

## Many Happy Returns

Good fundraisers are still as sought after as ever. When an experienced fundraiser with a good track record walks through our doors, we know that they will have little trouble in securing a job.

In a sector that employs a large percentage of women, many return to work after maternity leave often wanting to work less than five days a week or to work more flexibly to coincide with family responsibilities.

In our experience, some charities are open to accommodating this need for flexibility but there is still some reluctance to consider it as an option even when faced with a shortage of candidates in certain fundraising areas and the prospect of posts being unfilled for lengthy periods.

Helen Saelensminde joined the Charity Sector in 1997 and has specialised in major gift fundraising for the last 7 years.

After a period abroad, Helen returned to England in Autumn 2010 and, with 2 young children, she ideally wanted to re-enter the work place in a 3 day a week role.

Around the same time, Arthritis Research UK were looking to add to their new Philanthropy team but were finding it difficult to find an experienced Major Gifts fundraiser.

Below both Helen and Jacqui Manning, the Deputy Director of Fundraising and Director of Philanthropy at Arthritis Research UK, talk about their experiences.

**Helen Saelensminde,**  
Major Gifts Officer,  
Arthritis Research UK



### **How difficult was it to find a role at the level you wanted when you embarked on your job search following maternity leave?**

Sometimes I think that timing is everything. I started looking for a job in Autumn 2010 by approaching some of the previous charities I'd worked for. I was nervous about starting a job search after so long out of the office, and this felt like a less

stressful way to start. By coincidence, both of my two former employers were seeking fundraisers. One wouldn't consider a part-time role and, though the other would have done, it didn't work out. I approached the Kage Partnership soon after, on recommendation from a friend, and now find myself working in one of the first roles I applied for. It almost feels like it was meant to happen.

### **I know that you were looking specifically for part time roles when we met. Did you see many and what sort of roles were they?**

There were very few part-time roles advertised online when I was looking and, in virtually every case, the salary level implied that it was a more junior level post than I was seeking. I recall seeing only one post that fitted my criteria and, even then, it was a fixed-term contract to cover someone's maternity leave.

### **What was your impression of the level of openness of prospective employers to flexible working?**

I'm very lucky that the whole process of searching for a new role was really very short. I spoke to 3 employers in total, and two were open to considering part-time. Is that representative of the industry? I really don't know.

I did have one or two frustrating conversations with recruitment agencies who explained that they didn't get many part-time roles in but they would contact me if they did. The Kage Partnership were willing to put me forward for full-time roles and ask employers beforehand if they would consider revising the post to a part-time one.

### **How did you secure the job at Arthritis Research UK?**

Originally I was hoping to work 3 days a week and, whilst Arthritis Research UK agreed they were willing to consider part-time, they felt that the post required at least a 4 day week (they were right!!). I was willing to go ahead on that basis, particularly since I'd already seen that I was going to struggle to find a 3 day per week post.

### **Six months down the line, how is the role working and are you able to successfully carry out the duties of the role in 4 days?**

I'm really enjoying the role at Arthritis Research UK. It's challenging – we're building our major donor pool from scratch – but there's a lot of internal buy-in to support what we're doing and it's exciting to be involved from the start. The role requires a lot of self-organisation so it's relatively straightforward to plan

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meetings around the days I'm in the office but, in order to get everything done in a four day week, it does mean being that little bit more organised about getting things done.

### How easy is it to juggle work and home life and are there any frustrations?

I'm very fortunate that my husband works from home a lot and we have lots of family close by who help us with childcare. It means I don't have to worry when I need to stay late for an event, and also that I know the children don't have to be in nursery all day every day. I sometimes swap my day off around to meet both work and home demands and I'm very lucky that Arthritis Research UK are willing to be as flexible as I am.

It's difficult as a Mum, when you're aware of often being the first one out of the door in the evening, but it helps that Arthritis Research UK are progressive in their views about working from home and they're focused on the results you get, not how long you sit at your PC each day. In all, I'd say that I have a great balance between work and home. I find I enjoy each all the more, for having the other.

In addition, I feel that the time I've spent on a career break has enhanced my skill set quite considerably. I've returned to work more confident, more focused and more sure of my skills than I ever was when I left my last job and I sincerely believe that it makes me better equipped to do the job than I was before.

## Jacqui Manning,

Deputy Director of Fundraising and  
Director of Philanthropy, Arthritis Research UK

### Were you open to negotiating on the hours for the Major Gifts Officer role at the beginning of the recruitment process?

We knew from the outset that due to the levels of competition for good people in the major gifts area, it would be challenging to recruit the right calibre of staff. So we were open to a range of flexible working options, though the role was advertised as a full time post. The emphasis for us was on finding the right person for what is an exciting but demanding role.

### What were the benefits of being flexible?

By being flexible, we've managed to bring on board a fantastic team member with very sought after skills, who demonstrates a high level of commitment to the organisation. Helen also brings interesting life skills and a different perspective to the team, both of which are valuable.

### How has your willingness to be flexible in recruiting to this position worked out for you and your team?

It is working extremely well for us, primarily because both parties are willing to be flexible and maintain an open dialogue to help balance the demands of work and home-life.

## Top Five ...unsuccessful feedback

The most common factors mentioned by recruiters following interviews:

- Lack of research on the role and organisation
- Going over time on presentation tasks
- Inability to answer questions clearly and concisely
- Displaying too many nerves
- Lack of enthusiasm

## About Us

For those of you not familiar with the Kage Partnership, we have been recruiting Fundraisers, PR and Marketing professionals to positions at all levels within the not-for-profit sector for the last 13 years.

We conduct our business with integrity and courtesy, providing a tailored and effective service to all of our job seeking and recruiting clients.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of recruitment please do not hesitate to contact us:

**020 7928 3434 [info@kagep.com](mailto:info@kagep.com)**