

my family

careers

Getting back to work



Looking for a job but can't work crazy hours because of the kids? One enterprising mum explains how she re-entered the workforce and in the process helped others just like her.

By Belinda Connolly.

Not all that long ago having children meant kissing goodbye to a career but now women have the option of finding work in a flexible environment that allows them to balance raising a family with a job.

Kathryn MacMillan found out first-hand how difficult it was juggling a career and motherhood when she had to explain large gaps on a CV.

The young mum owned her own business but ill-health meant she was forced to sell up.

At the age of 35, with her health restored and a child at school she wanted a job but needed one with flexible hours.

She searched for books to help her brush on skills needed to re-enter the workforce but found none.

"There were not a lot of resources to help me, there were lots of books about writing resumes and handling interviews but nothing about explaining to employers your career breaks," Mrs MacMillan said.

Based on her difficulty in finding a job she could fit around the rest of her life, Mrs MacMillan started Nine 2 Three recruitment agency (nine2three.com.au).

She said the agency was a conduit connecting people looking for flexible part-time, full-time and temporary roles with employers in a variety of organisations.

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Asking to work school-friendly hours of 9am to 3pm was daunting enough, let alone for a woman returning to the workforce after many years.

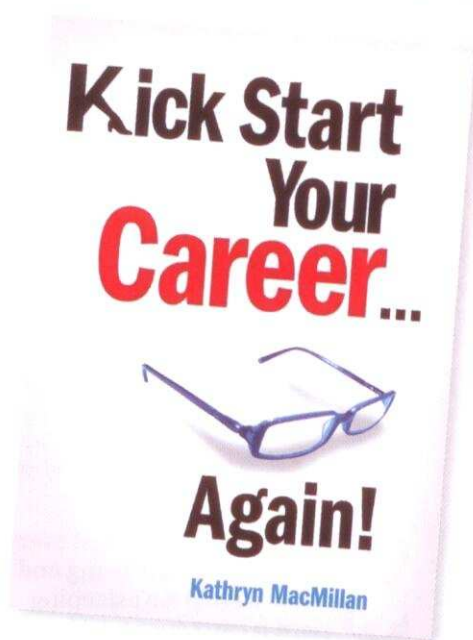
Time and time again Mrs MacMillan said mums returning to work asked the same questions but there was nowhere they could go to get answers.

"I realised there must be a lot of people in a similar situation as me," she said.

She wrote *Kick Start Your Career... Again!*, a working mum-friendly slim volume that could be read on the train to the interview or the night before.

Mrs MacMillan said women who've taken years out of the workforce shouldn't underestimate themselves.

"Women in this situation have a lot to balance: work, life with families. They are bringing life skills, they know how to delegate, they understand responsibility,



they have time management skills – all these things are appreciated by employers.

"One of the biggest issues is confidence, they may feel they've been out of work for a period of time and they're questioning whether they have the skills to do the job."

Balancing Act

There is much debate about whether women can truly have it all. Some say yes, many more so no and a few say you can have it all, just not everything at the same time.

Kathryn MacMillan said balance and honesty with your own capabilities was the key to success.

She said the agency often saw mothers who were keen to re-enter the workforce but haven't thought about the many weeks of school holidays each year.

"You need to have contingency plans in place," she said. "Once you've planned that then it's also about making sure your family is onboard with your decision to go back to work."

She said children could be responsive to taking on chores around the home to help. Even toddlers are capable of putting clean clothes in drawers, older children can ensure family pets are fed and watered and school-age children can make their own sandwiches each day.