

Flexibility key to transitioning back to the work force

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It can be tough to catch up at work after a weeklong vacation, much less after years of being out of the workforce. Those who have done so say it's important to find activities that keep you involved in the profession.



After a background at Deloitte, a software company and a local realty firm, Michele Himes, CPA, stopped working in 2001 to stay home with her children. She said she always knew she would return to work eventually, but never had a set date in mind. She contacted Kaiser Consulting in 2008 after seeing an ad in the paper advertising flexible, part-time work for CPAs.

Kaiser is structured around flexible project schedules for employees, where they choose their hours and days they work. In the beginning, Himes said she went back to work for about 16 hours a week, and then went full time. This helped her transition as she became accustomed to a new schedule.

“As my kids have gotten older and been in school more, I’ve been able to increase my hours and the flexibility has not changed,” Himes said. “What I was promised in the beginning is what it is today.”

Hilary Dodson, CPA, found Kaiser the same way, and returned to work in 2009 after staying home for nine years with her three kids. Her past work history included time at PwC and as a sole practitioner, and during her time at home she worked as the PTO treasurer to keep her skills fresh.



“My life has evolved and now I don’t have little kids but elderly relatives that need me too,” Dodson said. “It’s helpful that the flexibility is the norm.”

For those who are considering staying at home but would like to return to work eventually, Dodson suggested finding an activity that keeps them involved in the profession to keep skills current.

“I’m so thankful I did it; it helped keep me up to speed on some of those skills,” Dodson said, of her time as treasurer.

Himes said when she was working in public accounting, “50- or 60-hour weeks would tick by in a second.” Having a flexible schedule gave her the opportunity to enjoy her career and family.

“For me, this work is challenging and interesting and every day is a little bit different,” Dodson said. “I enjoy dealing with people and helping them solve their problems on an accounting level. And whether I’m helping the people who work for me or a client, we all need to feel like we’re making a difference somewhere.”