

The tax world after a career break – the way back in

Simon Godley, of Talentpool, offers some guidance on how to re-establish yourself in tax after a period outside

Securing a professional position after a lengthy career break takes more than the usual mix of required skills and experience. Candidates need to assess changes in professional resourcing and consider refreshing their own skills in order to compete effectively.

Some tax professionals may find that the initial re-entry into the marketplace requires a step down from their original jobs or that they

It could be that the career break has equipped them with the ability and expertise to aim for a different or more senior role.

And the length of any career break is pivotal. The tax arena is constantly changing and this, combined with economic conditions, means that the longer you take out of the tax market, the higher the risk of not being able to get back in. Shorter breaks mean that getting back into a new job on your return shouldn't

have found a few more closed doors on your return. In fact, given the current nervousness in the financial markets, now may not be the ideal time to take a career break.

Practice versus industry

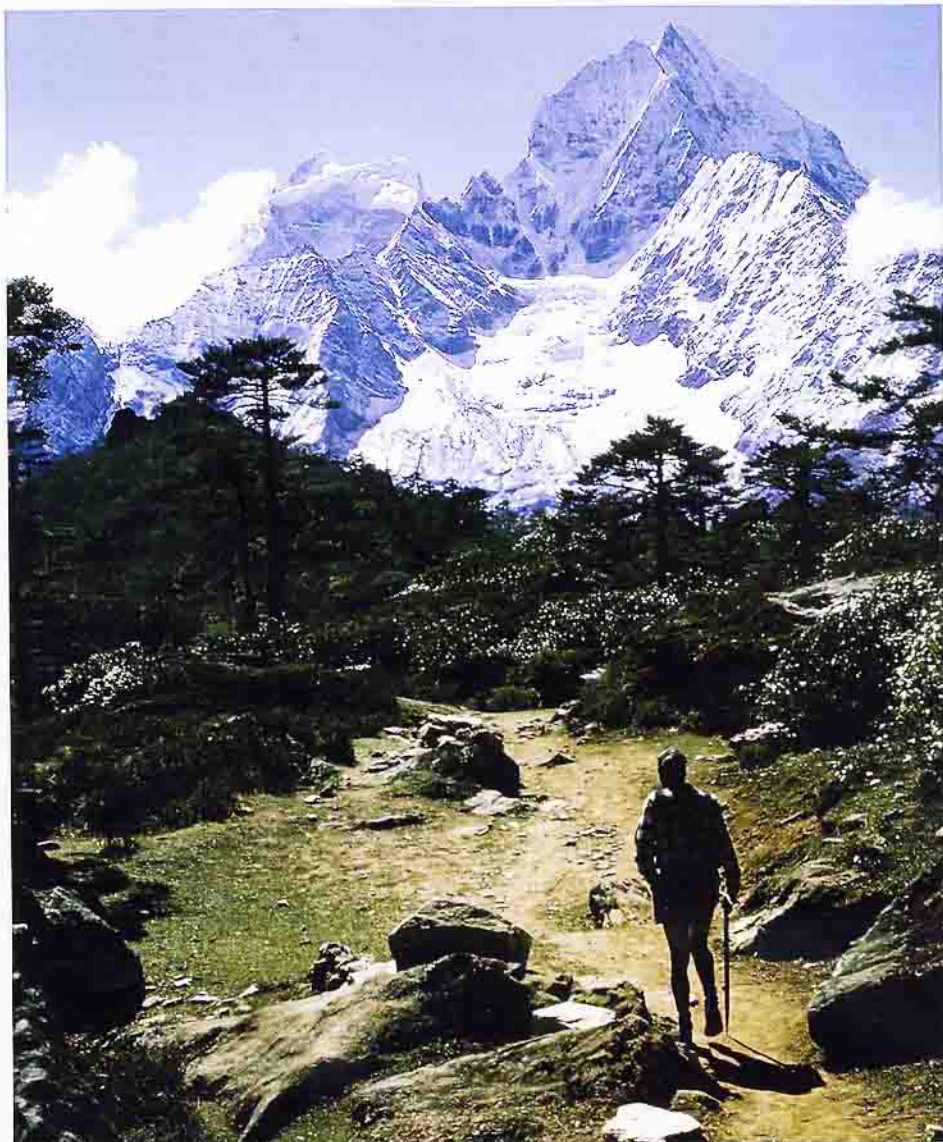
Depending on your role and tax experience before the career break, you may be looking at a route back into a tax team within the professional firms, or into an in-house tax role. If your previous experience has been largely corporate tax within industry, then the easiest route is to go back into industry.

If your experience is within a Big Four corporate tax team, for example, then you could look at roles within both practice and industry. If you have taken a long career break (18 months or more), then instantly stepping back into a professional firm could be more difficult.

There is more emphasis on being technically up to date and conversing fluently with clients on complex tax matters. Industry can be less concerned about technical know-how, with an emphasis on practical tax accounting skills, along with an ability to communicate well with senior finance and business heads in the group.

Getting back in – some tips

- Review new roles appearing on tax job sites and the tax press, for example etaxjobs.com, and taxcareersonline.co.uk. Respond to those that match your prior technical experience.
- Apply for interim roles, eg, three to six months' tax contracts in industry, requiring your prior technical experience. This will get you back up to speed with some of the tax rules, and could possibly lead into a permanent role.
- Use your network – contact ex-bosses and colleagues to see if they can point you to a route back in. They may have heard of roles in the market, and your ex-boss may offer you a job again, should you be happy going back to the same employer.
- Keep in close contact with recruiters – if there is now a gap on the CV because of a career break, then making it on to a shortlist for a role will be more difficult. You need to be regularly picking up the phone to recruiters, keeping on their radar for when new roles/contracts come up
- Find out which areas of tax have undergone a change. Update your technical skills and knowledge.



The Himalayas – where else would you take a career break after Enron?

enter at approximately the original level. Certainly individuals need to be flexible and take an objective view of their own experience and skills as measured against the current marketplace.

take too long, depending on the underlying demand in the market on your return.

This latter point is key – if you had decided to go trekking in the Himalayas for 12 months at the point when Enron collapsed, you may

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