

Back to Work: How to Land a Job After a Long Absence from the Workforce

By Robert Half/Accountemps

If you're attempting to relaunch your payroll career after an extended absence, it's likely you're finding today's job market especially challenging. Use the following tips to get back in the game:

Mind the gap. As you know, gaps in a job history concern many employers. Hiring managers want to know you're capable of successfully working in a field that, given the accelerated pace of business, is likely different than the one you left. Allay their worries by noting how you stayed sharp and kept up with developments during your time away. For instance, did you attend industry conferences or seminars, join professional associations, enroll in continuing education courses or subscribe to trade publications? If not, consider taking these steps as an investment in your career. Highlighting your efforts to remain connected to the payroll profession shows employers that you have both initiative and up-to-date knowledge.

Retool your resume. If you're sending resume after resume to no avail, you might consider revamping your document. While most people use the standard chronological format (which offers a snapshot of previous positions in reverse-chronological order), a functional resume is another option worth exploring. The functional resume is organized around your top skills, experiences and professional achievements rather than the specific jobs you've held. The advantage of the functional format is that it gives prominence to your key strengths and qualifications, shifting the focus from aspects of your background (such as a long period out of the workforce) that could damage your chances of getting through an employer's initial resume-screening process.

Pursue project work. Seeking temporary work through a staffing firm is also a wise way to show prospective employers that you've remained engaged while searching for a full-time position. Some companies that instituted hiring freezes or laid off accounting staff are now seeking the services of project professionals to keep productivity and service levels high. Project work allows you to gain new skills, make valuable new contacts and earn money. But most importantly, it enables you to get a foot in the door with firms that, at some point, will again be looking to hire full-time employees.

Accountemps is the world's first and largest temporary staffing service specializing in the placement of accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. The company has more than 360 offices worldwide and offers online job search services at www.accountemps.com.