

Perils of a Work Gap on the Résumé

WORKING
PATRICIA COHEN

Is explaining a hiatus to raise children better than ignoring it?

When Brooke Bleyl started job hunting after taking 10 years off to care for her children, her interviews did not go well.

“They even said they typically don’t hire people with such a gap,” said Ms. Bleyl, who lives outside Cleveland and has three children.

After receiving “rejection after rejection after rejection,” she said, “I was very defeated.”

Ms. Bleyl, who had worked as an employment recruiter before taking time off, eventually found a job as an account manager at a staffing service, but only with the help of a personal connection.

For women hoping to return to the workplace after caring for their children, the advice is often “don’t ask, don’t tell.” But women may be better off explaining their decision to stay home to a potential employer upfront, said Joni Hersch, a professor at Vanderbilt Law School

and co-author of a new study on the subject, “Something to Talk About: Information Exchange Under Employment Law.”

Employers, afraid of running afoul of anti-discrimination laws, don’t bring up the subject, Professor Hersch said. But, she said, “women who conceal personal information dramatically lower their hiring prospects.”

Some experts were skeptical of the experiment conducted by Professor Hersch and her co-author, Jennifer Bennett Shinall, an assistant law professor at Vanderbilt, saying it was too far removed from the actual job-hunting experience.

The researchers did not interview recruiters or human resources professionals. Instead, they asked more than 3,000 people recruited online to act as potential employers and choose one of two candidates with similar experience. One applicant provided an explanation for a 10-year gap in her job history while the other provided no explanation at all. Those who revealed the personal information were 30 to 40 percent more likely to be chosen.

“The number of people who preferred the woman who explained her résumé gap was staggering,” Professor Hersch said.



MICHAEL F. MCELROY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

She and Professor Shinall argue that overly broad guidance offered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has had the effect of freezing out discussion about family life during interviews. Professor Hersch says that more neutral language that invites employers to broach the issue of family with candidates — men and women — would be preferable.

A lot of the interview process is about ensuring a good fit, she said, but now there is “an environment where you’re dancing around the elephant in the room.”

Ofer Sharone, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts, Am-

herst, who researches career transitions and hiring, disagrees. He said that changing the E.E.O.C. guidelines would be disastrous.

Marriage and children tend to hurt women much more than men in the workplace, he said, and the professors’ recommendation “would greatly exacerbate that discrimination.”

Employers often wrongly assume that mothers will not be able to commit to their jobs as much if they’re committed to their families. Saying a candidate is the wrong fit can be code for discrimination, Professor Sharone said.

Reducing the choice to one woman who explains a gap and another

who doesn’t, he said, misses the more likely reality: Both would probably be screened out before they got to the interview stage.

“If there’s a gap,” Professor Sharone said recruiters had consistently told him, they are “going to go with someone without a gap.”

Professor Sharone and other researchers did agree that if a candidate made it to the interview stage, then explaining a gap was better than leaving it to the employers’ imagination.

When Stephanie Bond decided to re-enter the work force after taking off a couple of years to care for her two sons in 2012, she ended up getting hired by a recruiter she had contacted. “I said I was a road warrior and took the opportunity to reconnect with my family,” said Ms. Bond, who was also able to list consulting work on her résumé to cover any gap. During the interview, she said, “I was very upfront about the flexibility I needed to have,” which included working from home at times.

Her own experience as a hiring manager has taught her what to look for in candidates with a career gap. But for some employers, she said, a gap is “a complete red flag and you wouldn’t get an opportunity to explain.”

Devices Worth Taking Along

TECHNOLOGY
BRIAN X. CHEN

If you’re preparing for a summer vacation, you don’t want to weigh down your travel bag with electronic gear you will barely use. Here is a guide to products I have found useful on an airplane, in a rental car, in a hotel, in an Airbnb rental and outdoors, or traveling overseas.

On the Plane

My favorite media tablet for travel is the Apple iPad Mini, which starts at \$399. Its compact size makes it easier to rest on an airplane tray. Because it is a multifunctional tablet, you can choose from a host of distractions, such as reading a book and playing a mobile game. For watching videos, SeaGate’s wireless portable hard drive, which costs \$100, may be worth stowing in your carry-on. Ahead of your trip, you can load movies and other media onto the hard drive, and the drive creates its own Wi-Fi network to stream movies to your iPad.

