

Managing Your Career as a Working Parent

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Managing your career becomes more challenging after you have children. Before children, all you had to worry about was your career, your social life and your personal relationships. Children add a whole new dimension of responsibility and selflessness to your life, and unashamedly to most people, they take priority to a career. In saying that, it does not mean that you want to give up your career. You have worked hard at attaining your qualifications and you have generated significant skills, experience and expertise that should not be wasted. Consider the following ideas to manage your career as a working parent:

- **Consider your work flexibility requirements on a regular basis.** Flexibility requirements may change as your children grow older. You may choose to work more during some stages of your kids lives and be at home more for other stages. No one can define what the happy balance is because we are all different. To achieve your own successful balance, you have to be happy about the choices you make and ensure that family responsibilities are shared.
- **Do a health check on your career.** Are you where you want to be or do you feel like you are being left behind? If you have been doing the same job for a long period of time and you are unsatisfied, talk to your manager. Make sure you apply for suitable internal jobs that match your experience. If a full time person is required, build a case for job sharing. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Also, make sure that your salary is in line with salaries being offered for similar roles in the job market. Refer to the online jobs boards, newspapers, or talk to a recruiter. If your salary is below average, put forward a case to your employer.
- **Update your skills.** Talk to your human resources department or manager about training and workshop options that may be available in-house to employees. Alternatively, your employer may have funds in their staff training budget for you to do an external course. Sometimes you may be able to participate in these workshops / courses / training during a working day.
- **Attend networking events.** Networking events are a great way to expand your contacts, gain exposure to new opportunities, and get up to date on industry trends. Many networking events are still held in the evening however networking lunches are becoming very common. Get in touch with an association in your industry and find out about their networking events. If you work for a large employer, there may be networking groups already in existence that you could tap in to.
- **Organise your home life.** If the home front is running smoothly (most of the time!), then you will have more time to focus on your career while you are at work. For example, if you have great child care arrangements (including drop-off and pick-up), a regular house cleaner, you have pre-cooked some meals, and you and your partner take turns in cooking dinner, you won't be sitting at work spending your time worrying about your responsibilities at home.
- **Be confident in your skills and abilities.** Many parents are too 'grateful' for being given a chance to return to work or for being allowed to work flexibly. You are a skilled, experienced and responsible employee returning to work. If you have returned to work flexibly, you are being paid on a pro-rata basis so you are not getting more than you deserve. Do not work on your days off and do not answer your phone. These issues should have been addressed when you negotiated flexible working conditions. If they haven't been, you should approach your manager and discuss any problems you are experiencing.