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14 Ways To Get 'Back In The Game' After An Absence From Work



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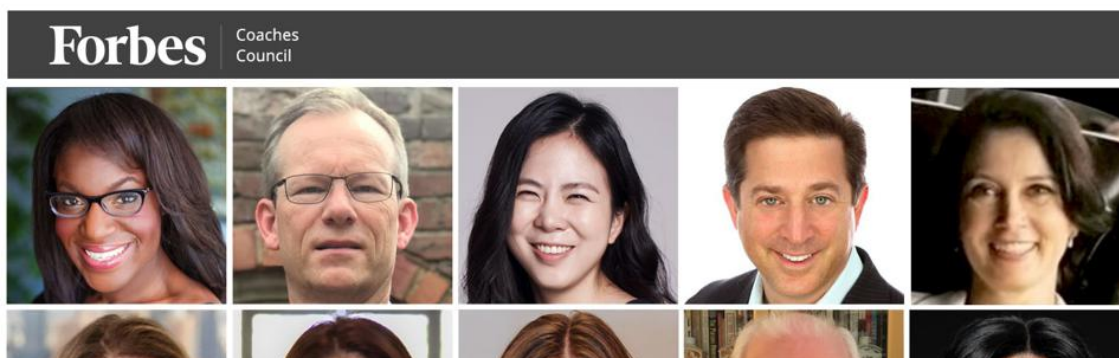
Forbes Coaches Council COUNCIL POST | Membership (fee-based)

Leadership

For someone who's been out of the workforce for an extended period of time, it can be challenging to re-enter your field.

Whether you were busy raising kids, attaining a higher degree or recovering from an illness, you may have a few personal hurdles left to clear before you feel totally comfortable back in the workplace and ready to perform at a high level.

You might be worried your skills are rusty or feel anxious about the changes you will have to make to your résumé to attain a new job. However, there are some effective things you can do to help yourself get "back in the game." Here, 14 members of [Forbes Coaches Council](#) shared their best advice for a professional looking to find their stride again after time away from work.





Forbes Coaches Council members offer tips on getting "back in the game" following an extended absence from work. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

1. Take Time For Self-Reflection

View this as an exceptional opportunity to transition. Prior to making the foray back into the game, take the time and space for intentional self-reflection and discovery. Explore the following questions: What have I learned about myself? What capabilities have I bolstered? How can I layer on my experiences and articulate them clearly? Try to see this proverbial detour as another leg of the journey. - [Alexa Teare, Lingo Live](#)

2. Start With Volunteer Work

Start volunteering and giving yourself away without being paid. I am not suggesting you risk your health. I do recommend that you give; and when you do, you will learn. The lessons you get and give by volunteering have direct value for your résumé and your brand. It demonstrates a giving mindset. If you are savvy, you will build networks within the volunteer organization that will fuel your job search. - [John M. O'Connor, Career Pro Inc.](#)

3. Reframe Your View Of Current Circumstances

Your mindset matters. Don't be too hard on yourself. See what

happened in your life as additional time you got to spend honing a new skill set and expertise, not as being “out of the workforce.” What new ways of working and thinking have you gained that would be of value? You are now carrying unique aspects in addition to your expertise. How would this help where you want to work? Believe in yourself. - [Monica Kang, InnovatorsBox](#)

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4. Explain How The Absence Made You Better

Don't try to hide your break and make it less noticeable. That draws more attention to it, and in a negative way. Instead, acknowledge it and explain why it actually makes you a better hire. What did you learn from it? How did you use the time? What skills did you develop? How will it help an employer? Life experiences can be as valuable or more valuable than work experiences. - [Brad Federman, PerformancePoint LLC](#)

5. Analyze Your Real Needs

Analyze your real needs and requirements. Set very specific goals. Envision and create a work environment that fits your current situation, circumstances and lifestyle. Be kind to yourself. Take it one step at a time; putting additional pressure on yourself is highly counterproductive. To succeed, partner with a coach or a mentor to guide you through the mindset changes and overwhelming emotions in the process. - [Sharesz T. Wilkinson, The Speech](#)

Improvement Company

[Forbes Coaches Council](#) is an invitation-only community for leading business and career coaches. *Do I qualify?*

6. Leverage All Of Your Networks

First, incorporate your volunteer achievements into your résumé, as you would any paid roles. Next, leverage all of your networks: prior co-workers, college alumni you know (or don't know), family, friends, neighbors, PTA members, every LinkedIn connection and fellow caretakers. Don't think that because you haven't been in a paid role that you don't have a network. You do! - [Lisa Rangel, Chameleon Resumes LLC](#)

7. Make Yourself Visible

Visibility matters. People tend to pass along opportunities to people they know and like, so get out there and network. Go to business association events, Chamber Coffees, Rotary Club, etc. Ask questions. Get to know people. Schedule follow-up coffee to get your name in the mind of every possible person who may have an opportunity for you. - [Erica McCurdy, McCurdy Solutions Group LLC](#)

8. Work Your Personal Network

Often, people think that a network refers only to your professional connections, but personal networks heavily influence the workforce. Ask to be introduced to people others know. Most of the time, people genuinely want to support others. In a digital

world, get out there and show up. Face-to-face interaction is critical to building relationships and creating connectivity. - [Melanie Towey, Melanie Anne, LLC](#)

9. Bring Your Skills, Behaviors And Knowledge Up To Date

Connect yourself to the environment and understand the issues that are shaping the current agenda. Develop your network, create visibility by developing content and let your network know that you're getting "back in the game." Do pro bono work to get back in the swing of things. Above all, see and be seen. Being on people's radar is key. - [Luis Costa, Luis Costa - coach · facilitator · speaker](#)

10. Reassess Your Personal Values, Goals And Priorities

During your time out of the workforce for whatever reason, you will have changed. Ensure that as you re-enter, you are going back as the new you, not the person you were before you left. - [Claudine Reid, PJ's Community Service](#)

11. Tell Your Story With Your Résumé And Cover Letter

The most practical advice I can offer is to use your résumé and cover letter to tell your story. Many organizations are eager to welcome candidates back into the workforce. However, long, unexplained gaps on your résumé send a red flag. Tell your story by sharing why you stepped out and why you are ready to return. Use this as an opportunity to highlight your personality and values. - [Cheryl Czach, Cheryl Czach Coaching and Consulting, LLC](#)

12. Find And Leverage 'Value-Added' Nonprofit Projects

The key to returning is to leverage your “value-added” volunteering. By finding nonprofit projects that can help you add to or build upon your current skill sets, you can stay relevant in the eyes of recruiters. Some examples of projects to participate in could be building a social media campaign, raising money or growing partnerships. All of these experiences can help you build a portfolio of skills that will put you on the on-ramp back to work. - [Kelly Huang, Genesis Advisers](#)

13. Build LinkedIn Relationships In Advance

Since your résumé will never compete with people who have remained in the workforce, the focus should be on engaging and building relationships through LinkedIn—ideally, six to 12 months before you plan to re-enter the workforce. Through personal interaction, people see talent in you, and this leads to opportunity. - [Michael Quinn, HireMilitary](#)

14. Combine Past And Present Into A Story Of The Future

I think it begins with confidence. Remind yourself that you were previously skilled and absolutely still are! Next, navigate the story of what you previously did, along with the valuable things that you have just been doing, and relay how combining those will lead you to the next endeavor. Creating this kind of narrative will make it work. - [Ash Varma, Varma & Associates](#)

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