

# GET THE JOB

## Explaining Pandemic Downtime

As the employment market heats up and job seekers find fresh starts in their careers, the issue of explaining pandemic-related downtime is a hot topic to address.

Professionals from all industries were furloughed at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, and many still haven't been back to work. Others turned to consulting roles to be more flexible for their families.

We all did our best to make decisions in the face of a once-in-a-generation global health crisis. Now as travel restrictions ease and companies begin bringing back employees, how do we explain our past year-and-a-half of work – especially if it's complicated or inconsistent?

### TELL THE TRUTH

One of most stressful parts of applying for jobs is covering gaps in employment. Many professionals are adamant about omitting positions with past employers when it comes to their résumés.

There can be many reasons for this, including a less-than-amicable exit from the company or trying to



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draw attention away from roles not related to their current job targets.

While there are some instances this may be appropriate, hiring managers and their sophisticated candidate screening programs are pretty smart about sniffing out inaccurate, incomplete information.

Your best bet as a job seeker is to create an honest, transparent résumé, cover letter

and LinkedIn profile that addresses any gaps head on.

Hiring managers today are more flexible than ever before when it comes to analyzing pandemic-induced gaps on a candidate's résumé. This is good news for job seekers.

### UPDATE YOUR RESUME OFTEN

As you search for new positions, it is critical that you update your résumé to align

your background and experience with the positions you're interested in.

Here are a few key pieces of your résumé to consistently maintain:

- Overall format and design.
- Up-to-date summary or objective.
- A "specialties" section that includes specific keywords.
- Bullets for each past job that show how you have made a difference for your company.

Updating your résumé can be a difficult task to keep up on. Set a monthly calendar notification to alert you to do a quick review of your résumé. Schedule a quarterly meeting with some of your colleagues or friends to talk through recent career updates.

You'll be surprised how these proactive behaviors will prepare you to strike when a job announcement of interest catches your attention.

### CONNECT THE DOTS

On any résumé, it is critical that you draw clear lines from your previous accomplishments to the job for which you're applying.

Do so by tailoring your résumé before submitting an application. This helps increase the chances that your résumé will make it through applicant tracking systems that are scanning hundreds of incoming documents from candidates.

The less homework you make a hiring manager do, the better your chance of getting hired. Include key phrases that you find on job announcements within your résumé, and then expand upon them with real data about how you helped a company save or make money.

These small steps can pay big dividends for your job search.