1- Read the article quickly and choose the statement that sums up the main idea.

Vodafone starts programme to recruit career-break women

By Andrew Hill

Vodafone is starting a programme to recruit women who have taken a **career break.** The telecoms company aims to **hire** 1,000 people worldwide over three years. Half will be in roles such as call centres and shops, and the other half in managerial positions. It hopes to attract skilled workers who are trying to return to a job after up to a **decade** out of the workplace.

Vodafone's ReConnect programme is the latest in a number of initiatives aimed at encouraging workers to restart their careers after a break.

Royal Bank of Scotland's Comeback Programme provides 'returnships' of 12–16 weeks, including **work placements**, coaching and **networking** opportunities.

A study prepared for Vodafone estimates that 96 million skilled women aged between 30 and 54 are on career breaks worldwide. This includes 55 million who have experience as **middle managers** or in more senior roles. Another survey showed that eight out of ten believed that more support is needed for women who want to return to work.

Vodafone's programme is not restricted to former Vodafone staff and is open to men as well as women. However, the group expects most of the **candidates** to be women, many of whom will have stepped off the career ladder to have children. The scheme will extend to 26 countries. Participants will have the opportunity to refresh skills and will be offered flexible working options. An early ReConnect programme in eleven countries recruited 50 people, aged between 28 and 58, who had been out of the workplace for between 1 and 10 years.

ReConnect candidates will account for 10 percent of all Vodafone's external management recruitment. Those taking part will have the chance to apply for permanent new jobs or to replace staff who leave. Vodafone believes the programme will help it meet its target of increasing the proportion of women in its 7,500 managerial roles from 27 percent to 30 percent.

In 2015, Vodafone became one of the first multinational companies to offer new mothers equal minimum **maternity leave** – set at 16 weeks – around the globe. It also offers full pay for new mothers for a reduced 30-hour week during their first 6 months back at work.

1. More companies plan to increase the number of female managers aged between thirty and fifty-four over the next three years.
2. Multinational companies in twenty-six countries start programmes to encourage workers to take career breaks in order to gain more skills.
3. A telecoms company plans to help people return to work after they have had years away from their job.

2- Complete the definitions with the words/phrases in bold in the article.

1- People considered for a job or training programme are .....
2- A period of ten years is a .....
3- ..... is when you meet people involved in the same kind of work to share information and support.
4- Recruit and ..... are verbs that mean 'employ'.
5- A ..... is a period of time when people take time away from their job, for example to look after their children or family.
6- When a woman spends time away from work after she has a baby, it's called .....
7- .....are in charge of small groups of people, but do not take important decisions that affect the whole organisation.
8- People working for a company for a short time without pay are on .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3- Find the numbers (1–5) in the article and match them with the information they refer to (a–e).

1. 1,000	a countries where the scheme will operate
2. 96 million	b number of weeks that new mothers can have paid leave
3. 26	c number of people Vodafone wants to employ over three years
4. 7,500	d approximate number of women around the world on a career break
5. 16	e number of management jobs at Vodafone

4- Decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F).

1- The ReConnect programme wants to help people return to work after up to five years out of a job. _____
2- Vodafone is not the only company encouraging workers to return to the workplace. _____
3- Studies show that most women want more support when they return to work after a career break. _____
4- Only people who worked for Vodafone can join the ReConnect programme. _____
5- Men cannot apply to join the ReConnect programme. _____
6- Vodafone hopes that the programme will increase the number of women in management in the company. _____

5- Without looking at the article, choose the option which best completes each sentence. Then read the article again to check.

1. Half of Vodafone's new employees will be in managerial positions and the other half will work in jobs such as...

a call centres and shops. b catering and restaurants. c factories and delivery.

2. Some companies offer programmes that include networking opportunities and ....

a study skills. b coaching. c interviews.

3. The Vodafone scheme plans to extend to twenty-six countries and will offer ...

a paid holiday. b regular training courses. c flexible working options.

4. The pilot ReConnect programme was successful and the candidates were aged between

a eighteen and twenty-four. b thirty and forty-five. c twenty-eight and fifty-eight.

5. Vodafone allows new mothers to work fewer hours for six months on .....

a full pay. b eighty percent pay. c fifty percent pay.

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