



Transferable Skills: Invisible Assets

You may have more to offer an employer than you realize.

But, wait! There's more!

As a student or recent graduate, how do you capitalize on your previous, even if limited, work experience? How do you enhance your candidacy when crafting your cover letter and résumé? How do you translate summers of waiting tables, an art internship, or volunteer time assisting Habitat for Humanity into viable selling points that are relevant to a current job opportunity, even if unrelated?

Answer: Focus on your transferable skills.

Basically, transferable skills are part of your life experience; versatile skills and qualities learned and developed over time that can be applied to many situations. They are acquired through upbringing, education, networking, work, mentoring, training, social interaction, and other activities. Honed through self-awareness and action, transferable skills help you navigate through life and are essential to career success.

A competitive advantage.

For employers, candidates with transferable skills are more prepared to solve problems, generate ideas, and meet customer needs. These job seekers can “think on their feet” in various roles and situations: They may be as adept at handling customer issues as they are at fundraising.

Transferable skills are diverse and include people, data, and technical skills:

Communication skills. Using verbal and writing skills, body language, tone of voice to communicate ideas and thoughts clearly, effectively, persuasively.

Interpersonal skills. Being able to listen, relate, understand, cooperate, manage, guide, and “play well with others.”

Leadership skills. The ability to inspire, influence, motivate; assess situations, make decisions; take risks and determine goals; achieve results through resourcefulness, creativity, and teamwork.

Analytical skills. How you analyze data; research, compile, and interpret information; handle numbers, apply logic, and determine patterns.

Organizational skills. Includes time management; the ability to prioritize, disseminate and record data, generate accurate reports, manage resources.

Technical skills. The application of practical know-how and hands-on proficiency with specific equipment and machinery, software and hardware, techniques and regimens.

Personal qualities. Having integrity, resilience, self-awareness, self-discipline and control; being punctual, reliable, patient, responsible, fair, creative, positive, and so on.

Applying what you learned

First, dissect previous experiences and jobs into core skills. Identify what worked—or didn't. Then focus on the value you now bring to a new job. Point out transferable skills that are relevant to the job description in your cover letter and résumé. Include them in your elevator speech (see: Elevator Speech: Job Search Infomercial), and when networking and interviewing to demonstrate your assets and versatility:

-- Waiting tables in a fast-paced, high-pressured setting enabled you to develop customer skills and anticipate diner needs. In retail sales, you can then quickly ascertain desires and skillfully offer solutions that satisfy a customer's demands, as well as effectively resolve complaints.

-- Your museum internship required organizational skills for handling art and scheduling openings, qualities you bring to an assistant event planner position where networking and time management are crucial.

-- Building new homes for disaster relief provided technical know how of tools, construction principles, and building codes applicable to a home inspector job.

You may be new to a job and its tasks, but these other traits and qualities will help you bridge the gap.



i n a nutshell:

Transferable skills enable you to:

- Be a more desirable candidate
- Be more confident, disciplined and resourceful in many areas
- Qualify for more opportunities
- Transition and adapt more quickly to new situations
- Establish and maintain meaningful relationships
- Interact well with others to achieve successful results
- Be a more well-rounded, independent individual

Make yourself more marketable: Focus on how your transferable skills will add value and generate positive results for your employer.