

Job Search and Networking

3 Steps to Identifying Transferrable Skills



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Searching for a job can be stressful on its own. Not to mention the anxiety of convincing an employer that YOU are the right person for the position, especially during a time when opportunities are scarce or competitive. If you have little work experience, or if the bulk of your work experience has been in one specific area, you may feel unqualified for a different job or a career change. Good news: that isn't always true. The key is identifying the skills you already have, and learning how to make them work for your resume. General skills that you've gained from a previous role (whether you got paid for it or not), and that you can use in a variety of jobs, are called **transferrable skills**. Being able to show potential employers that you can transfer the valuable skills you already have could make you an attractive candidate for more jobs than you may have thought.

In a recent survey of 500 US employers, the most desirable traits in job candidates are things like an ability to complete tasks, common sense, dependability, enthusiasm, motivation to achieve, and adaptability, just to name a few. Notice that these are all general attributes, and not job-specific duties or experience related qualities. While some jobs do require very specific education or training, regardless of what type of job you're looking for, being able to isolate your transferrable skills will only make your resume stronger.

1. Make a list of your skills

Someone who has worked on the same assembly line for years may feel like that's the only thing they can do. But when you take a deeper look you see that working on that assembly line required skills like attention to detail, ability to maintain focus on a task for long periods of time, or quality control. Similarly, someone who has been a student for most of their life may not have any work experience, but their skills probably include things like meeting deadlines, creating presentations, and organizational skills. Try to zero in on all of the little things that helped you in your last role. Chances are those little things will add up to the kinds of skills that employers are looking for.

2. Look for "hooks" in the job description

Just like the catchy line in a song that grabs your attention, job descriptions have hooks too. Look for key words or phrases and match them to your skills. For example, a job that is in a "fast paced environment" probably needs someone who works well under pressure, has excellent time management, or is able to stick to deadlines. Someone who has experience working in a restaurant or other areas of the service industry, for instance, likely has those skills already.

3. Be able to give examples

Being able to back up the skills you list on your resume is very important; don't be surprised if potential employers ask for concrete examples. It can be stressful being put on the spot, but don't panic! Fortunately, you've already done the hard work. Think back to the list you made of your skills. Which skill is it? Why did you put it on the list? When did you use it? How did it help you? Take time to answer these questions before an interview so you can be prepared if it comes up.

One last thing to remember: when it comes to resumes and interviews, honesty is the best policy. When listing your skills, stick to the ones you know you can provide solid examples for.

