

WORKING MOTHER

Get Hired

Time for a promotion? A career change? Returning to work? Our seven-step blueprint will tell you everything you need to know to land a job you'll really love. (Hint: splurging on a piece of power clothing is a must.)

Two years ago, Marijane Funes, mom of three, was freelancing public relations projects from her Pelham, NY, home when she had a bit of a meltdown. "Out of nowhere, I panicked, thinking, *Will I ever be employable again? Not just to get any job, but one I really want?*"

Armed with a now-or-never attitude and a strong sense of what she wanted (something fulfilling) and what she didn't (a long suburb-to-city commute), she answered an ad on Craigslist.com for a position at a local marketing firm and then chiseled away at her insecurities. "I felt fossil-like. Technology had changed so much since I'd been in a professional environment. I was Wilma Flintstone. But I decided to fake it a bit on the tech front and put myself out there."

Her bold move earned a big reward. Today, Marijane heads her company's public relations department—a job she calls fulfilling beyond her wildest dreams. "I know so many women who think they won't be able to get a job, much less one that they're passionate about," she says. "But if your professional skills are solid, it doesn't matter if you've had drool on your shoulder for the past five years."

Whether you're a middle manager eyeing the C-suite, a frustrated accountant longing to run an art gallery or a mom who's been out of the workforce for a while, the time to make a run at the position you've been pining for is now. The labor market is getting tight, forcing businesses to rethink long-term recruiting strategies. "Working moms

have huge opportunities they didn't have in the past," says Lucy Rosen, president of the Business Development Group, a Garden City, NY-based marketing and business development firm. "More and more, employers are becoming sensitive to the fact that there are smart, talented women out there who can write their own tickets."

Though just ten of the CEOs among the Fortune 500 companies were women in 2006, IMD, an international executive search network, predicts this number will grow rapidly as the baby-boomer generation retires, creating a huge shortage of talent. National experts also project that women will begin to fill out executive positions and radically change the current statistics at all levels of business.

Now is the time to get out there and put this newfound leverage to good use. High demand for talented female professionals, Rosen says, means companies are increasingly offering tempting work/life options such as flextime, part-time work and job-sharing in order to attract and retain star employees. "They'd be foolish not to," she says. So don't be afraid to aim for a job you may fear is beyond your reach.

And if you're a mom wanting to reenter the working world, come on in. A recent survey conducted by Salary.com found that as the available talent pool shrinks, employers are finding increasing value in the transferable assets a mom can bring to the workforce—like multitasking, compassion, dependability, work ethic and management skills. The proof

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS

is in the hiring. The survey found that more than 95 percent of employers hire moms who ramped off, and more than 80 percent are *recruiting* moms reentering the workforce.

So how do you land your dream job? In our seven-step guide, you'll find workplace strategies, insider networking tips, the latest in resumé writing, expert salary negotiating tactics and some identity crisis solutions to help you make all the right moves. You can thank us when you're looking out the window of your new office.

ASSESS WHAT YOU WANT

It's amazing how easily our jobs or life situations can lead us away from our dreams. One minute you're battling your way from coffee-touting assistant to corporate visionary; the next—bam—your husband gets transferred or one of life's other surprises throws you into a tailspin. Now you're coasting in a job that doesn't make you happy, and you don't know what to do about it.

First, get clear about your priorities. What do you absolutely need? What are you willing to be flexible about, and what do you want but can live without? If you're angling for a big



promotion, how is that going to affect your family life? If your true passion is teaching, not IT, what's it going to take to make that dream a reality?

"We find that people who are not happy with what they do often have a values conflict," says Michael Bednarski, PhD, a psychologist and management consultant on the staff of the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute of New York City. "What they do for a living doesn't express who they are." Research on job satisfaction shows that many people would like

their work to be more personally and professionally satisfying. "When you don't find your work gratifying," Dr. Bednarski says, "it may become unchallenging, and job dissatisfaction occurs. This dissatisfaction can spill into other areas of life."

Dr. Bednarski coaches clients to assess their values and to list the five things that matter most to them in their lives: for example, financial security, creativity, helping other people, location, work/home balance, using intuitive skills. Try interviewing your close friends or spouse to better understand what you're really all about. Dr. Bednarski and other experts recommend using instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (found at mbticomplete.com) to facilitate career decision making and assess career mobility.

The questions you need to ask yourself include: What do you *love*? What is your skills set? Where do you have a skills gap? How much money do you need to make? What sorts of flexible arrangements do you need? Once you have a clearer vision of what you want, the path will begin to emerge.