In the Hotel

Most hotels include cable television, but chances are you will be aching for the variety of programs you could get from streaming services like Netflix, Hulu and HBO. So I would pack Roku’s new Streaming Stick, which is the size of a thumb drive. It bypasses the hotel requirement that you log into their Wi-Fi networks through a web page — by letting you enter the credentials through your smartphone browser.

Another common headache in a hotel is finding enough outlets to charge multiple gadgets. Anker’s four-port USB wall charger can be plugged into a single outlet to charge four USB devices at a time.

In a Rental Car

The most annoying part of renting a car is all the upsells, particularly the fee for a GPS device and a mount — as if your smartphone did not provide maps already.

The best solution is to pack your own smartphone car mount. Tech-Matte’s MagPhone CD Slot, which costs only \$11, holds your phone with a magnet; you put a magnet sticker on your smartphone case.

For playing music, I recommend



MINH UONG/ THE NEW YORK TIMES

packing a standard audio jack that connects a smartphone with a stereo system, like the \$5 audio cable from Amazon.

In an Airbnb House

I have found it extremely useful to pack a sous-vide precision cooker on Airbnb trips. A sous-vide cooker heats water to a precise temperature; you seal food like steaks and salmon into plastic bags and immerse them in the water to cook them evenly at that temperature. The \$199 Anova Precision Cooker is slim enough to store in a weekend bag and includes a bracket to mount the device to your host’s cooking pot. The cooker frees up time for you to enjoy other activities.

Outdoors

Assuming you bought a smartphone in the last few years, don’t bother packing an extra camera. But if you’re going to be in the water, consider a waterproof case like

LifeProof’s Fre, which fits snugly around an iPhone.

If you are the type who enjoys drowning out the sounds of nature with music, the \$100 Roll from Ultimate Ears is my favorite wireless portable speaker.

Traveling Abroad

Google’s Project Fi is offered in more than 120 countries and charges the same rate no matter where you are: \$20 a month for unlimited minutes and text messages and \$10 per gigabyte of data.

I found that the service offered robust coverage. But Google Fi is available only on a small number of Android phones, and in foreign countries, the data speeds are capped. I recommend a Google Fi phone, with prices starting at \$199 on Google’s webpage, for people who frequently travel abroad.

But for those who seldom go overseas, it is more practical to use a foreign SIM card with your own phone.

Add a Teenage Driver, See Premiums Go Up

YOUR MONEY
ANN CARRNS

Parents looking forward to having their newly licensed teenagers drive themselves on errands may be less enthusiastic when they see the family’s new insurance bill.

Families adding a teenage driver to their auto insurance policy will see their premiums increase by an average of 79 percent, the latest analysis from insuranceQuotes.com finds. That’s a bit lower than the average increases seen in recent years, but it is still a hit to the wallet. In some states, the average premium doubles. And even in states with relatively modest increases, premiums can balloon by double digits.

“Parents need to understand, it’s very expensive to add a teenager,” said Laura Adams, senior insurance analyst with insuranceQuotes.

The higher premiums reflect teenagers’ greater likelihood of being involved in an accident. Research shows that they have the highest crash rate of any group in the United States.

Quadrant Information Systems, a provider of data and analysis to the insurance industry, conducted the analysis on behalf of insuranceQuotes using state data from large auto insurance carriers. The study looked at the impact of adding a driver who was 16 to 19 years old to a family’s policy. The hypothetical parents were married 45-year-olds with clean driving records and good credit.

The five states with the largest average increase when adding a teenage driver were New Hampshire (125 percent), Rhode Island (119 percent), Arizona (109 percent), Wyoming (106 percent) and Ohio (100 percent).

In some states, because of regulations on how insurers set rates, the increase after adding a teenager is less severe. Hawaii, for instance, doesn’t allow insurers to consider age, gender or length of driving experience when considering premiums, Ms. Adams said, so teenage drivers don’t pay much more than adults. The average increase in the state was 17 percent.

A full state-by-state list is available at insuranceQuotes.com.

Teenagers tend to be poor drivers mainly because they’re learning something new, said Deborah Hersman, president and chief executive of the National Safety Council.

