

# The Job Hunting Podcast

## [58. Career Q&A: Returning from maternity leave, expected salary range, planning your next move, and much more.](#)

Hello, my name is Renata Bernarde. I'm the host of The Job Hunting Podcast. And today we have another career Q and A here at The Job Hunting Podcast. And I think these sessions are important because I do get quite a lot of questions from my followers, listeners. And when I do presentations and keynote addresses and the questions are so good and sharing them with you, I think it is important because you may be thinking the same. You may have similar problems in your career development, and if you don't have them right now, you may face them in the future. So answering them in this podcast allows me to share with you some of the ideas and concepts that I'm sharing individually with other people. These are not questions from my clients. These are questions that come via social media. So either through LinkedIn, Facebook posts, uh, Facebook, DMS, and Instagram, and as I said when I do speaking engagements and they are public engagements as well.

The episode show notes will have the list of questions with timestamps. So if you decide to skip ahead and only listen to the questions that are relevant to you, you can do that by checking the episode show notes where you will also find the link to my website, the link to the optimised job search workshop, and several other services and free resources that you can download the newsletter that you can subscribe to. I have a whole range of options to support you, whatever investment you are keen to do in your job search and career development. So I urge you to go to the episode show notes, or go to my blog and check out those links because we're getting close to the festive season. If you don't have any intention to stop your job search either because you need to find a job quickly, or because, you know, you're not very keen on the festive season or you have time in your hands and you want to spend it well and get ahead of the game.

You can do that. If you want to take a break, you can do that. You know, we have options here and I'm here for you to support you, whatever you choose to do. I've been in this situation before job hunting during Christmas and New Year, and I know it isn't easy, and it can be a source of anxiety and stress. And for that reason, I am here to support you whilst you decide to do your job search, or if you decide to take a break, I'll be here when you're back. So don't worry about anything.

Let's go into question number one, question. Number one is about the expected salary range. So this person has found and of course, and you may have found the same that when you're doing online applications, it's mandatory to nominate your expected salary range. Sometimes even your expected salary period.

And this person is asking me for tips in answering well, my friends, the tip is you have to answer it and you have to answer it honestly. And frankly, and there is no reason why you would put a range or an expected salary that you don't want to get. This is really important. And if you find yourself questioning the reason why that question is there or not knowing what to do, then you haven't done your work homework before you started that online application. And that's why a lot of the coaching that I do is helping my clients and my students develop their job applications in a way that requires them to do a lot of thinking and preparation before they even jump on the online application. Right? So, of course, your employer wants to know your expected salary.

It's a way for them to understand where you sit within the range and if you are the right candidate for that role and for the budget and for the structure that they have, you shouldn't be worried or concerned. You should have done your research first before jumping into that online application. And that research will tell you if that job is within your range, and if it isn't within your range, then don't waste time applying for it. There are plenty, plenty of other jobs for you to apply for and make

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a good impression and convert. So what you want to do is when you're job hunting is to convert at each point of the recruitment and selection process. So if you are applying online, all that you need to do is get in front of someone, right, is getting a call from the hiring manager or the HR manager, or a person in charge of that online application process. And that's what you want to do. Um, so you have to answer all of the questions in such a way that converts you to that next level. But if the expected salary range for the online application is not the range for you, all that it's going to do, if you convert to that conversation, it will be cut at that next conversion, right? So you might get a call if you've matched their range that they're expecting to hire from, but then you want to convert from the call to an interview, for example.

So do your research and answer it truthfully, be true to your needs and the requirements for your personal lifestyle, though, the range that you feel comfortable with. And then move forward with that online application once you've done that research.

Question number two, I have a problem that I am doing a job very well and management likes to keep me where I am. I am stuck in the same position for the last 10 years. Does it look like I'm missing a strategy on how to communicate with top management? So that question leaves me wondering, so I have questions back to you. If you feel like you are stuck in the same way that this person questioning this feels like I'm asking you, have you put yourself in a position where it's well understood that you want to career advance? Have you used the time with your manager when you have performance reviews or meetings one-on-one, have you made that call to action? Have you made inquiries about promotions when there was a promotion or sorry, a job advertised internally, or a position that you knew was vacant?

