

## **ASK THE CAREER ENGINEER!**

**Francina R. Harrison, MSW**

**Q:** I have been a stay at home mom now for 8 years. Now that both of my children are in school I want to return to the workforce. However, I am aware that the workforce has changed dramatically in the last 8 years. I am not sure how I will respond to the “where have you worked?” question or how to market my skills. What can I do to get a job in today’s market, in spite of my 8 years absence? **Nancy W**

**A:** Nancy, you have worked for the last 8 years! In fact, you have been successful at perhaps one of the most important jobs in the world. So congratulations on a job well done. Now for returning to work “outside the home” here are some strategies.

- First, make sure you are contacting companies that meet your needs in terms of location, hours, shifts and growth opportunities. For example, don’t run to a retail job if you need your nights and weekends free; it’s not going to happen.
- Second, get a realistic picture of where you are in terms of your soft and hard skills. Let me explain. Hard skills are those tangible assets you have such as: keyboarding speeds, software application knowledge, use of office machinery, Internet skills, certifications, bi-lingual etc. In most cases, hard skills can be obtained or improved with training programs (self-paced or traditional). Just as important are those soft skills, where in my opinion, many moms excel: problem solving, organizational skills, time management, working with diverse groups, initiative, leadership skills, coordinating etc.
- Third, I suggest a resume that emphasizes your functions “what can I do”, versus “where I have been.” This will give you an opportunity to “market” those “soft skills” and showcase your work experience. There are several examples in the popular resume books out there.
- Fourth, that question “what have you done for 8 years?” go ahead and answer it; with pride and confidence. I suggest this, “*I have spent the last 8 years at home with my children during their formative years, now I am ready to return to the workforce and pursue my own goals!*”

Another quick suggestion, for mom’s returning to work, consider part-time or ¾ time employment. In most cases those hours have been successful in terms of managing work/life balance. Good Luck!

If you have a question for “The Career Engineer” send an email to [francina@thecareerengineers.com](mailto:francina@thecareerengineers.com) . Author of the book, *A Mind to Work: The Life and Career Planning Guide for People Who Want-Need to Work!* For more information on Harrison & Associates, call 757-420-1109 or visit our website at [www.thecareerengineers.com](http://www.thecareerengineers.com).