

Q & A

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**■ Laura writes: Is it OK for a prospective employer to ask if you have children in a job interview? I've been to a few interviews lately and been asked: "Do you have any children?" Of course, I'm honest but I believe it's going against me. I had all the experience required for the roles but have been unsuccessful in getting the job. What can I do to prevent this going against me in the future?**

Laura, employers are on shaky ground with this question but unless you can prove they didn't employ you because you had children, then it would be hard to claim discrimination.

If you feel compelled to be honest, ensure you put the information in context. They are asking out of fear so make sure you tease out their particular fear and address it.

Example: "So Laura, tell us about yourself, do you have children?"

Answer: "What an interesting question. I'm curious as to why you ask it. Are you particularly family-friendly or has there been concern in the past about employing people with children? It might help me supply the information you really need."

Or: "I have three fantastic kids. I am not sure why you are asking, but if you fear lack of commitment, my childcare arrangements are x,y,z and, as you can see, I have x qualifications and x experience so focus and dedication while also being a mother is not an issue. What about you? Do you have children?"

What I would really like to answer is: "Why? Do I need children to do this job?"

Or: "What is the relevance of having children to this job?"

Or even: "Wait, I need to switch on my tape recorder. Now, repeat the question."

Go to Ask Kate at [careerone.com.au](http://careerone.com.au)

# Keeping companies on the right track

Jill Pengelley

**K**ENT Aughey is a hands-on investor. He puts much more than money and faith into expanding enterprises.

He retains an informed interest to ensure the businesses he invests with stay on track.

Mr Aughey is an investment manager and managing director of rising private investment and advisory firm Ashington.

He specialises in providing expansion capital to small and medium businesses, with investments typically in the range of \$500,000 to \$2 million.

He says these smaller companies offer exciting growth potential but often are overlooked by larger corporate investors.

Mr Aughey is looking to hire another investment manager and says it is an exciting career path that "exposes you to some of the state's most dynamic companies".

"It attracts professionals with a corporate finance background and those with a passion for helping businesses reach their full potential," he says.

"An investment manager is specifically liaising with the company and looking after the investment.

"We don't want to get in the way of the management team operating the business but, from a strategic perspective, we want to be able to add value to how they're running the business."

The investment manager will meet fairly regularly with the business operators to assess progress and offer guidance.

"We try and make it a sort of mentoring support role," Mr



MENTORS: Investment advisers Robyn Longford and Kent Aughey.

Picture: GREG HIGGS

Aughey says. "If they win, so do we."

Mr Aughey says he started buying shares as a teenager and became an investment adviser for a stockbroking firm in his 20s.

He says investment managers need to understand people as well as business.

Robyn Longford started as an investment analyst at Ashington this week and would like to progress to investment manager over time.

Her last job was as a taxation accountant.

"It's a change from straight accounting," she says. "I love business and I want to do more than just the one facet."

"Here, you use your knowledge to determine whether a business is going to be profitable and make it your way in the market."

Ms Longford says it will be her job to provide advice and support to the investment manager.

For information on training for investment and finance careers, go to Financial Services Institute of Australasia at [www.finsia.edu.au](http://www.finsia.edu.au).

Recruiter's corner

David Bell  
director,  
talent pooling,  
Human Capital  
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**E**MPLOYERS who put their recruitment strategy on hold during a slowing economy risk failing to fill critical roles when the storm calms.

Most companies recruit only for their current needs. However, employers should use the volatile market conditions to attract talent that other employers may not be able to hang on to.

Organisations will always have critical roles, regardless of the market direction.

An unexpected departure or sudden demand for critical skills could significantly impact business performance.

As the skills shortage and an ageing population increase labour market pressures, companies need to safeguard themselves against the loss of critical skills by developing a pipeline of quality candidates.

Talent pooling can help companies identify good people and get to candidates before their competitors do.

Talent pooling allows you to cast your net wide to passive candidates, as well as those actively looking for work: you can identify the most capable people and begin building a relationship with them, before a role becomes available.

The methods for engaging these people can vary from: catching up with senior business leaders, joining a networking group, creating a careers mini-website, attending or organising events with prominent speakers, distributing email newsletters, mentoring senior stakeholders in other organisations or training your employees to become company ambassadors.

## Business Manager

The Robinson Institute has been formed from three of the University of Adelaide's leading research centres (The Centre for Stem Cell Research, The Research Centre for Reproductive Health and the Centre for Early Origins of Health and Disease), to facilitate research and teaching that significantly advances medical science in reproductive health and regenerative medicine.

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