Did you put yourself forward for that role? Because sometimes people forget to put themselves forward for roles and they expect to be tapped on the shoulder and tapping on the shoulder sometimes happens. And sometimes it doesn't. And it's important for you to communicate well. So it says here, I'm missing a strategy on how to communicate with top management. And my question back to you is, are you initiating that conversation with your management? Have you made it clear to them that you have a keen interest in advancing your career, and then making sure that you address that in such a way that you then develop the professional development opportunities to address any gaps in your skills and resources and tools and experience? So it may be that you need to do a little bit of professional development to match their expectations of how you would move forward in your career. But that's, you know, something that you might need to workshop with a mentor, with a coach, with your manager.

If you have a good relationship with your manager, all of these things will help you in combination and will help you advance. And also letting your network know that you have ambition, that you have an interest in developing your career further from where you are now, and maybe clarifying for yourself what your personal plans are for your career for the next five, 10, 15 years. Some of you may know from following me, I'm a big fan of setting long-term plans and then working backwards towards your next steps. And maybe what you need to do is also grow your personal understanding and your confidence as to where you want to go next

Question number three. I'm in a part-time contract role. And I now have a director who wants to put me into a full-time permanent role. This full-time permanent role needs to be approved by the CEO, and I'm not sure what will happen to my role if it's not approved. This is an interesting question because so many of us now are on short-term contracts. By short-term I mean anything between

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four months and two years, and this can add stress and anxiety to professionals who don't get certainty about what's going to happen next. Many times I've seen professionals doing an excellent job for their employers on a 12-month contract. And they have no clue up to the very last moment if their contract is going to be renewed or not. And even if the job that they're doing seems to have hit all the marks and the project seems to need further work from someone, the approval process just lags behind and this may be something that I'm assuming will continue to be a challenge and an issue as we move back into a new normal, with many organisations putting projects back on in 2021, hiring people on short-term contracts, because they don't really know yet how their organisation's structures post-COVID will crystallise, and you need to be ready for plan a and plan B.

It's really important to keep a mindset of you have no control over this. You have only a certain amount of control, but definitely, the decision is not up to you. And sometimes not even up to your manager and your co-workers, it's higher up. And even though they may want you to stay and need you to stay, there could be issues higher up such as hiring freezes, lack of budget for that financial year, a whole range of strategic issues in a very large corporation. And sometimes even in smaller organisations that don't allow you to continue.

So in, you know, it's really important to don't put all your eggs in one basket. And if you do my Reset Your Career program, which you can find on the episode show notes, and on my website, you will understand how I feel about that and how I help people to always keep that in mind that you can make a great impression by giving your job a hundred percent of your work, but never really advance in that role or have that role made permanent. And for that reason, it's important to continuously work on your career readiness on making sure that you keep connected with your network, keeping an eye on job opportunities, having connections with headhunters, and how to do that in an optimal way is really important, especially if you are, like I said, on a short-term contract where you have less control of what's happening next.

So have a look at that Reset Your Career program. And that may be a good one for you to invest in. It's not a big investment, but it will certainly help you have that mindset of making sure that you are ready to move on and step into the job-hunting world, should that position disappear and it can happen. And you shouldn't take that personally because it's not. Many times it has nothing to do with the excellent work that you've done. It's just the end of a project, end of a budget, or other environmental factors affecting that organisation, like hiring freezes, for example, that doesn't allow your organisation to keep you.

Question number four. What advice would you give me if I want to move from a small organisation to a top tier company? It seems like, for example, the big four consultancies only look for people who work for big four consultancies. Yes, it is true that a lot of us feel like consultancies, big four, tend to be very insular in the way they hire, but that's not really the case. I have seen the big four consultancies have a keen interest in hiring from manufacturing, from higher education, from government, from banking and finance, because it helps them maintain their bridge to their clients. So when you're and look, many of them are also supporting and doing strategy for smaller private companies, for not for profit companies. So you shouldn't, self-select out of those opportunities and believe that they will not hire you and therefore not apply when they have job opportunities.

There is a way of positioning yourself for blue-chip companies, not just big four that will help you in converting from a job application to a call, from a call to an interview, and so forth. And that has to do with your ability to convey your stakeholder engagement, your business development, abilities,

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your network, and your skills and experience, your capabilities. These are the things that will really position you as I get great candidates to work for one of the big four or for a blue-chip organisation that is keen to develop partnerships and collaborations and have new clients in sectors and industries that they either have a very keen interest, or they don't have a very big presence, but they're willing to grow. So that would require you to do a little bit of research on what's really of interest to the specific organisation that you are applying for.

