expressions.

Why you still need to network

Networking helps with the opportunities you know about...

When you're applying to an online job posting, having a contact at the company gives you an immediate edge. If you track down a name on LinkedIn and then get your resume into the hands of a real person, this increases your odds that an HR professional will see your resume and avoids the possibility that it will be screened out by digital filtering programs.

And the opportunities you'll never hear about.

According to Forbes, up to 80 percent of all jobs never even get published. This is part of the "hidden job market" that includes open positions that don't make it to LinkedIn, Glassdoor, or even recruiters. Most likely, they are posted inside an organization and filled internally. Networking is key to cracking that market open.

Prepare your elevator pitch

While there are no set rules for what to include, your pitch should cover:

1. Your past jobs
2. What you're looking for next
3. Your qualifications
4. What makes you stand out

Don't be afraid to let some of your personality show through. Like your resume, the elevator pitch can be customized to your audience.

Do **NOT** include:

1. How long you've been out of the workforce
2. Your salary expectations
3. Personal information
4. Overly specific information about your skills or industry
5. Your age

Attend networking events

Networking events can be an effective way to meet peers, make new contacts, find freelance work, and get leads about jobs.

As a mom, you don't have endless time to be at every event. Use platforms such as Meetup, Eventbrite, and Facebook Events to find the right networking event just for you.

To get the most out of the event:



Print business cards with your full name, phone number, and professional-sounding email address.



Write, practice, and perfect your elevator pitch. Say it out loud until it sounds natural.



Give yourself specific networking goals. For example, pledge 10 new LinkedIn connections every week and 20 emails to former coworkers.



Bridge the Skills Gap

The idea of going back to school can be anxiety-inducing, but it doesn't have to be. It's never been easier to get the skills you need. These are just a few of your options.

Try online classes

From the comfort of your home, you can take classes from prestigious universities such as Yale and The Wharton School, build up a portfolio, and get real-life experience that will open doors for your job search. Some options let you earn certificates, verification badges to add to your LinkedIn profile, or other forms of recognition for your work.

- [Lynda.com](#) – focused on digital skills, with concentrations in marketing and web development
- [HubSpot Academy](#) – focused on career advancement skills in sales, marketing, and digital
- [Coursera](#) – millions of classes on virtually any subject from top learning centers and universities
- [edX](#) – degree-focused options aimed at professionals seeking career advancement
- [FutureLearn](#) – concentrations developed with partners such as Accenture and UNESCO

Pros: Go at your own pace;
smaller financial commitment; learn industry standards

Cons: Requires more discipline and self-direction;
limited access to instructors

Attend classes in person

Community colleges are still one of the best educational values, letting you take classes from accredited, accomplished instructors at a fraction of the cost of a state or private university. You'll also get the opportunity to network locally with people who are on similar journeys and may end up in your field.

Pros: Relatively inexpensive; more accountability; access to teachers

Cons: Lengthy commitment; may take a year or more before you have all the classes you need

Invest in an in-person boot camp

People switching to a new career may benefit from the highly structured learning experience of programs such as General Assembly or Startup Institute. These, and other boot camp-style programs, offer digital classes and in-person programs to advance careers in programming, development, digital product management, and user experience. In addition to intensive coursework, students receive access to career coaches and unique, students-only networking and training opportunities.

Pros: Intensive learning environment; the latest skills taught; enhanced accountability; access to career and placement services

Cons: Higher cost; may require a full-time commitment



Showcase Your New Skills

Once you start acquiring skills and relevant knowledge, show potential employers your newfound mastery with some real-world experience. If you find yourself in the “can’t get the job without job experience, can’t get the job experience without the job” conundrum, consider the following options.

Showcase Your New Skills

Volunteer

In addition to getting work experience, making new contacts, and filling your portfolio, volunteerism is a valuable thing to have on your resume. It may be hard to fit in with your additional responsibilities, but could be an option during evenings or weekends.

In one study by Deloitte:

82% of interviewers say they prefer applicants with volunteer experience

92% of interviewers say volunteer activities build leadership skills

Only about **one in three** candidates mentions it on their resume!

Find a cause you're passionate about and offer pro bono work. If you don't have a calling but still want to volunteer your skills, try organizations like [Taproot Foundation](#) or [VolunteerMatch](#).

