



Highlight your soft skills

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

Education, knowledge and experience can help you get to the top of the candidate list; however, highlighting your soft skills can really set you apart in a competitive market. Many prospective employers are looking for a combination of both technical and soft skills that go beyond a simple job description. They want a well-rounded individual with diverse skills to join their team.

In general, soft skills are a person's personality traits, behaviors and attitudes that can positively impact the work environment and office culture. Hard skills are typically the technical skills and knowledge required to do a job. Soft skills, such as communication, organization and teamwork skills, can often help you do your job better.

There are hundreds of different types of soft skills. In fact, the combination of soft skills required at each job and at each company are very unique. Below are examples of some of the most critical soft skills that employers are looking for when making their hiring decisions:

Team player: Working well on teams with people who have a variety of learning and communication styles can be an invaluable soft skill at many companies. A good team player is able to contribute to a group or team, listen well to other members, and be very aware of the different group dynamics.

Problem-solving skills: Emphasize your ability to evaluate an issue and use your knowledge and experience to come up with the best solution. Problem-solving can involve how you approach the problem from different perspectives and how you determine what the best options are for the situation.

Creativity: This soft skill can range from being able to think about alternative ways to approach problems, to creating something that is new and different.

Time management: Managing your time refers to getting things done in a limited timeframe in the most effective and efficient manner. This can include working on tight deadlines, managing a complicated schedule, and being able to achieve many tasks and goals within a set amount of time.

Communication skills: Your ability to effectively communicate with coworkers, managers, and customers can set you on a successful career path. Good communication skills include verbal and nonverbal skills. Communication goes beyond simply writing and speaking well, it can include things like being able to request help on a project, initiating better communication between coworkers, or encouraging clearer communication to external customers and the public.

Work ethic: Employers look for candidates who have a strong work ethic, are goal-oriented and show enthusiasm for new challenges. Showing a prospective employer that you are committed to your job and career is key when marketing yourself as a candidate for a job.

Leadership: This soft skill can be successfully representing and supporting a group of people or guiding a team through decisions. Leadership skills can include having a vision and being able to guide a group towards set goals.

Brainstorm about all the soft skills you possess, and then be able to demonstrate each. Think about examples where you have best used your soft skills in various situations or challenging circumstances. If you have any letters or awards that highlight these skills, include copies with your letters of reference or bring them to your interview. At your interview, take advantage of opportunities to describe and elaborate on your soft skills when you are answering the questions. Marketing your soft skills to an employer will help them to see what an asset you will be for their company.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to www.dws.state.nm.us.

Published September 27, 2015.

The NMDWS column can be found in the Albuquerque Journal's Classifieds section featuring Real Estate, Automotive, and Careers every Sunday.