You can do that by looking at their websites and seeing what their key things are and what they're focusing on. If you're applying for big four, they are a thought leadership type organisation, they will have put forward reports that you can read, and you can get a lot of intelligence from reading those reports and seeing if they are aligned with the experience that you are bringing to those organisations. You have to find the commonalities, the alignment and sync your career experience and capabilities with what you believe they need from employees coming in and how you can support them in growing or maintaining their current clientele. So consider that and see if that will help you as you apply for jobs in the future. I'd be really keen to hear back from listeners that are moving from small private companies, non-profits, government, or higher education, into consultancy. And let me know what you experience over the next couple of months.

Question number five, I recently started a new role. Should I plan for my next move now? I really love this question because that's how I think personally, and not because I didn't want to stay in the organisation, but because I've always felt that each role was an opportunity to learn, an opportunity to meet new people, to do great work and implement wonderful projects. But I also always felt that it was a stepping stone to something else. And I think that that's how many think about opportunities and not just millennials or younger professionals, but people my age as well. And it's a flawed strategy to want to start a job and believe that you're going to be there for 10, 15 years. Your employer doesn't expect that of you and you shouldn't expect that as well. It's really important to understand that the average tenure now for a professional in the corporate sector, and even in a non-profit as well would be three to five years, sometimes less, sometimes more, but you should be really looking at what sort of opportunities this new job will open up. What are the windows that I will then have three to five years from now? Because if you think strategically about that, you will engage with that job in a different way. I also think it's very important for you to do an excellent job wherever you started, and you do that by starting your job as if you were leaving because you can then build a very good induction plan for your next, your successor. You can do succession planning from the beginning. As you are learning your job, you can start taking notes and developing protocols and procedures and developing some sort of guidelines if there aren't any, if it's a new position altogether.

Because of the roles that I've had, they have mostly been brand new positions since 2009, 2008 nine. When I went in, it was an opportunity for me to develop my own BD, to develop the protocols, procedures, strategies, implementation plan, and operational plan from the get-go. So that when I left, I felt like I was leaving a legacy behind, and whoever was taking over, it would be such an easier job for them to hit the ground running. And there wouldn't be any sort of breaks in communication or misunderstandings. And I always left an organisation letting everybody know that they could contact me anytime, that they could ask me for help. And I would be very keen to support them, should they need my help in understanding something or they couldn't find something. And that has always been a very good way of maintaining that network and making sure that they knew that they could count on me.

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So, yes, I think that you should plan your next move when you start a new job. And I know that sounds weird, but it can help not only you and your career but also your employer and the succession planning that will come when you leave.

Question number six, I have just returned from maternity leave and I feel like I no longer enjoy my current role. What advice would you give in helping me find a new role? This is very true and something that can happen to women, it also can happen that you come back very eager to get your new, to get your old roll back and people for some reason expect that you don't want it. So you have to have a very open and frank communication with your manager. Hopefully, if you can have that, that would be great to let them know how you feel. If you're coming back from maternity leave and you can't wait to go back and hit the ground running and work full time, and you want the promotions, you want to be leading projects, let them know.

Don't let them assume that because you now have a baby, that you are not keen on leading, managing, implementing, and taking responsibilities. And I think it's very important to make that very clear. If you come back and you feel like let's say a full-time job is not for you anymore, it's too much to handle, and you would prefer to come back on a more part-time basis, and you need to have a better work-life balance for the time being. And that's also something that you need to discuss, hopefully even before you return fully to your employment so that arrangements can be made possible within the organisation to support you. And that they may be able to find you an opportunity for you to come back. And it could be that you don't then come back to your original role if that role is perceived as a role that needs to be done full-time, then you may need to come back into a different role.

So those conversations are really important for women coming back from maternity leave and having the support that you need from HR, from your manager and your colleagues, and your team will help you make the best decision for you and for your family. Now, it could also be that you stayed away for three months, six months, 12 months, depending on where you are in the world, or how long is your maternity leave. And it gave you so much food for thought that you then decided that what you were doing before, doesn't really ring a bell with you anymore. It's not your purpose. It doesn't give you joy and you want to do something completely different. Then it would, you know, be important for you to talk to a mentor or a coach to make sure that you make the best more strategic and safe next steps to take you from where you are, to a position that is financially sound, that supports you and your family, and you don't make any emotional or harsh or too abrupt decisions that could backfire. And those really big career changes, I think require the advice of mentors or coaches to support you, because they can really, you know, cause quite a lot of disruption and stress.

And you wouldn't want that, especially if you have a small child to care for. So think about that. And remember that I have a 30-minute free call to support my listeners and followers should they need to contact a career coach? You can find that link on the episode show notes. I'd love to help you.