AMP UP YOUR EGO

If you want people to believe in you, first you have to believe in yourself. Pour yourself a cup of tea (or a martini), get comfortable and write down all your accomplishments. Seeing right there in black and white how capable you are just might motivate you to take the leap, whether that means making a strategic move in the same industry or jumping to another field entirely. A teacher, for example, may have excellent managerial skills from years of keeping a room full of first graders on task. A marketing manager may have what it takes to run a nonprofit because she can raise funds by highlighting the organization's strengths.

Focus on what you have to offer, not on what you don't. Include any volunteer or community work you've been doing—or even the coordination it takes to get everyone in the family where they're going on a tight schedule.

To get the job you want, you need to conquer your insecurities, transform your thinking, tailor your behavior and demand the professional recognition you deserve, says Rebecca Shambaugh, author of *It's Not a Glass Ceiling, It's a Sticky Floor*. "It's incumbent on women to look beneath their own feet to see what behaviors, assumptions or beliefs they have that may be self-limiting or keeping them from achieving their own career goals," she says. Gaps in your skills set? Fill them in. Take courses at a local college or online university and immerse yourself in the world you want to join. Attend conferences; speak with others in the field; check the Web and read trade journals. Seek a mentor who's doing a job similar to what you'd like to do, suggests Shambaugh. "If you want to be CFO of your organization and you're not quite there, find a role model and ask her how *she* did it," she says. "Set up an action plan. You'll be shocked by how empowered you feel."

If you've been out of the workforce for a while caring for your children, don't apologize. "Recognize yourself as a competent professional instead of wasting time explaining an absence from work," says Michelle Tillis Lederman, founder of Executive Essentials in New York City, which provides



executive and career coaching. "If you come from a place of insecurity, it translates that way."

UPGRADE YOUR IDENTITY

Now that you're brimming with confidence, you have to visualize yourself in your new job. For instance, if you're in the No. 2 slot aiming for the No. 1 position, you have to start thinking and acting like a leader so that the world starts seeing you differently as well.

"There are parts of your identity you've just accepted from childhood and taken into adulthood," says Mary Lynne Heldmann, an executive and team coach and author of *When Words Hurt: How to Keep Criticism from Undermining Your Self-Esteem*. "Identity becomes destiny if you keep looking at yourself that way." Take an inventory of everything you believe about yourself—both good and bad. It's likely that many of those beliefs are limiting, such as *I am not very organized* or *I could never be the CEO of a successful business*. "You need to challenge each and every item on the list," says Heldmann. "Limiting beliefs aren't reality. They're just something that we make up. So why not change that to beliefs that work for us?"

While you need to ground your intentions in reality, you don't want to limit your goals or become tied to a specific outcome. Your new way of thinking may lead you into something completely different from what you'd originally envisioned—but just as rewarding. "As you get clearer and clearer about the future you intend and you keep connecting to it," Heldmann says, "you actually move closer and closer to its becoming a reality. I've seen so many lives change for the better simply because people created a new belief system."

WRITE A KILLER RESUMÉ

A resum  has one function: to land you an interview. And experts agree that the way to wow potential employers is to be sure you have the basics covered. Make your resum  easy to read: a vertical format, not too much bold or underlining, plenty of white space. Keep it specific to the industry and don't include a lot of extraneous information. Answer the three most important questions employers have: Can you either make or save them money? Are you innovative? Do you have the skills necessary to do the job?

The secret to a great resum , says Kathy Sweeney, president of The Write Resum , a Phoenix-area resum  writing and career consulting firm, is to think of it as product packaging or a 30-second commercial about you. Be sure the "profile" section at the top of your resum  details your core competencies. For instance, an accountant might have the words "accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger and financial statements" in her profile.

Recruiters want to see a good mix of duties and accomplishments. Illustrate where you have increased revenue or decreased costs. It's best to use numbers, whether it's dollar figures or percentages. Instead of writing "responsible for" and then listing what you did in a certain position, quantify your employment history in ways that focus not only on what you did but how well you did it. For example, instead of "Responsible for managing marketing," say, "Launched a marketing initiative that resulted in a 40 percent increase in sales and improved customer services."

If you're a mom looking to reenter the workforce, hit the "mommy gap" head-on. Experts suggest listing the dates from the time you started staying home to the present, and write: "Off-ramped for personal reasons. Now pursuing return to full-time work." Below that, suggests Nurys Harrigan, president and CEO of Careers in Nonprofits, a Chicago-based staffing firm, list the ways that you have updated and sharpened your skills during that time, through volunteer work, courses or affiliations with professional associations.

