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Coach helps stay-at-home moms back to work

By: Jackie Pilossoph | For Sun-Times Media | @helpsquadjp



Mary Beth Barrett-Newman is the owner of her career coaching business, 2nd Career Consulting, where she helps stay at home moms re-enter the workforce.

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Ask career coach, Mary Beth Barrett-Newman how to find a job and she'll tell you that one of the most effective techniques is to arrange face-to-face, informational interviews with acquaintances, former co-workers and friends of friends. In other words, buy people coffee and pick their brains.

“Call that boss you haven't talked to in 10 years,” said Barrett-Newman. “The worst thing someone can do is sit behind a computer and apply online for jobs all day.”

Barrett-Newman has a lot more advice to share when it comes to looking for a job. She is the founder of her Evanston-based career coaching business, 2nd Career Consulting. Her niche: helping stay-at-home moms reenter the workforce.

“There are so many women who were very successful in their careers, who had kids, decided to stay home, and then, for whatever reason — divorce, financial needs, kids getting older, fulfillment — decide they want to work again,” said Barrett-Newman, who started her business four years ago.

Barrett-Newman, who lives in Evanston with her husband, Gary, worked in the trust department of First National Bank of Chicago for five years after graduating from college, and then took a

position in sales and marketing for a small executive benefit consulting firm, where she spent the next 25 years moving up the corporate ladder.

“I learned all aspects of running a business such as sales, marketing, client administration, nurturing clients, hiring, training and management,” said Barrett-Newman, who also holds an MBA.

During her career, Barrett-Newman’s employer merged three different times and grew to 300 employees. The company was sold in 2008 to Prudential Financial, and Barrett-Newman’s position was eliminated shortly thereafter.

Having no idea what to do next professionally, she went on a career exploration where she had a multitude of informational interviews. A former client put the idea in her head for 2nd Career Consulting.

“I started thinking about what I loved and what I didn’t in my former career,” said Barrett-Newman. “I realized what I loved the most was coaching people, mentoring and training, so that’s what I decided to focus on.”

When Barrett-Newman first meets a client, she said the process begins with reflection and assessment, which includes personality assessment testing.

She and the client then discuss prior jobs and volunteer work, what they liked and disliked about previous jobs, what skills they used and what is important moving forward. Barrett-Newman also suggests external input, where the client contacts people they worked with to get feedback for career options.

Other services Barrett-Newman provides include helping to update a resume and social media, formulating a strategic job search plan, preparing for interviews negotiating offers and coordinating child care.

Jocelyn Sussman of Glencoe was a stay-at-home mom for six years, and hired Barrett-Newman three years ago to assist her in getting back to work.

“It had been so many years since I’d interviewed or put together a resume, and LinkedIn was new to me as well,” she said.

Sussman, who now works in corporate finance said Barrett-Newman helped her with networking, interviewing techniques, and figuring out a job strategy.

Barrett-Newman, who charges by the hour said she is totally different than a recruiter, in that recruiters work for companies who have open positions, and help them find candidates. Her clients are the individuals looking for jobs, and her role is to coach them in all aspects of their job search.

Barrett-Newman estimated that she’s coached and helped about 100 clients find jobs during her four years in business.

“There’s nothing better than getting that call and hearing they got a job,” Barrett-Newman said. “They’re elated and I’m their best friend.”