



Easier Than You Think

Most moms are able to find a job within three months once they decide to go back to work, a new survey finds.

Erin Mantz quickly landed a dream job in human resources when she was ready to go back to work following time at home with her newborn son. “I’d been out of the workforce for ten months, and I was nervous,” says Mantz, who lives in Potomac, MD. “But I had several interviews within a week and an attractive offer right after that.”

Whether moms take off one year or ten, most (71 percent) secure new jobs in three months or less, according to a survey of 500 women conducted by Socratic Technologies Inc. for *This Is How We Do It: The Working Mothers’ Manifesto*, by Carol Evans, CEO and president of Working Mother Media. What’s their secret? Job coaches and moms say a few smart steps can make for a smooth transition back to work.

KEEP ONE FOOT IN Mantz is glad she stayed in touch with colleagues and professional organizations. “I didn’t want to feel the world was passing me by while I was in the playroom,” she says. Moms who “keep a foot in the door of their profession” have an easier time returning to work, says career counselor Nancy Collamer, the Greenwich, CT-based founder of the Jobs and Moms Career Center (www.jobsandmoms.com). “Send a holiday card. Make an occasional call.”

That’s just what Susan Gradishar, a teacher in Bel Air, MD, did during the three years she stayed home with her two babies. “The key to returning to work is never leaving it completely,” says Gradishar, who heard through colleagues about the postbabies position she secured.

STAY FLEXIBLE AND PATIENT If you’ve been out of the workforce for ten years or more, as Cindy Hagemann of St. Marys, GA, was, you might not land your ideal job immediately, experts say. She took a job she was overqualified for, hoping it would be a stepping-stone. It was: “Within about six months, I proved myself and moved into the marketing department, which was where I wanted to be.”

Some women opt to go back to school to forge a new career path. When Debra Landau of Dix Hills, NY, was pregnant with her third child, she realized she wanted to leave the public relations field and enrolled in a certification program for Jewish family educators. “I landed a job even before completing my certification,” she says.

WORK OUT CONFIDENCE ISSUES The biggest barrier moms face in landing a new job is that they discount their value in the marketplace, experts say. Christine Fruehwirth, a career coach in Potomac, MD, who founded FlexCareers Consulting, finds that an important period of self-exploration precedes many decisions to go back to work. “Moms often have issues they need to work through, such as guilt and fear of change,” Fruehwirth says. That might take more time than the job search itself.

—Suzanne Riss