

# 3 Tips for Blitzing the Return To Work Resume



Unleash your super parent-powers today

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# INTRODUCTION



So you're thinking about creating a resume ...

Developing a new resume can seem a bit daunting at the best of times but if you've taken some time out of the paid workforce there's a good chance you can multiply that many times over! The great news is that the many hats you wear, including the very

valuable and skilful work of leading a family, has allowed you to develop or hone some wonderful skills that will benefit an organisation and will contribute awesome resume content.

This ebook gives you answers to the three top resume questions that come up in my work with mums thinking about returning to work after a break and gives you some great strategies to address them. Finally you will find an example to help you visualise what a return to work resume (RTW) could look like.

Good luck creating your resume. I hope these ideas help you on your way!



# CHAPTER 1:

## How do I deal with time gaps?

*Knowing how to tackle time gaps in a resume is probably the most common concern for RTW parents. We generally picture resumes with details of current and previous roles presented in reverse date order so it's easy to wonder how to represent periods where the focus was not on paid work. You may be worried that potential employers will notice a gap and assume your skills are outdated or that there are other reasons for your time out of the paid workforce. No need to worry ...*

If your break(s) from paid work has been relatively short, the standard **reverse chronological** resume format should work well for you. This format is the most common and recognisable to employers. You can find an example on the [Career Vitality](#) website. If you have had more substantial breaks, please read on to learn about the **functional resume**.

Start your resume with your contact details, followed by a **Summary** introducing your key skills / what you offer, taking into account the requirements for the role. Next outline your previous roles under a heading such as **Employment History**. Time gaps can be made less obvious, or dates even appear seamless, by referring to years (rather than including the months) for employment dates.

*For example:*

**Customer Coordinator** **2008-2010**  
**ABC Company**

(Follow with a description of the role then relevant **Achievements**)

**Customer Care Officer** **2005-2008**  
**ABC Company**

After your employment history, you can consider the various resume sections mentioned in Chapter 2 of this book.

If you have had a period of maternity leave with an employer there is no need to mention this specifically, just as you wouldn't typically mention other forms of leave.



# CHAPTER 1 (Cont.):

## How do I deal with time gaps?

Capturing any relevant voluntary work or study can also be a great way to close gaps on your resume while demonstrating the additional skill development that has occurred over this time.

Another key strategy to address gaps is to consider what is referred to as a **functional resume**. This style of resume showcases your competencies / expertise rather than focusing on dates. This can be a great way to impress the reader with your skills and **achievements** early in your resume rather than potentially highlighting any time gaps.

I suggest starting any resume with a **Summary** detailing your skills / what you offer (taking into account what is needed for the role you are applying for). In a functional resume this would then be followed by a section on each of the competencies/areas of expertise sought by the employer (this information can be drawn from an advertisement, job description, conversations with the hiring manager, etc). Under each heading list examples of your relevant achievements (**refer to the Appendix for a complete example of a functional resume**).

After the competencies are covered, a summary of roles/dates can be provided under a heading such as **Experience** or **Employment History**. You can either omit timeframes when you have taken a break from paid work or alternatively include the years with a role title such as "Parent", "Mother", "Household Leader", etc. Periods of relevant volunteering / community involvement can be incorporated into this section to indicate your experience and development during these times (while also reducing gaps).



# CHAPTER 2:

## What do I include?

*RTW mums are often unsure what information to include in their resumes. There are concerns that resumes may have changed since they last prepared one and there is uncertainty about the impact of technology on resumes and employer expectations.*

Key sections for your resume could include:

**NAME / CONTACT DETAILS** (it is personal preference whether to include your residential address but you will definitely want to include an email address and phone number)

**SUMMARY** or **CAREER PROFILE** (key points summarising your skills / what you offer aligned to the role)

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY** or **EXPERIENCE** (an outline of your previous roles, including your achievements)

**EDUCATION** (school and/or further studies relevant to the role)

**VOLUNTEERING** (include your volunteering activities relevant to the role or incorporate these into another section)

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** (outline all courses and training you have undertaken **relevant** to the role)

**REFEREES** (You can choose to provide or not provide referee details in your resume, ie. indicate "Available Upon Request".)

Your decision on what to include should be guided by relevancy to the target job. Review the job information and include content that covers off all of the key requirements (or **keywords**).

Your **name** should appear prominently along with your **email address** and **phone number**. If you have a **LinkedIn profile** that is complete and supports the role you are targeting you should also include those details.



# CHAPTER 2 (Cont.): What do I include?

Information such as age/date of birth, marital status, references to children, etc are **irrelevant** to the role and therefore should not appear on your resume. Depending on your age, you may even consider omitting dates achieved for qualifications and/or schooling which can be an indicator of age.