Get hands-on experience

Mom Relaunch's [LaunchPad program](#) pairs moms returning to their careers with real projects in their fields of expertise. LaunchPad opportunities include substantial, meaningful projects in IT and HR within Mom Relaunch or in partnership with forward-thinking companies. Both give you the opportunity to fine-tune your skills (or acquire new ones), brush up on your professional communication, and receive recent experience for your resume. In some cases, you're assigned to a LaunchPad project that's already in the works, but a new one may be created to better serve your areas of expertise and interest.

You'll build your confidence in a low-pressure environment filled with other women who are all pulling for each other to succeed.

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03

Relaunch



Prepare Your Resume

We know this isn't your first time creating your resume.

You probably already have a serviceable resume that needs to be updated for maximum impact or you may need to start from scratch. Either way, we have some tips and tricks.

Go for a functional resume

If you have substantial time gaps or you're making a radical career change, an attractive alternative to the traditional chronological resume is the functional resume, which allows you to organize your experience by groups of skills or achievements instead of by date.

To get the basics down, review these examples.

The no-nonsense functional resume

Look at how this creative director frontloaded his resume with scannable accomplishments and puts his skillset in the spotlight.

The super-creative functional resume

You don't have to go high-concept to make a big impact. This resume offers another look at how to put the focus on your skillset.

Prepare Your Resume

A typical functional resume contains five elements:

- 1. A summary.** Start strong with a short and straightforward professional summary that gives an overview of your goals, relevant skills, and experience.
- 2. A grouping of your skills.** Create “buckets” of functional areas such as Resource Management, Complaint Resolution, Project Management, or Quality Assurance. Include at least four or five skills in each bucket. Make sure it’s targeted and tailored for each opportunity.
- 3. Your professional experience.** Even if you’re making a big career move and don’t have expertise that directly lines up with your target job, include your experience in a way that supports the skills you mentioned above. For example, customer satisfaction, efficiency, and producing results span across different roles and are important to every job.

- 4. Education.** If you’re changing careers and have a minimum of directly-related job experience, it’s important to play up all your relevant education, coursework, and certifications.
- 5. Contact info.** Include a phone number and email address. If you make, design, create, or build things, include a link to your portfolio. Unless you’re aiming for a position in social media, only include your LinkedIn profile URL and no other social media links.

Exclude:

- Protected details such as your age, race, or gender
- A photograph of yourself
- “References available upon request”

Show your value

Revenue and sales numbers are good starters, but make sure you also include other accomplishments that address common employer concerns, such as efficiency and customer satisfaction.

1. **Sales/earnings.** e.g., Increased sales from less than \$4 million to \$8.2 million within two years
2. **Growth/improvement.** e.g., Exceeded sales goals by an average of 17 percent every quarter in 2016
3. **Money saved.** e.g., Negotiated contract with outside vendors resulting in an annual saving of \$600,000
4. **Time saved.** e.g., Cut data processing time by 40 percent by implementing a new cloud data infrastructure, leading to more timely insights
5. **Metrics** (unique visitors, click-throughs, conversions, time spent on site). e.g., Created an email campaign with a click-through rate of 7 percent
6. **Budgets you managed.** e.g., Helped create and manage monthly social media campaigns with a monthly spend of \$20,000
7. **People you managed.** e.g., Led development on a project that included 15 programmers and designers
8. **People you impacted.** e.g., Managed the seamless migration of 1,000 users from various local servers onto DCS corporate UNIX servers in an aggressive one-month timeframe

Select keywords

Many companies use a digital applicant tracking system (ATS) to screen resumes for specific experiences and keywords. If your resume doesn't have the right keywords, you won't make it to the next step, no matter your experience. To get your resume past the ATS and onto the next step, you need to:

Analyze the job posting for specific skills or training needed. Find similar job openings and note common keywords and skills listed, too.

Get more information on any **technical terms** or **industry buzzwords** you've found in the job postings that might apply to your work and experience.

Sprinkle them throughout the **summary, skills,** and **experience.**

However, you shouldn't:

Be inaccurate. Only use keywords that correspond to your skills and experience.

Embellish because you can't find any keywords that directly apply to you.

Go overboard and **stuff your resume with keywords.**



Try a new design

Once your resume makes it into human hands, you've only got about five to seven seconds to make an impression. After you've nailed the content, create a document that will attract the eye and direct it down the page.

For inspiration, here are a few creative yet incredibly functional resumes that helped their authors land jobs.