Driving involves complex decision-making, she said, particularly in situations like merging into traffic on a highway, and making left-

Q & A

¶ Can I just buy my teenager a separate auto insurance policy?

You could, but the cost would generally be more than adding your teenager to your own policy, Ms. Adams said. That’s because the auto premium, even with the new, inexperienced driver added, benefits from the parents’ (hopefully good) driving history, and sometimes from other factors, like their higher credit scores.

¶ How can I keep my premium affordable when adding a teenager?

Some insurers offer “good student” discounts of as much as 25 percent for young adults, including teenagers, who maintain at least a B average and can document their academic achievement.

¶ How can I help my child stay safe while driving?

Parents can adhere to the rules of their state’s “graduated” driver’s licensing programs, which give new drivers incrementally more responsibility as they log hours on the road, Ms. Hersman said. Rules can vary by state, so parents may want to discuss their own rules as well. The National Safety Council has created a sample “contract” called the New Driver Deal, that parents and teenagers can sign to help reinforce safe habits. The teenager agrees to rules like no texting while driving and no driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

hand turns across oncoming traffic. It takes practice to get it right.

But they improve as they log more miles behind the wheel. “As people gain experience,” Ms. Hersman said, “they become better drivers.”

Research also suggests that teenage boys are more likely to drive recklessly, particularly when other teenagers are in the car. Having just one teenage passenger in the car increases a teenage driver’s crash risk by 44 percent.

The largest premium increase occurs when a 16-year-old driver is added to a policy, Ms. Adams said. The premium gradually drops each year, as the driver logs more driving miles.

Just Ignore Stock Market Fluctuations

SKETCH GUY
CARL RICHARDS

Early on June 27, a friend texted me: “Will you come talk to my co-workers?! They are talking about stopping their 401(k) contributions because of what’s going on! Driving me nuts!”

I replied, “What?”

Within seconds, he replied: “Stock market fell 500 points this morning, Carl! It’s all the way down to 17,537!”

My first thought: “Wow! The Dow is over 17,000.” And this is where

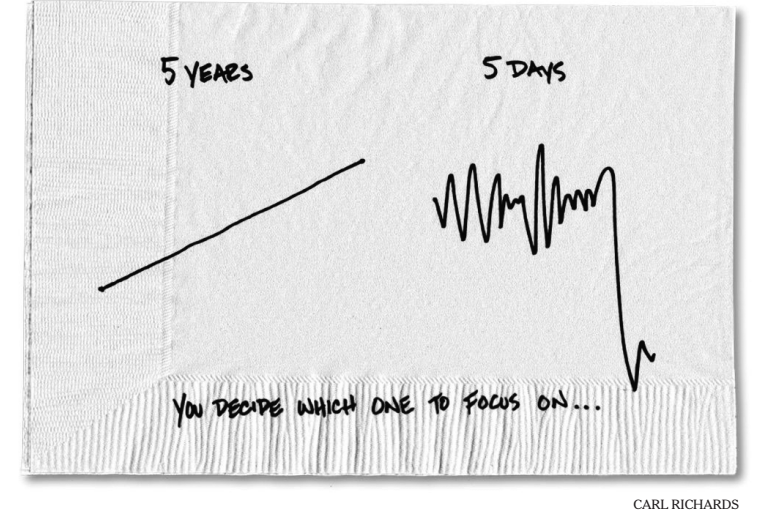
things got a bit exciting for me as a financial professional. You see, about five years ago, I decided to totally ignore the stock market, especially breaking news about the stock market. I hadn’t stopped investing, but since investing is meant to be done over decades, I had this crazy idea that maybe I would really, truly act out that whole long-term thing. That meant thinking about five years, 10 years, even 20 years from now. But I most definitely wouldn’t be thinking about what happened in one week, let alone one day.

So I made sure I had a diversified

portfolio of investments. And then I proceeded to do nothing. I also ignored the stock market news entirely, which has been surprisingly easy.

But that Friday morning, for really the first time in five years, it registered: The Dow had gone from just under 12,000 to over 17,000. That’s a gain of almost 50 percent over the last five years. Now that’s what I call amazing!

Less amazing, however, is what the markets will do, or not do, over the next few days. So you choose: five days or five years.



CARL RICHARDS