If you're sending your resum  electronically, be sure it's in a simple format such as Microsoft Word. And in the subject line, include only the position title. "Staffing firms screen for that," Harrigan says. "Especially when we're getting sixty emails per hour."

START NETWORKING

"It's who you know" is still very much a truism when it comes to getting your perfect position. Most people get their jobs by networking. And while it's not as tough for men to be bold in this arena (thanks to old-boy networks), women have a harder time. Often women will say: "I hate this. It's horrible asking people for things," says J. Janelle Shubert, PhD, director of the Center for Women's Leadership at Babson College, a private business school in Wellesley, MA. But if you substitute the idea of "relationships" for "networks," it gets easier.

Start networking where you're most comfortable: your child's playgroup, your neighborhood, your college alumni office. Don't narrow your networking to work environments

only. You might be surprised to learn that a mom at your child's school is also the CEO at your town's largest employer! Once you begin your job search, let *everyone* know.

The golden rule of networking is to give more than you get. So how can you help those you want to network with? Start networking before you need something. Think two steps ahead to build goodwill and credibility. This works in short-term situations, too. "Don't enter a room trying to collect twenty business cards in twenty minutes," says



Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Northampton, MA-based Human Resource Solutions (yourhrexperts.com) and the former HR careers expert for Monster.com. "Instead, try to meet one or two people and keep the focus on them. Eventually the conversation will turn to you, and you'll have the chance to share your story."

Attend industry events. You can print up business cards (free at vista.print.com) and hand them out to people you meet. Also, check out sites like facebook.com, linkedin.com and other social online networking tools to discover old friends, classmates and colleagues. The Internet isn't a quick fix for the networking challenged, but it's a great tool to help you make connections.

ACE THE INTERVIEW

The best way to breeze through an interview is to be prepared. Use the Internet to research the company, take notes to use as reminders, then memorize them and rehearse. "Brag" about your accomplishments without coming off as pompous by providing real-life examples of your achievements. There's a huge difference between "I'm great at

project management" and "Here's an example of a project that I managed successfully." Go in prepared with clever responses to common interview questions. When asked, "What is your five-year plan?" link your answer to the job you're interviewing for, says Katy Piotrowski, author of *The Career Coward's Guide to Interviewing*. Say something like "Because your position is a great fit for where I'm heading in my career, my first goal is to excel in this job." Likewise, when asked to list your strengths, align your answer with the requirements of the position. For example, you can say, "I excel under deadline pressure. Here's an example of when that proved particularly useful." Then provide an anecdote that makes you look like Superwoman.

When asked about your weaknesses, choose one that is truly a challenge for you but that you're working on. Avoid the overused weakness-but-not-really tactic of saying something like "I'm a perfectionist" or "I'm a workaholic." Instead, pick a trait that you've struggled with but that isn't a deal killer: "I tend to be a big-picture thinker, and I've thought about that and found that it's helpful to be really focused on details as well."

GET WHAT YOU'RE WORTH

You're an inch away from landing your dream job—now you have to be sure your compensation is just as dreamy. This negotiation is a dance, so the more rehearsed you are, the better. Know what you'll take if the money doesn't measure up. Are you willing to

TACKLE YOUR TICS

Everyone knows about interview body language: Lean slightly forward to look interested; don't cross your arms or you'll look defensive. But what about the quirks you have less control over? Are you a hummer? A tapper? A leg shaker? Here, nervous habits and measures to combat them from a duo of pros: Diane Gottsman, a corporate etiquette expert, and Katy Piotrowski, founder of JobWorks.

The Rambler If a pause in conversation makes you pounce, put the brakes on your babbling by asking, "Are there any questions that I can answer for you?" or "Would you tell me about your expectations for this position?" Keep your comments under two minutes.

The Fidgeter You twirl a pen while thinking. Make sure you have nothing in your hands, and cross one foot behind the other.

The Interrupter You finish other people's sentences or cut others off. Consciously take a deep breath as each question is asked. Curb your enthusiasm by allowing a few seconds of quiet time before answering: Your interviewer will finish her sentence, and you can gather your thoughts before speaking.

The Hand Talker You look like you're putting on a puppet show when you speak. Do a run-through with a friend. If your hands are often up in the air, steady them on your legs.

The Um-er This filler word marks every sentence. Go for silence instead. A pause shows that you're thoughtful. But don't beat yourself up for throwing in a few "ums"—most of us do it.

accept a pay cut for a position that gains you critical work experience or access to potential mentors or future employers or clients? What about a better title in exchange for less pay? Would you consider flextime? Additional vacation? Decide what your walkaway value is, and be prepared to say “no thanks” if you can do better elsewhere.

