



Recruitment
& Employment
Confederation

CAREER 
RETURNERS



Career returners
recruiter guidance:
Part four

10 steps to become a returner- inclusive recruiter



Here are 10 steps you can take to be more inclusive of returners, **starting with 3 steps relevant to ALL recruiters** and moving to more impactful actions for recruiters who decide to actively target and support this talent pool.

1

Learn about returners

Understand who we mean by a returner and the challenges they face. Listen to returner stories on the Career Returners Podcast and read the Success Stories on the Career Returners website.

Talk to people in your networks who are on career breaks for childcare, eldercare, health or relocation reasons. Challenge your stereotypes.

2

Understand the business case and social rationale

Educate yourself on the multiple reasons for hiring returners. Reading this guidance and sharing it with your colleagues is a good first step!

3

Reduce advertising bias

Make sure job adverts only ask for 'current/up-to-date knowledge' or 'recent experience' if this is essential.

Avoid using it as a shortcut for relevant skills.

Find out more about [advertising adjustments](#) below.



4

Remove screening bias

Check that your automated application process is NOT screening out candidates just because of a CV gap.

Check your teams are not automatically screening out returners.

Find out more about [screening adjustments](#) below.

5

Reduce interview bias

If shortlisting using competency-based interviews, adapt questions to not ask for 'recent work examples'.

Focus technical interviews on skills rather than knowledge. Advise clients to train hiring managers to be returner-inclusive.

Find out more [interviewing and assessment adjustments](#) below.

6

Support returner candidates

Provide returners with information on the relevant interview methods and advice on how to prepare for a competency or strength-based interview.

7

Promote returners as a strong candidate pool

Put career returners on the radar for your clients as a high-calibre and diverse talent pool.

Suggest they add encouraging wording to relevant job adverts such as 'We welcome applications from candidates who have taken a career break'

8

Advocate for supportive return to work pathways

Advocate with clients for the provision of transition support for returner hires, such as training, mentoring and Career Returners Coaching, to help returners to rebuild confidence and more rapidly re-integrate.

9

Advocate for returner programmes

For larger clients, advise them to consider a Returnship or Supported Hiring Returner Programme to accelerate returner hiring and build peer support among cohorts of returners.

10

Champion returner successes

Continue to break the bias using real-life examples of successful returner hires.

Practical tips for a returner inclusive recruitment process

Many of these practical action steps overlap with general best practice in inclusive recruitment, with a few specific to returners.



Advertising adjustments

Advert content

- ▶ Focus only on necessary skills and qualifications. What is truly necessary to do this job well?
- ▶ Avoid over detailed role specifications.
- ▶ Avoid “current/recent” wording.
- ▶ State flexibility on offer for the role.
- ▶ Consider adding an inclusion statement: “We welcome applications from candidates who have taken a career break”.

Application process

- ▶ Don't ask for current role.
- ▶ Sharing the salary for the role helps provide clarity on what's being offered.

Screening adjustments

Screening CVs and applications

- ▶ Don't make judgments that a candidate is weak based on an out-of-date CV.
- ▶ Look for transferable skills and skills built during a career break.
- ▶ Don't reject a candidate for being over-qualified before checking on their expectations.
- ▶ Look beyond the most recent role.



Screening calls

Talk about career breaks

- ▶ Explain that you are supportive of helping returners.
- ▶ Ask openly and considerately about what they have done on their career break.
- ▶ State why you are asking: to give opportunity to share any relevant skills and experience gained during break.
- ▶ Put candidates at ease so they understand the motivation for the questioning.
- ▶ Say that if they would prefer not to discuss their career break, for whatever reason, then that is ok too.

Assessment adjustments

- ▶ Ensure assessments don't demand recent knowledge or experience.
- ▶ Provide tailored candidate support, including links and tips for research and preparation before the assessment.
- ▶ Focus where possible on technical behaviours and understanding rather than knowledge.
- ▶ Train hiring managers on getting the best out of a returner in interviews.
- ▶ Notify returners as soon as possible with outcome of application and assessments.
- ▶ Tailor and soften standard rejection response so returners feel positive about their performance.
- ▶ Post-assessment, offer to provide constructive feedback to build their confidence with what they did well and to offer learning points to help them secure a role in the future.

Onboarding adjustments

- ▶ Recommend that clients provide tailored support to returners, include mentoring, training and career returner coaching to set them up for success in the six-month transition period.

Evaluate and learn

- ▶ Returners are a different type of experienced hire, so attraction, assessment and onboarding will take time to develop and embed. Get feedback from returners, recruiters and clients to learn and improve.

Thank you for joining us on the journey to empower individuals back into work after an extended career break and remove the career break penalty.



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