

SWITCH CAREERS WITH TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Be realistic about which of your work strengths apply to positions in different fields.

Are you hoping to move your career in a new direction? Or considering transitioning into a different industry? Perhaps you are coming back to the workforce after taking a break from your career?

While each of these situations has its own challenges, your chances of making a successful transition will be boosted by identifying and highlighting your transferable skills. These are strengths in your repertoire that can be used in another area or field in ways similar to or different from how you've used them before. They can be skills or past experiences from a traditional job, your personal life or volunteer service.

The skills you used to fulfill job duties in one industry will likely apply to a similar position in another industry. You just need to identify for prospective employers how that would be possible for their open jobs.

Identify your skills.

To highlight your transferable skills, first you need to identify them. Make a list of at least five things you are qualified to do that could be used in a different area. To help you with this process, ask three people who know you well what they would consider your transferable skills to be.

This might be managing projects, writing or anything else you have done in your previous positions or personal life. For example, if you were in charge of remodeling your home, you may have used transferable skills such as project management, financial management and communication. Try to identify any measurable results for those skills that you could show on your resume or in an interview with a hiring manager and write those down as well.

Keep in mind that you need to be realistic about which skills could be used in another industry. How much industry knowledge might be required to effectively use that particular skill in a new area? If you are unsure of the answer, conduct informational interviews with professionals in the new industry to find out how those skills may or may not be applicable.

Once you have compiled your list, here are three ways to effectively highlight your transferable skills.

Highlight skills on your LinkedIn profile.

Your LinkedIn profile is a great way to grab the attention of hiring managers and let your network connections know you are a versatile professional.

Try customizing your headline to include your transferable skills that the job you are looking for requires. These will register as keywords that make it easier for hiring managers to find you.

Use the summary section of LinkedIn to showcase who you are as a professional. Don't just copy and paste your resume.

For example, if you are coming back to the workforce after taking some time off, think about how that has helped shape your experience and expertise and makes you a more valuable employee. While keeping your summary professional, share some personal details about how you have been using important skills that are now transferable to an office setting. These elements will make you stand out.

Highlight skills in your cover letter.

Check the keywords and skills listed in the job ad for the position you seek. Are any of them transferable skills that you possess? Even if you are moving to a different industry, use your cover letter to explain how you used those skills in a previous industry and that you are excited to apply them in a new industry or position.

Highlight skills on your resume.

Make sure your resume is relevant by taking time to update it. Decide what education, transferable skills and experiences would be relevant to the position you are applying for and highlight those.

In order to best highlight your transferable skills if you are switching to a different industry or have taken a break from your career, consider different resume styles.

A functional resume focuses on your skills instead of your chronological experience. A hybrid, or combination, resume combines elements of a traditional chronological resume and a functional resume. Generally, you will have a "Highlights" section at the top, where you can focus on your skills and expertise, and then list your chronological work experience in a "Relevant Experience" section.

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