

## A game plan to help you find a flexible job

By Kate Sykes, Director [www.careermums.com.au](http://www.careermums.com.au)

Despite a national skills shortage, finding flexible working conditions can still be a challenge. Some of our CareerMums have expressed frustration when dealing with recruitment firms who are not as excited about their potential in the job market when they say those 3 little words: "part time job".

Don't be discouraged. There are employers who want your skills and experience, and are more than happy to 'think flexibly'. It is just a matter of knowing where to look, who to talk to, and how to approach it.

To find a flexible job, follow our 5 step game plan:

**Step 1:** Review your **career aspirations**. What do you want to do? Sit down with your partner or friend and write down what your skills are and what you are good at. Create a mind map and re-visit it throughout the week to make sure you have covered everything. Research suitable job ads and see the skills that employers are looking for. If you need to improve your skills and boost your confidence, look at doing a short course. If you are in need of career coaching, contact [www.mumsatwork.com.au](http://www.mumsatwork.com.au). Importantly, work out the flexibility you need to manage work and family.

**Step 2:** Revamp and update your **resume**. The biggest mistake you can make in your resume is to refer to the time you have spent at home as 'stay-at-home mum'. Think about the unpaid activities you have been doing and turn these into 'work speak'. For example, raising money for a charity involves communication, business development, and marketing skills. Tuck shop work involves money-handling, customer service, and the ability to work in a team. If you've been doing the bookkeeping for your family business, research what businesses will pay you to do their bookkeeping. Volunteer work is a wonderful way to build up your work experience so make sure you include this in your resume as well. If you would like a free appraisal (tips and hints only) of your resume, send it to [info@mumsatwork.com.au](mailto:info@mumsatwork.com.au). Your resume sells you so make sure you spend time on formatting, content, and grammar.

**Step 3:** Submit a **proposal** to work flexibly. If you are staying with your existing employer, ensure that you are communicating your desire to work flexibly at least a few months before you return to work. Ask your employer to provide you with a template that outlines and itemises all the things you need to consider to return to work in a part time or flexible role such as working hours, work you will perform at home versus the office, and how client needs will be affected. If you are actively searching for a new employer, be very clear about your flexibility requirements upfront. If you see an ideal job being advertised that is full time, ask if they would consider flexible or part time working arrangements. The national skills shortage is providing an ideal environment for you to negotiate flexibility. If you need help preparing a flexible proposal to put to your employer contact [info.mumsatwork.com.au](http://info.mumsatwork.com.au)

**Step 4:** Find **family friendly employers**. Who are they? Is there one close to you? The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) promotes women-friendly

organisations with equal opportunity programs that recognise and advance their female workforce. Similarly, the National Work and Family Awards recognise private, public and community sector organisations with outstanding flexible working arrangements that meet the needs of the business and its employees. Visit either [www.eowa.gov.au](http://www.eowa.gov.au) or [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au) for a list of family friendly and flexible employers in your state. If you think you would like to work for one of these employers, show initiative and make contact with them.

**Step 5:** Know your **flexible job channels**. Ensure that you register your name and other relevant information with a few job channels to ensure you have broad coverage. There are some recruitment agencies that specialize in flexible job vacancies. Agencies that we know and recommend are:

- Nine2Three – [www.nine2three.com.au](http://www.nine2three.com.au)
- Flex Professionals – [www.flexprofessionals.com.au](http://www.flexprofessionals.com.au)
- Priorities – [www.priorities.com.au](http://www.priorities.com.au)
- Seed Recruitment – [www.seedrecruitment.com.au](http://www.seedrecruitment.com.au)
- Dare Two Share – [www.daretwoshare.com.au](http://www.daretwoshare.com.au)
- Catch Recruitment – [www.catchrecruit.com.au](http://www.catchrecruit.com.au)

Boutique job boards and candidate boards that promote flexibility include [www.careermums.com.au](http://www.careermums.com.au) and [www.adage.com.au](http://www.adage.com.au). Set up job alerts and upload your profile so prospective employers can find you.

Another great channel is your family and social network. Let them know what you are looking for. Great leads often come from people you know. Consider setting up yourself up as a freelancer or independent consultant/contractor. With good contacts, there can be an abundance of flexible work projects that employers can engage your services for on a short to medium term basis on a flexible arrangement. Many employers prefer this option as they only pay for your expertise and help on an as needs basis, therefore they are often more likely to meet your flexible needs.

Before launching [www.careermums.com.au](http://www.careermums.com.au), Kate Sykes worked in marketing and communications management roles in the IT, finance and Government sectors in Sydney, Canberra and Boston USA for over 12 years. She is also a member of the Canberra Business Council Workstyles committee which focuses on promoting flexible workplace practices in the ACT region, and dedicates time to a program that assists pregnant teenage girls. Kate is passionate about women's contribution to society and the workplace. And importantly, she is a mum to two young children.