A colorful infographic

This format has become a classic because it's scannable, playful yet practical, and endlessly customizable.

The passion project

Create a document that puts your best skills into the spotlight in a way that targets employers in that industry.



Network Professionally on LinkedIn

Here's why a LinkedIn profile matters:

LinkedIn is many employers' first stop for sourcing and vetting talent, with 15 million active job listings. It's a powerful tool for branding and promoting yourself, establishing expertise, and attracting the attention of people who can help you find opportunities.

Network Professionally on LinkedIn

Get started

Your Photo

- Use a recent picture of yourself. Don't use something grainy, out of focus, or with other people in the shot (and cropping someone out doesn't count).
- You don't have to pay for headshots. Ask a friend or family member to snap a picture of you while you're wearing professional clothing in a neutral, distraction-free background.
- Look at the camera and smile. Research shows that smiling is the most impactful characteristic on likability, competence, and perceived influence.

Your Profile

Treat your profile the same way you'd write a resume. In fact, you can use a lot of the same content here. Remember to:

- Focus on your accomplishments and measurable results
- Avoid too much jargon
- Use an active voice

Get connected

Once your profile is complete, use it to expand your network. In addition to looking for people you know, seek out and follow influencers and experts in your current field or the one you're trying to break into.

Next, review LinkedIn's professional groups and participate in discussions with well-reasoned, savvy comments. While this is a way to network with others, keep in mind that 93 percent of recruiters and employers report scouting a candidate's LinkedIn presence. The internet never forgets so whatever you post, keep it professional and positive.



Win the Interview

Do your homework

The best interviews happen when a candidate can discuss her skills in a way that shows the employer she can solve problems and contribute real value to the company. You should research:

- The company and its executives
- The people with whom you're interviewing
- The marketplace and their closest competitors
- Any unique challenges they (or companies like them) are facing

Practice, practice, practice

Excelling at a job interview is a skill unto itself. Like most skills, the more you practice, the better you'll get. Preparing in advance will help you ace your next one.

- Carefully **study your resume** so you'll be able to quickly answer questions about your skills.
- **Rehearse in front of a mirror or record yourself** and study your body language.
- **Recruit friends, family, and connections** to get interviewing feedback.
- **Try a mock interview over the phone or via Skype**, in case your interviewer requests this in one of your rounds.
- To get in the right mind space, **rehearse in your actual interview clothes**.

Ask questions

A carefully crafted query will help you look engaged and prepared, and get you valuable information to decide if it's the right job for you. Examples include:

1. What needs are you looking to fill?
2. What will a typical day look like for me in this role?
3. What are the biggest challenges facing the new hire?
4. How have you found success here?
5. What is your proudest accomplishment?
6. What gets you most excited about this company?
7. What can you tell me about the company's culture?
8. How would you describe the working environment?
9. How does this position affect the company's success?
10. What are next steps in the hiring process?

During your first interview, avoid questions about:

- Leave policies
- Flex time/flexible work schedules
- Health care coverage

Address the resume gap

As more employers recognize the importance of work/life balance, admitting that you took a few years off to focus on family, health, or other issues doesn't carry the stigma that it might have 20 years ago. However, a gap on your resume is definitely going to be noticed. During your interview, be proactive and offer a brief explanation for your leave of absence. Be honest, forthright, and positive.

Make sure to pivot as quickly as possible and show that you're ready to contribute at a high level. Impress upon the interviewer that you've taken steps to keep your skills sharp and relevant during your time away. You want to leave the interviewer feeling confident that you're the best person for this role.

Play up the relevant experience you've had since leaving your last job, including:



Freelance



Pro bono



School or
online classes



Volunteer work

Don't dismiss or minimize the significance of any role you've had or class you've taken – even an intermittent freelance project shows your initiative, self-direction, and people skills.



Let's (Keep) Do(ing) This!

We hope your skills and focus have landed a great job offer and you are on your way back into the workforce. **If so, congratulations!** We wish you a smooth transition.

If you still haven't found that new job, remember: your job search is a numbers game.

You can tip the odds in your favor by repeating some of the steps we recommended here, such as **continuing to polish and market your skills**, and taking advantage of what **Creative Circle** and **Mom Relaunch** have to offer. And if you feel stuck, know that we are here as a resource to help during any phase of your relaunch.

Take a deep breath and relax!

Approach a new job with confidence, go with an open mind, and above all, *be yourself.*

