

Closing the Gap

Consider your transferable skills and how you can apply them to a variety of tasks when looking for a new job.

By **LAURA LESTUS**, CAS, The Liberty Group



Transferable skills, unlike job-specific skills, are those skills you use in nearly every job. These skills are integrated into your workday and can be used across different fields but rarely stand out as obviously as skills that are easier to quantify.

E

mployers only post job openings when they have a specific unmet need to fill. It is critical that you fully understand the needs of the hiring company and match your skills to that need. Knowing the difference between job-specific skills and transferable skills can help you land that dream job.

Transferable skills, unlike job-specific skills, are those skills you use in nearly every job. These skills are integrated into your workday and can be used across different fields but rarely stand out as obviously as skills that are easier to quantify. Identifying transferable skills can be a challenge, because most often no formal training is associated with these skills.

JOB-SPECIFIC SKILLS

Some jobs require specific skills that other jobs don't require. Without these job-specific skills, a person cannot successfully perform the job. For example, the ability to operate a fork lift is a job-specific skill for a forklift operator; the ability to type at least 20 words per minute is a job-specific skill for an administrative support job; the ability to repair a boiler or broken water pipes is a job-specific skill for a plumber.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills are required for many jobs across different levels and functional areas. Once you learn these skills, you can apply them to your current job and any future jobs you might have. For example, the ability to supervise other employees, the ability to conduct a group presentation and the ability to manage a project schedule are all transferable skills that apply to a variety of jobs at different levels and in different areas within the apartment industry.

Transferable skills are a significant part of the value you bring to an employer, so it is important to identify and describe them. Here are some steps to help you:

STEP 1: LIST YOUR SKILLS

Create a list of hard and soft skills to help you understand what qualifies as a transferable skill. Hard skills, or those required for a specific job or profession, are technical and content-specific skills. Soft skills, which are



Image by Farang/dreamstime.com

Transferable skills are a significant part of the value you bring to an employer, so it is important to identify and describe them.

**ACCESS
ELECTRIC**

**YOUR
ELECTRICAL
SOLUTION!**

**NO OVERTIME FEE
NO BUCKET TRUCK FEE
NO FUEL SURCHARGE
NO SURPRISES**

**FRIENDLY STAFF
QUALITY INSTALLATIONS
FREE ESTIMATES
24-HOUR SERVICE
HIGH VOLTAGE REPAIRS
ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS
LICENSED & INSURED**

**ACCESS
ELECTRIC**

(281) 489-7755

non-technical and more transferable than hard skills, include time management, problem solving and dependability.

STEP 2: REVIEW YOUR EXPERIENCE

Connect your transferable skills to each job task or duty performed in previous positions. For instance, you developed teamwork and leadership skills as a coordinator of special projects in a marketing position. You showed initiative by creating new forms for recording sales orders. You demonstrated flexibility when deadlines were changed or when you had to work with other departments as a fill-in worker.

STEP 3: CONNECT THE DOTS

Match your transferable skills to the duties and responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. Use the job description or advertisement to help identify the skills the employer needs. An apartment community starting a rehab project might value a worker who has an eye for detail. A lease-up property needs an employee with excellent interpersonal skills. A company that depends heavily on its receptionist would look for an employee who demonstrates dependability as reflected in a limited use of leave.

STEP 4: INCLUDE RELEVANT SKILLS

Incorporate into your resume the specific transferable skills you have identified and prioritize those most important to the employer. The job description or advertisement can help you understand which transferable skills the employer might value. For instance, include a statement that your previous human resources position required the use of analytical and decision-making skills to interpret and apply company policies.

STEP 5: MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR COVER LETTER

Explain in your cover letters how the transferable skills you have developed match those required for the position. Your resume will detail training and experience in accounting and rent collection, but you can explain in a cover letter how your attention to detail means a very low error rate and an excellent collection percentage. Highlight the organizational skills the employer needs in a sales manager by explaining the importance of that skill in your office manager position.

Finally, be prepared to explain in detail when asked about the specific duties you performed when using a transferable skill mentioned in your cover letter or resume. Your

An excellent way to evaluate a candidate's skills without the employment risk is to payroll the candidate. A payroll program allows you more time to evaluate the candidate and manage your business while drastically reducing the risk of a bad hire. This process, done in partnership with a staffing company, allows you to test-drive the candidate on the job so that you are able to gauge his or her on-site performance before making a hiring decision. Your staffing partner will ensure that employees meet your background requirements as well as handling all payroll, tax filing, workers comp insurance coverage, etc.

explanation will reveal your understanding of the transferable skill and how it applies to different jobs.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS FOR THE EMPLOYER

Recently, other industries have been tapping into our candidate pool in the Houston multifamily market because of the wide range of skills that people in our industry possess. With the expected increase in Texas apartment communities that will start leasing in 2013, hiring companies need to be able to look outside the box and consider candidates that may have three or four of the five specific skills desired but also possess two or three transferable skills that were not originally considered but would bring value to the position. If we continue to compete with other industries for our candidates, it will be increasingly difficult to find that perfect candidate unless we consider all skills, both specific and transferable, when searching for a new addition to the team.★



Laura Lestus, CAS, is Houston branch manager for The Liberty Group. Contact her at laural@thelibertygroup.com. Stay up to date on The Liberty Group's news

and events at www.facebook.com/TheLibertyGroup or visit the company's website at www.thelibertygroup.com.