

Resume gap? 5 tips to a winning interview response

 By [Anja van Beek](#)

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In the dynamic world of job interviews, there is one question that often sends a chill down the spine of job seekers: "What were you doing during this gap in your resume?" This seemingly innocent question can trigger fear, doubt, and discomfort in the minds of job seekers.



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For some job seekers this question seems invasive, irrelevant to their qualifications, and disregards personal boundaries.

Resume gaps are far more common than you might think. Yet, the truth is that the activities during these gaps belong to your personal life and are none of the interviewer's business. You might have taken a well-deserved break, prioritised your health, and family commitments, or embarked on a job search that aligns with your true aspirations. You could even be navigating challenging economic climates like the high unemployment rate in South Africa.

In a survey conducted in March 2022 of 23,000 global employees, 62% of respondents said they had taken a break from work at some point.

Whatever the reason, your resume reflects your professional journey, not a measure of your worth.

Let's delve deeper into why this question persists and how you can regain your power when faced with it.

The real reason behind the question

The true reason why interviewers are asking about resume gaps is due to fear and the need for reassurance.

Interviewers are often haunted by making a wrong hiring decision, leading to an atmosphere that can feel more like an interrogation than a genuine conversation with the potential candidate. This fear-driven approach may compel interviewers to focus on resume gaps, despite their limited relevance to a candidate's true potential and qualifications.



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Embracing resume gaps as growth accelerators

Instead of perceiving gaps as barriers, we can celebrate them as opportunities for personal growth and exploration.

A resume gap might signify a moment when you dared to step off the conventional path, allowing for new insights, skill development, and self-discovery. Embracing this perspective empowers job seekers to seek out organisations that value individual growth and diverse experiences.

Understanding the distinction between fear-based and trust-led organisations is paramount. Fear-based environments stifle growth, creativity, and overall job satisfaction, whereas trust-led cultures empower individuals to make informed decisions, creating an environment where employees can thrive.

Recognising this contrast can significantly influence your career choices and lead you towards opportunities that prioritise your personal and professional development.

How to respond with confidence

Job seekers must reclaim their narrative when faced with the infamous resume gap question. Here's 5 tips to keep in mind when faced with this question:

1. **Own your story:** Embrace your resume gaps as opportunities for growth, development and self-discovery. Acknowledge the valuable experiences gained during these periods and the skills you have developed. Remember, you are not defined by the time gaps on your resume, but by the unique path you have walked.
2. **Be prepared with a response:** Anticipate the resume gap question during interviews and prepare a well-crafted, positive response. Explain concisely the reasons behind your gap and how it contributed to your personal and professional development.
3. **Focus on impact:** Shift the focus of the conversation from the resume gap itself to the impact it had on your personal and professional development. Discuss how the experiences during that time have equipped you with valuable skills, adaptability, and resilience. For example, if you took a break to be a full-time mom and then returned to the working world, highlight how this experience honed your multitasking, planning, and organisational skills. Additionally, you can mention how it inspired your creativity as you assisted your child with entrepreneurship projects and how it elevated your budgeting skills.
4. **Stay calm and confident:** When asked about your resume gap, maintain a calm and composed demeanour.

Confidence in your response will convey your self-assurance and show that you are not defined by past challenges but inspired by them.

5. **Shift perspectives:** Instead of dreading the resume gap question, view it as an opportunity to showcase your growth mindset and ability to learn from life experiences. Reframe the question in your mind as a chance to demonstrate your adaptability and determination. Also consider how your confident and poised response may inspire a shift in the interviewer's perspective, realising the true value of a diverse and evolving professional journey.



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Final words

Our resume gaps are not weaknesses to be hidden, but badges of honour that exemplify your courage and resilience. Each gap represents a unique chapter in your journey of self-discovery and growth. Life is a journey filled with twists and turns, and you should embrace your diverse experiences with pride.

In a post-pandemic world, as we redefine success and navigate the job market, we must celebrate our resume gaps as essential components of our career narrative.

Remember, you are not defined by a few months or years on your resume, but by your empowered and multi-faceted journey – which a forward-thinking company will be happy to acknowledge and make a space for you in their team.

It's time to reclaim your power and embrace resume gaps as valuable steppingstones on your career journey.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

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