Can you give me advice on how to do a better resume and LinkedIn? And can I send you my resume? So this is definitely somebody who hasn't gone to my website yet, but you know, I'm always giving you the best possible free advice that I can give through my podcast and through my social media posts. But of course, I am a career coach and I charge for services. So if you want to have a look at my LinkedIn audit, please do so. If you want to have a look first at my LinkedIn podcasts, which I've done, I have a LinkedIn checklist, which you can download and I'll put the links below in the episode

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show notes. And resumes are tricky business because I have listeners all over the world and I find it really easy to do LinkedIn audits for people all over the world because LinkedIn has normalised and standardised the way that we position ourselves as job hunters and professionals on a platform that is universal.

And everybody follows very similar guidelines to position themselves on LinkedIn. Resumes are a bit tricky because they tend to be country-specific and sometimes industry-specific as well. So for example, it's well known that in America resumes are very short. A page is all you need. In Australia, the senior executive can have a resume of up to five pages and nobody would complain about that. So I would always prefer to do resumes, cover letters, statement of selection criteria for my clients, my coaching clients, and in the job hunting made simple programme, which is my group coaching programme. I also can help with resumes in a way that I can make sure that the advice I'm giving is the best possible advice for that student or client. I find it very risky for individuals to get advice from Google on resumes. Most career coaches don't like resume templates, not even the LinkedIn template, I don't think it is very good because of those differences.

So if you are working alone and you don't have a coach, make sure that you do a lot of research and that your resume template resonates with your industry, your sector and your country where you're applying for. And in fact, if I have clients that are in Australia and they're applying for jobs in the US, I have to adapt their resumes all over again. Right. And, all of these things are really important and part of career readiness education and coming better and better at job hunting. And as we have careers that will span 30, 40 years, and we know that we will change jobs every three to five years. It's really important for you to understand all of these steps in the job search and the recruitment and selection process. So well done for listening to this podcast, make sure you subscribe and keep yourself in the loop about all of these important aspects of making sure that you, the time that you were spending applying for roles is actually optimised so that it actually makes you a successful candidate.

At the end of the day, what you need is to get that job at the end of this competition that is recruitment and selection. So it's important to know that all of these different pieces of the puzzle, the resume, the cover letter, the email, the way that you present yourself on LinkedIn, the way that your network, not just when you need the job, but when you don't need a job, they're all part of your career advancement strategy.

The last question is number eight. What is your advice regarding the holiday season and job hunting? Is there any point in job hunting in December and early January? So I will put a link below to my previous episode, which is all about job hunting over Christmas and New Year and December. I also wrote a LinkedIn article about it. There is a workshop, the optimised job search for the holiday season.

There is a workbook that you can download with three different schedules and you can choose between job-hunting full-time, job hunting part-time, or having a light touch job hunt. What does it mean? It means that you're going to be doing a few tasks each day or every other day, which will make sure that you keep a finger on the pulse of what's happening and connecting with people, which then will allow you to enjoy the rest of your day and the rest of your time. And you're not going to be worried about job hunting whilst having your Christmas parties and catching up with people. I remember, not doing anything, but then being extremely anxious about not doing

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anything. And you know, it's much better to do a little bit each day or every other day in the light schedule of job hunting that I propose in the workbook that you can download.

There's a link below, and that will at least make sure that when you're, you know, when you're enjoying yourself, you're not thinking about it because you have a schedule, you have a routine that you're following and you know that you're doing the best you can, but look, you can also a job hunt full time. Job hunting is like a full-time job. It's no different. And there are definitely enough activities to keep you occupied all day long. If that's, you know, what you need to do or that's what you want to do, but like not every other job you can do it part-time or if you don't have the time and the opportunity, or you really want to take time off to spend with your family or your friends or travel, then you can do the light version. So these three options are available in the document that you can download.

And there will be a link in the episode show notes for you to do that. So I hope you have a wonderful holiday season and festive season, and that you have the best possible time, be it job hunting and investing in your career or enjoying time with friends and family, whatever you decide to do. You know that I'm here for you. This podcast will continue on an episode every week. And if you sign up for my newsletter, you'll be receiving a newsletter from me. I will take a couple of weeks break between Christmas and new year, but you can book times to have a consultation with me, do your LinkedIn profile, whatever you need to do, just go to my website and see what's available there for you, it would be great to keep in touch. Bye for now. And I'll talk to you next week.