

Identifying and Marketing Your Transferable Skills

How does a college graduate who worked as a server land a position as a marketing coordinator? The answer lies in the student's ability to demonstrate transferable skills. Although two positions may seem unrelated upon first glance, transferable skills can help you highlight the connection between them and prove you are a qualified candidate. Understanding your transferable skills and matching them with a job you want will allow you to bridge the gap between the work you do today and the jobs you aspire to attain tomorrow.

WHAT ARE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS?

Transferable skills are talents and abilities you have developed over time through your involvement in a variety of activities such as jobs, internships, volunteering, athletics, coursework, student organizations, hobbies, etc. These skills are oftentimes overlooked and understated on resumes and in interviews, but they can be your strongest asset during the job search. Although transferable skills may not seem immediately relevant to the job you seek, they are skills that all employers look for in a potential hire, and they can be applied to any work environment. Furthermore, transferable skills complement the knowledge you have gained from your degree, making you a more competitive job candidate.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS THAT EMPLOYERS VALUE:

Communication:

- Speaking effectively
- Writing concisely
- Listening attentively
- Expressing ideas
- Facilitating group discussion
- Providing appropriate feedback
- Negotiating
- Perceiving nonverbal messages
- Persuading
- Reporting information
- Describing feelings
- Interviewing
- Editing

Research and Planning:

- Forecasting, predicting
- Creating ideas
- Identifying problems
- Imagining alternatives
- Identifying resources
- Gathering information
- Solving problems
- Setting goals
- Extracting important information
- Defining needs

- Analyzing
- Developing evaluation strategies

Human Relations and Interpersonal Skills:

- Developing rapport
- Expressing empathy
- Listening
- Conveying feelings
- Providing support for others
- Motivating others
- Sharing credit
- Counseling
- Cooperating
- Delegating with respect
- Representing others
- Perceiving feelings, situations
- Asserting

Organization, Management and Leadership:

- Initiating new ideas
- Handling details
- Coordinating tasks
- Managing groups
- Delegating responsibility
- Teaching
- Coaching
- Counseling
- Promoting change
- Selling ideas or products
- Decision-making with others
- Managing conflict

Work Survival:

- Implementing decisions
- Cooperating
- Enforcing policies
- Being punctual
- Managing time
- Attending to detail
- Meeting goals
- Enlisting help
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting and meeting deadlines
- Organizing
- Making decisions

MARKETING YOUR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Any skill is transferable, but the trick is showing employers *how* it applies to a particular job, and *why* it is useful to them. If your employment history comes from the same industry as your desired career, this should be quite easy. However, if you have limited experience in the industry of interest, recognizing and demonstrating your transferable skills may require a bit more effort, but these skills will serve as a crucial marketing tool.

To identify your strongest transferable skills, analyze the job description for the desired position to determine which skills the employer has prioritized. Then, work backward, comparing those qualifications to your own skills and experience. If there is not a direct link between the two, find the similarities! Try to think about what you have done in terms of what you would be doing in that position, and use the skill lists above as a guide. Make the connection clear to the employer in your cover letter, resume, and interview. Furthermore, if you say you have “strong organizational skills,” *show* the employer you actually possess the skill by providing specific examples of how you applied it.

DEMONSTRATING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS IN A RESUME

Receptionist to entry-level finance position

- Communicated effectively with a wide range of individuals, including high-net-worth investors and institutional money manager, in a stressful and time-sensitive environment.
- Gained knowledge of financial markets and instruments, especially stocks, bonds, futures and options.

Server to entry-level marketing position

- Acted as a sales representative for the restaurant, upselling to achieve one of the highest per-ticket and per-night sales averages.
- Prioritized and juggled dozens of simultaneous responsibilities.
- Built loyal clientele of regulars in addition to tourist trade.

DEMONSTRATING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS IN A COVER LETTER

Server seeking entry-level marketing position

In addition to my marketing coursework, I have employed marketing and customer service skills in the restaurant field. In my most recent position, I marketed appetizers, desserts, and other add-ons to customers and added value to their dining experience. I would like to apply the same sales savvy and interpersonal skills in this marketing position you have advertised.

Babysitter/nanny seeking management trainee position

As a former caregiver to three active children, I certainly know the importance of effective time-management. I have cultivated that ability, along with exemplary leadership, organizational, and communication skills, which would contribute to our mutual success when I join your management trainee program.

Telemarketer/phone survey taker seeking hotel management position

My work as a telemarketer required me to communicate with a diverse array of people, some of whom represented difficult challenges. Through this experience, I refined my communication skills to the point where I was able to consistently smooth ruffled feathers, solve problems, and provide satisfaction to customers. These skills are vital to effective hotel management, and I am eager to apply my talents at your hotel.