

REBOOT YOUR CAREER AFTER EXTENDED ABSENCE FROM THE WORKFORCE: RETURNSHIPS OFFER COMEBACK PATHS



Many a time some employees, especially women, have to abruptly curtail their careers and leave the workforce, for a variety of reasons. For women it is primarily pregnancy and then the responsibility of bringing up the child. For others it may be homecare or an accident. At the time of making the decision it could seem to be the right one to make and must have been taken with a lot of deliberations and planning. But that does not necessarily mean that their careers have ended for ever and they cannot return. They can – but they have to understand that from the time they let go and now the employment scene has changed considerably. There are many things to consider before they can make a comfortable transition back to the workforce. Even if a job is available, it could be reckless to jump into it, without proper planning and preparation. Once the decision has been made, they have to ensure that they get sufficient direction and training into what the new job could entail. Jennifer Berman, managing director of the HR advisory, consulting and training group at CBIZ Human Capital Services says that returning workers should not automatically take for granted that they will be able to carry on from where they had dropped out. They need to match their existing skills with the new skills that they will now require and then work to acquire them. Goldman Sachs has launched a “Returnship” program that fulfills just these needs for those aspiring to return to the marketplace. The program is designed to help those individuals to re-hone their talents that will help them rejuvenate careers and sharpen skills that could be a little jaded after a voluntary extended absence from the workplace. The “returnship,” an obvious take off on “internship,” works on similar lines. Whilst the latter is a training ground for new recruits the former, simply leverages existing skills, though a ten-week preparatory program, that apprises the individual about what could have changed at the workplace, since they last worked within it. The program ensures that the back-to-work employee does not feel alienated at the new workplace and that there is no abridged impetus or capability. The program demonstrates the new pressures and demands that their new roles could make on them. Returnships were primarily calculated to bring mothers back into the workforce after their children have been raised enough to give them time to rejoin work, but many men also cut careers abruptly and such programs can be an invaluable source of knowledge to both to understand what current work is like. Most employers consider returning individuals as workers with experience and maturity and prefer them over the younger lot. Moreover, with their responsibilities behind them, they can expect to stay at the jobs longer. How they have scored in the returnship program, provides employers with a yardstick to gauge if they still have it in them to fulfill their work responsibilities. However, these ‘returnships’ do not pay much and in many cases not at all, but after having been out of the workplace for extended periods, this could really provide the returnees with a platform to re-launch their careers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were around 3.3 million Americans who had come back into the labor force. Some of them had lost their jobs because they were laid off, others had taken voluntary breaks to start a family or to look after elderly relatives and even those who had retired, but found retirement to be monotonous and boring.