



# Women Returners

The Spencer Group Candidate Toolkit



**the spencer group**

Specialist Recruitment Solutions

## Women Returners

Leaving employment for a few months, or even a few years, forms an important stage in the career of most women. But time away from the workplace can be disruptive and people re-entering the workforce often feel intimidated by the changes that take place, even over a short period.

Women need to make sure that when they return to work they still have their self-confidence, have kept in touch with issues in the workplace and have updated their skills.

'Women need to look factually at what they have done. Women who have taken a career break often feel they have no confidence or skills. They need to look at what they have done as a mother or carer at home,' says Jenny Daisley, chief executive of women's training specialist, Springboard Consultancy.

Before you leave work, check your options. Some companies offer internal refresher courses or offer short-term placements and training days during a career break, designed to help staff keep in touch. Whether you intend to return to the same company or not, make sure you know where you stand in terms of company pay and benefits, such as pensions and private medical insurance.

## What is the norm for your industry?

Some professions are better than others at helping staff back into work. Often these are either female-dominated jobs or in industries facing chronic staff shortages. Discover what is the norm for your industry, and try talking to other women who may have suffered similar problems.

Women in science and engineering, for example, felt there was a need for a women's support organisation, and started setting up local groups across the country.

'When we first thought about setting up the Association of Women in Science and Engineering (AWiSE), it was given a small mention in *New Scientist*. There was no contact address, just my name in an article. I got half a dozen calls from women who wanted to set up local groups, who had gone out of their way to track me down,' says Dr Joan Mason who founded the group.

AWiSE, though still small, has helped to influence national policy and to set better standards for women in academia and in science and engineering-related professions.

## Networking will help

Choosing a network that suits you is important. Many professions run their own groups, ranging from IT to publishing. Some of these target women wanting to enter the profession, but also provide support and advice on training issues, organise events and provide mentoring services for women. A number of networks also attempt to influence policy-making at a national or local level.

'Joining a network was an amazing experience for me,' says Hilary Leslie, chair of the London branch of Network, a national organisation. 'Network serves many purposes. It supports women returners, mothers and those who have been made redundant, a very diverse group of people.'

### Sector-based networks:

- Women in Science, Engineering and Technology 0114 225 2041
- Association of Women in Science and Engineering 01647 221316
- NASUWT - Women in Teaching 0121 453 6150
- Women in Publishing
- Women's IT Network