

# PART-TIME PROS

## **Handling a Gap in Your Work History**

By Erin Hovanec – Yahoo! HotJobs

Life happens. So do layoffs, new babies, sick relatives and once-in-a-lifetime travel opportunities.

No matter how hardworking and responsible you are, it's possible that you'll find yourself out of work for a significant period of time at some point in your life. The trick is to keep this sabbatical from hurting your long-term career.

### **Keep Busy During a Career Break**

Just because you're not employed doesn't mean you can't stay involved in your profession. In fact, it's much easier to rejoin the workforce if you keep your skills sharp and your knowledge current. Staying up to date doesn't require 40 hours a week. In this case, how much time you spend on your career is less important than how wisely you use that time.

Here are some effective ways to stay connected to your career while not employed:

- Find a freelance assignment or consulting project,
- Take a class in a topic related to your profession,
- Volunteer with an organization or mentor,
- Read trade journals and industry news.

### **What's Missing From This Resume?**

Nowhere is an employment gap more glaring than on a resume. You can keep these gaps out of your resume by thinking out of the box. If you've spent a portion of your time off doing freelance work, consulting or volunteering for an organization that relates to your career, include these in the "Work Experience" section.

List them exactly as you would a "real job." Include the name of the company or charity you worked with, their city and state in addition to dates. Also include your responsibilities and achievements.

Worst case: You simply have nothing relevant to include. Your resume has a big, empty space. In that case, you may want to consider a functional resume -- one that de-emphasizes chronological work experience and focuses more on your skills. Use this only as a last resort, because studies have found that most recruiters prefer chronological to functional resumes.

### **Short, Sweet and to the Point**

If your employment gap comes up in an interview, explain why you were out of work simply and briefly. Don't go into a lot of detail -- unless you think the experience gained during the gap may help you get the job. For example, if you left the workforce to go back to school or to do career-related volunteer work, say so.

Regardless of your explanation, end it on a positive note: That you're ready -- and excited -- to get back to work.