# CHAPTER 3:

## What skills have I got?

*Often RTW mums feel that they have 'just been parenting' and have difficulty recognising the transferable skills and achievements that they have to offer. They often believe that skills and achievements they have developed outside the workplace are not valued by employers.*

Parenting and other life contexts are rich sources of transferable skills and achievements (skills developed in non-employment situations which are relevant to the workplace). Motivated by my clients' frequent comments that employers don't value non-employment achievements, I developed a suite of achievements from parenting and community activities and sought the feedback of hiring managers, human resources professionals and career practitioners. All of the 20 people who responded said that the achievements would be highly valued in the workplace as long as they were relevant to the role applied for. Some of those who replied said the transferable achievements showed a level of creativity and initiative that would be valued in their companies.

By incorporating your relevant achievements or outcomes (from all contexts) you will allow the reader to see that you are outcome focused and are able to get results.

While you can give priority to an achievement from a workplace context, other situations such as community activities, parenting, study, etc, are also valuable.

An **achievement** would generally be one sentence long and start with a strong, past tense, verb (they've already happened). They should clearly communicate the **outcome/benefit** from what you did. They are even more powerful if you can quantify them, eg. amount of money raised, the speed in which an activity was completed. An example of an achievement from a non-employment context might be:

*"Successfully influenced a neighbour to seek additional quotes for erecting a new shared fence, saving \$5000 on the original estimated cost."*

**You will find many more achievements examples in the Appendix.**





# APPENDIX

## EXAMPLE FUNCTIONAL RESUME

### Name

No. Street Name, Suburb ♦ Phone: 1234 5678 ♦ Email: xyz@hotmail.com

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### SUMMARY

- Superior communication skills with an exceptional ability to build effective relationships
- Strong planning and organising skills
- Capable of managing competing priorities and achieving results
- Proven ability to work independently or as part of a team
- Reliable and honest worker with a strong work ethic
- Natural ability to problem solve and identify improvement opportunities
- Skilled in the Microsoft Office software suite of programs

### COMPETENCIES/ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Communication

- Competently fulfilled the role of secretary for a soccer club, participating in monthly executive meetings and coordinating club communication.
- Effectively supported and counselled callers to a crisis line to reduce their distress and enhance their coping capacity.
- Significantly contributed to a successful campaign that stopped the closure of a local school.
- Successfully built relationships with, and supported, residents of a nursing home enhancing their happiness and engagement with the broader community.

## APPENDIX (cont.)

### Planning and Organising

- Successfully organised an Australia's Biggest Morning Tea fundraising event that attracted 150 people and raised in excess of \$9,000.
- Effectively coordinated a support group by introducing a fair meeting arrangement system which resulted in greater participation and the continuation of the group.
- Planned six events for residents of a local nursing home which ran smoothly and received positive feedback from participants and management.

### Financial Awareness

- Identified an opportunity to save money by refinancing a home loan which subsequently resulted in lower fortnightly repayments and an overall saving of \$30,000 over the loan period.
- Successfully negotiated a property purchase price \$63 000 (8%) less than the previous owner's expectation and valuation.

### EXPERIENCE

XYZ Charity, Volunteer Telephone Counsellor	2012 - 2015
GHI Soccer Club, Voluntary Secretary	2010 - 2015
ABC Company, Finance Officer	2002 – 2005
ABC Company, Administration Clerk	1998 – 2002
CDE Company, Receptionist	1996 - 1998

### EDUCATION

Certificate III in Aged Care, AAA Training Provider  
State High School, Brisbane

## APPENDIX (cont.)

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Understanding Dementia, University of Tasmania (Massive Online Open Course), Statement of Attainment

### REFEREES

Name

School Canteen Manager

Phone: 8765 4321

Email: [canteen@hotmail.com](mailto:canteen@hotmail.com)

Name

ABC Soccer Club President

Phone: 2345 6789

Email: [soccer@hotmail.com](mailto:soccer@hotmail.com)

(Or referees available upon request)

# ABOUT CAREER VITALITY

Career Vitality is a Brisbane-based career consultancy specialising in supporting return to work and working parents through 1:1 career coaching, workshops, and resources. Principal Consultant, Donna Thistlethwaite, has worked across both private and public sector organisations over a career spanning 30 years, 15 years of which were in human resource management, shaping and guiding the careers of employees.



Mum to five year old Matthew, Donna developed the [CareerSmart Mums](#) workshop over two years ago to empower RTW mums to successfully plan and manage their careers. Over 50 women have completed the workshop with excellent results and feedback.

Donna's qualifications include a Graduate Certificate in Education (Career Development), Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management), and a Graduate Certificate in Industrial Relations. She is a professional member of the Career Development Association of Australia, a key resource for maintaining and expanding her professional and technical knowledge.

If you would like to re-enter the workplace, change career direction or take your career to the next level, call Donna today on **0419 120 601** or visit [Career Vitality](#).

