



EXPLAINING GAPS IN YOUR EMPLOYMENT



Explaining Gaps in your Employment

If you're feeling a little bit anxious about explaining an employment gap on your resume, don't worry, you're not alone! It's normal to feel a bit nervous, but the good news is that with the right approach, you can make sure that your gaps don't hurt your chances of landing a job. Let's take a look at some important tips and tricks to help you explain your employment gaps.

What is an "Employment Gap"?

First things first, let's define what we mean by an employment gap. Essentially, it's any period in your professional career where you didn't have a formal job. Your resume lists your work history in reverse chronological order, so these gaps stand out. They can vary in length, from a few months to several years, and employers will almost always ask about them. But don't worry; once you know how to explain your employment gaps effectively, you'll be able to put their minds at ease and move forward with the interview.

Explaining the Gap

When you have employment gaps in your work history, it can feel like you're already fighting an uphill battle. But the truth is, these gaps don't have to negatively impact your chances of getting hired. Here are some tips to help you explain your employment gaps effectively:

1. Tell the truth

The most important thing you can do is to be honest. It's tempting to lie when responding to these inquiries, but trust us; honesty is always the best policy. Remember, employers are not trying to be accusatory or make you feel like you've done something wrong. They're simply trying to find the best person for the job. If they see a gap in your resume, it's natural for them to have questions. They want reassurance that whatever caused that pause in employment won't prevent you from being successful now. So be honest, and don't make the mistake of telling tall tales. Lying about the employment gap is one of the worst things you can do.

2. Determine what gaps you don't need to worry about addressing

Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to explain every employment gap. Suppose you're further along in your career. In that case, employers aren't interested in learning about those years you spent hopping around part-time jobs as a teenager. Leave those jobs off your resume so they will keep recruiters focused. They're interested in your career history and your path to get where you are now. You can even ditch the months in your resume entirely to avoid drawing attention to short breaks of less than six months. Short employment gaps aren't a cause for concern because they are easy to explain.

3. Show what relevant experience and skills you gained during the gap

The best way to explain employment gaps is to discuss what you learned during that time. What skills did you gain, and how will that experience benefit you in the workplace moving forward? Find ways to tie everything back to the position you're trying to get. Highlight how the employment gap served you and how it prepared you to get to where you are now.

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4. Practice

Don't enter your interview without being ready to explain notable employment gaps. You can almost guarantee that questions about your employment gap will come up. Prepare your response ahead of time, keep it concise, and move on. Understand why the gap occurred, and be prepared to talk about how it helped you grow both personally and professionally.

Common Reasons for a Gap

You Took Medical Leave:

Your health is crucial, and medical leave is an easy explanation that most employers will recognize. Don't worry about disclosing the nature of your medical leave, but do let the interviewer know if your condition is resolved.

You Needed to be a Caretaker:

Caring for a sick family member is a full-time job, making gaps necessary. Include in your answer that you no longer need to be the caretaker, so the interviewer doesn't worry that this will happen again.

You Moved:

Relocating to a new area is a big deal, and it takes time to adjust. Finding work and getting legal matters taken care of can be time-consuming, so it's reasonable to have an employment gap.

You Were Pursuing Formal Education or Career Development:

Employers love to hear when candidates take the initiative to further their careers and skillset. Those endeavours take time and attention, so taking time off is reasonable.

You Were Looking for a New Job:

It's not always easy to land a job. Depending on your industry and local job market, you could wait months for an opening. Don't be afraid to talk about that process when explaining an employment gap.

You Were Laid Off:

Being laid off is another reason that employers understand. As long as you use your time productively, it's perfectly reasonable to have a lengthy employment gap.

You Started Your Own Business:

If you started your own business, you probably had no choice but to end your formal employment. In fact, it's safe to assume that it did if you're interviewing for a job. You can discuss what happened (and what you learned) when explaining the gap.

Opportunities to Explain Gaps in Employment: There are several opportunities to explain employment gaps. You can proactively mention it in your cover letter or include it in your work history, positioning it as if it were another job. Finally, there's the interview. Have an explanation ready, and you can get it out of the way and move on.