

Fresh start

A sabbatical is a chance to rejuvenate your career and become an improved version of yourself, says RONESH PURI, MD, Executive Access

There comes a time in our lives when we need to take a break and pause a bit as corporate life today is like running on a treadmill with little time to reflect. A sabbatical is a time when you can not only recharge your battery but also focus better on your life and career. Instead of being pessimistic, consider it as a chance to rejuvenate your career, expand your horizons and become an improved version of yourself. Overseas, a number of organisations prefer to hire employees returning from a sabbatical because they think such candidates are likely to be not only more energised but also more 'hungry' and hence more eager to succeed. Here are a few points to consider if you wish to restart your career after a gap:

1. Revive your self-belief:

Be crystal clear about your strengths and skills. This will boost your confidence and give you a fresh dose of energy for your job search. Find your talents and qualities which could help you in moving forward.

Confidence, hunger and passion help. So, do believe in your unique qualities.

2. Make a good resume: A good resume opens doors for you. Ironically, most resumes are neither well-prepared nor customised. Your resume must reflect what you have done — in reverse chronological order with each assignment separately explained. However, do not succumb to the temptation of providing incorrect information or hiding anything such as the length of your tenures. For, organisations have become smarter and can easily detect anomalies. Misinformation can disqualify you. It is advisable to seek professional help to prepare your resume.

3. Prepare for the interview: It is imperative to do your homework well. Research the company as well as the individuals who will inter-



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view you. I have noticed candidates lose good opportunities because of inadequate homework. Preparing yourself also means having deeper insights about yourself. Poor self-awareness can be damaging. During an interview, try and be as honest as possible rather than making excuses about your break. Do not criticise your previous organisation or bosses.

4. How would you contribute: Experience is merely a qualifier. Think deeper about the position you are interviewing for and do think of some ideas on where you could add value. Every interviewer wants to know how you can contribute to the organisation.

5. Keep yourself updated: The interviewer would also be curious to know whether you are aware of what is happening in the industry or their business. Knowing what is happening around and how the business has changed lately is useful.

6. Build a network: Before you meet people in your chosen industry and start building your network, structure your story with your career break in the middle. Tell friends and family what you are looking for. You never know who might be able to assist you.

7. Find a coach/mentor: Hiring a good coach or a mentor can be a good investment to ensure you have greater clarity and self-awareness.

8. References and certificates: Strong references from your former bosses and decision-makers from the marketplace have a positive influence on one's candidature. Do ensure that the referees are people of repute in the organisations they are associated with. Also, be prepared for blind reference checks.

In a nutshell, use the sabbatical as an opportunity to improve your life and career.