

What is the Employment Gap

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Employment gaps are not an uncommon experience for the majority of prospective employees and can be a cause for discrimination. According to Reitman & Schneer (2005), an *employment gap* is defined as any period of voluntary or involuntary unemployment that lasts longer than one month and does not include temporary layoffs or leaves of absence. Thus, a *gap* only occurs after complete severance from a company. **It** is a period (months or years) when the job seeker was unemployed. People decide to stay unemployed mostly because they want to raise their children, travel, or go to school full time. *Gaps* on a resume are a big red flag and they raise the suspicion of the potential employer. Without explaining *gaps* in employment, the hiring manager may assume the worst. If employers see a *gap* in employment, they might assume you were incarcerated, an addict, or just plain lazy or an incompetent employee.

How to deal with the employment gap?

Considering that *employment gaps* are common, stigmatized, have differential effects in early and late-career, and can lead to serious employment issues, it is important to discover ways that the unemployed can compensate for *employment gaps* and determine whether the proposed strategies are equally effective in early and late-career.

1. Volunteer Experience

Volunteering is one attractive solution for bridging an *employment gap*. According to Wilson and Musick (1997) described volunteering as being comprised of both work and leisure, expressing simultaneously the value of useful leisure and meaningful work. According to Smith (2010), economists also recognize volunteer work as a bridge position to paid employment, as it allows individuals to gain new skills thereby increasing their human capital and value to potential employers.

1. Come up with an Employment Gap Explanation

The moment you explain the real reason, the imagined worst-case goes away.” The reason could be that that you had family problems like divorce or migrating to your spouse in a certain area and are excellent reasons for *gaps* in employment. Most employers know family is important. Also, ill-health could be yet another reason why one has been thrown out of employment for such a long period. Make it clear that the reason for your time off from the workforce has been resolved. If you were laid off due to a decrease in the volume of work, it would be important to provide any evidence of strong performance as you explain the circumstances surrounding the downsizing. Whatever your reason for being away, try to distil it down to something brief.

1. Be Prepared

You don't need to stammer when explaining your *employment gap* and don't be caught off guard by potential employers, you must have a ready explanation that is valid that justifies why you have been out of employment for a certain time, reassure the potential employer why you would not be doing it again and share the value you picked up along the way. Your explanation needs to be short, precise and to the point. The reason could be due to failure of the business. Even a failed attempt conveys a whole raft of information about your competency level. Then find achievements from the business that best fit the current job and then add them to your resume as bullet points.

1. Include Other Experience Gained During The Employment Gap

The best strategy is avoiding having a resume *gap* in the first place. As soon as you're unemployed, start consulting or volunteering. Make sure that you emphasize any constructive activities during your *gap* period, such as volunteer work, workshops or coursework, consulting, or freelance work. Then give a justification that the exposure gave you some managerial experience of some sort. Any form of work gives some additional experience, skills, and references.

1. Put a Cover Letter

If you have a *gap* in employment you may need to have a cover letter that states and justifies the reasons why you were out of employment for a particular time.

1. Profile your Skills

You need to profile your skills in such a way that they are relevant to the job you are applying for. You have to make sure that your *employment gap* consists of projects that indicate your skills are current and relevant to the job. Your *employment gap* needs to be structured and show substantive activities.

What are some of the questions that employers ask about your Employment Gap?

1. Why has no one hired you?
2. What really happened at your last job?
3. How sound is your professional judgement?
4. Do you have commitment issues?
5. What have you been doing all this time?
6. Is your expertise out of date?

From the above discussion, it is clear that the *employment gap* is a resume killer and it is therefore imperative for a prospective employee to patch up the *employment gap*. This can be done by using a lot of strategies some of which I have highlighted above.

Source:

Burke, R. J., & McKeen, C. A. (1994). Effects of employment gaps on satisfaction and career prospects of managerial and professional women. International Journal of Career Management

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