There’s a fine line between respectful assertiveness and over-the-top arrogance. But this is the single best time to ask for money, extra vacation, immediate enrollment in the 401(k) or whatever tops your wish list. If you feel uncomfortable haggling, as many women do, think of this as advocating not for yourself but for your family. Set your aspirations as high as realistically possible and get the best information you can to support those aspirations, says Hannah Riley Bowles, an associate professor at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and an author of a study on gender

differences and initiating negotiations. “Men tend to be paid higher than women, so see if you can figure out what kinds of packages men with your experience or job prospects have.”

When you’re negotiating, don’t be thrown by a question like “What do you need?” If possible, be prepared to make the first offer or come up with a way of framing the discussion so that your reasoning shapes the negotiation. Find the salary range for a job by consulting websites such as salary.com, vault.com and monster.com. If you’re an on-ramping mom, it’s important to get paid what the position calls for, not some price discounted for the time you took off.

After the dance is done and you’ve asked for what you want, you can put everything it took to get you there—newfound confidence, negotiating skill and a fierce wardrobe—to good use...right after you hear those magical life-changing words: You’re hired! ■

WHAT TO WEAR

The conservative pinstripe may be perfect for a Wall Street interview, but it’s decidedly unhip if you’re seeking a spot in high-tech. Here, industry-by-industry advice from *Working Mother* fashion editor April Zdrilic-Shen and from Brenda Kinsel, author of *Brenda Kinsel’s Fashion Makeover: 30 Days to Diva Style!*

Financial (think power suit) The power suit has softened—a jacket and matching skirt or pants in menswear fabrics is in. Look for feminine pockets on the jacket or interest in the sleeves to keep it from being too serious. Mix up the fabrics and patterns a bit. Try pinstripe pants with a tweed jacket. Keep accessories to a bare minimum. Handbags? Only classics need apply.

The Power Piece The perfect-fitting suit. The jacket shape should be modern (a preferred silhouette is a peplum or princess-seam style) and no longer than the upper hip—a jacket that’s any longer looks dowdy and will dwarf you.

Designers and stores to consider Nordstrom, Express, Macy’s, Lafayette 148 New York, Jones New

York, Ann Taylor, Banana Republic, Liz Claiborne Inc. and Sisley. For amazing shirts, try Anne Fontaine.

Fashion/Beauty (think uptown funk) Shoot for standing out in colors, textures and patterns. You want to look three steps ahead of everyone else. Try skinny pants with a fluid blouse—chiffon or silk with some detail at the neck and volume in the sleeve—and finish the look with a fitted man-tailored vest worn buttoned. Handbags should be bold and glossy. No plunging necklines! High heels are a must, but go with round-toe, peep-toe pumps or ankle boots.

The Power Piece They’ll be judging your handbag and your heels, so make ‘em hits.

Designers and stores to consider INC International at Macy’s for trendy pieces. Mix some H&M in with classic items. Also try Michael Kors, L.A.M.B., Tibi and Rebecca Taylor.

Ad Agency (think classic but with flair) High-waisted, full-cut trousers in a menswear stripe with a feminine white



blouse that sports great detailing and a black cropped jacket make an ideal ensemble. Don’t let the handbag get sloppy. No hobos! Go light on the accessories, but don’t forget them, either. Try a bangle bracelet or a multiple-strand beaded necklace in a bold color.

The Power Piece Great handbag and belt. These are two places you can let your personality shine through.

Designers and stores to consider Chaiken, alice + olivia for pants. Simply Vera at Kohl’s, Black Halo, Adam + Eve, Eskell, Tahari and Theory offer great modern cuts in pants and jackets.

Academic (think classic casual) You want to be taken seriously, so consider colors in the darker tones or neutrals. No lime green or hot pink. The fabrics and silhouette should be modern and sophisticated. Shoes should be comfortable and conservative—no Jimmy Choos!

The Power Piece A well-fitting, expensive-looking sweater (read cashmere here).

Designers and stores to consider J.Crew, Tory Burch, Armani Exchange and Isaac Mizrahi for Target.

Tech (think downtown hip) If there’s an interview situation where you can have a little fashion fun, this is it. Try a trendy T-shirt or a print blouse (stripes, flowers, paisley) with a cotton blazer-style jacket and nonmatching pants or skirt. Even a wrap dress paired with tights and boots would work well.

The Power Piece Great-fitting pants. They’ll anchor anything else. **Designers and stores to consider** Isaac Mizrahi for Target and Michael Stars, as well as vintage boutiques, for tees. Gap for jackets. Other hip designers to look for: Vince, DVF, Laundry by Shelli Segal and Adam + Eve.

