



Return to Work Anxiety

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In my experience with clients, return to work anxiety is prevalent in a number of situations. Predominantly individuals deal with this generally when their search has been for a prolonged period of time, say greater than 9 months, and their search was filled with good activity and many rejections. In this situation, an individual's self confidence takes a beating. For individuals with low self confidence, they will have return to work anxiety regardless of the time away from work. In today's workplace environment, this individual may, "Wonder will I lose my job again?"

The other situation is when individuals have made a personal choice to be out of the workforce and are now ready to return. This resulting gap in work history may well reduce the confidence of the individual and has created many self-doubts about their skills and ability to excel in the new workplace. There is a feeling that too much may have changed, when the reality is, it is probably not true. Also, they will wonder, "...will I be able to get up to speed," particularly after a longer period hiatus? The transition anxiety is often continued in return to work because of one's self doubts. Ultimately, the new position is, of course, welcome and the candidate is excited about the job. However, once their focus changes to the new job the anxiety may very well increase.

The best way to limit return to work anxiety is for an individual to focus on their key skills and strengths, which have served them well in the past and which they bring to the new work opportunity. Most important is for the individual to build a personal on-boarding strategy in which they develop a plan to integrate into the new organization, learn the culture and align themselves with individuals who share their same work values. This plan ramps up an individual's assimilation and help to reduce their anxiety. This strategy also helps the individual to understand what are the key performance factors necessary to succeed in the new organization.

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