

Transferable Skills: Translating Work Experience from Other Industries

In addition to noting your accomplishments, it is also important to highlight transferable skills. Transferable skills are those skills that will be assets in your next position, even if your prior experience doesn't directly relate. Transferable skills allow people to move from industry to industry and to change careers completely.

It is especially important to emphasize transferable skills when you are transitioning into a new career. Maybe you worked as a teacher for a number of years before entering advertising. You're bound to have developed strong skills in making presentations, explaining difficult concepts in easy-to-understand terms, and working with a wide range of people with differing needs and goals, from children to parents to administrators.

Maybe you worked in sales. Certainly you can tout your marketing abilities, which will be a huge asset in drumming up business for the company or offering new ideas to increase or improve exposure and image. Also, salespeople tend to be very good with people, and maybe you can play up your ability to mediate tense situations between departments or subordinates.

Instead of including industry-specific buzzwords and going into detail about your day-to-day duties, you want to show how you succeeded and how your prior career will be of value in your career. Here are some examples of industry-specific job descriptions that were transformed to emphasize transferable skills:

Original:

Private contractor managing application testing and implementation at all U.S. locations for a large Windows XP desktop/network migration. Project scope involved 500+ applications supporting 3000+ office and high-tech manufacturing users. Scope included implementation of hundreds of business applications in the new environment via SMS. Provided upgrade and replacement strategies.

Preferred:

Invited to manage large-scale software upgrade project as a private contractor after successfully completing three projects for Baker, Inc., while affiliated with consulting company. Provided upgrade and replacement strategies, ensuring that each business function was maintained or improved. Completed project on time and under budget. Received commendations from Global Project Director.

Original:

Responsible for the daily funding of all subsidiaries and the broker-dealer. Produced monthly financial statements in accordance with U.S. GAAP, International Accounting Standards, and Swiss Banking Regulations. Worked with senior management of Treasury, Financial Accounting, and Financial Operations on funding integration, subsidiary integration, and the tracking of merger-related restructuring costs during merger. Reviewed and verified post-closing adjustments to the branch financial statements.

Preferred:

Worked closely with senior management and various departments on the implementation of new business strategies. Introduced and implemented systems that reduced headcount, controlled costs, and increased efficiency. Assessed costs and risks involved with project development and implementation. Negotiated with legal/compliance, financial control, operations, tax, and treasury departments to gain approval of transactions. Ensured that projects conformed to legal regulations.