



## Transferrable skills

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

To stand out amongst the competition, job seekers have to successfully market and sell their qualifications and experience. This task can be especially difficult for those who have recently graduated from school, changed careers, or who have gaps in their work history.

Reviewing positions you have held in the past is a good start to updating your information. However, it is to your advantage to also consider your transferable skills that you have acquired throughout life. Transferable skills are those that you have gained from coursework, previous jobs, volunteering, and other life experiences that you can apply to jobs you are pursuing.

Once you have brainstormed and listed your transferable skills, that next step is to sell your skills to your prospective employer. It is important to tailor your application materials so that they relate to what the employer is seeking. In other words, craft your application so that it is relevant to what the prospective employer is looking for in an employee.

So, how do you begin to sell your transferrable skills? The cover letter is an introduction to what you can offer an employer. In the letter, highlight your strengths and touch on the skills most relevant to the job description. Connect your transferable skills to the job description by stating that you can use one or two of your strongest skills if selected for this position.

Evaluate your current resume and combine transferable skills with primary skills from past jobs. Depending on the type of prospective job, a traditional resume may not allow for a good snapshot of your skills. A functional or skills-based resume which emphasizes skills and experience rather than work history, may work best if there are gaps in your employment history, you have recently graduated, or are switching careers. For a functional resume, headings can be specific transferable skills and then under each heading will be a list of work that fits under that category. Sometimes adding a quote from a former employer about one of your transferable skills can help highlight how your past experience relates to this job position.

Some employers do not like purely functional resumes because they want a clear, quick glance at previous employers and work history. If that is the case, you can add a skills section or summary to your chronological or traditional resume. Including transferable skills in the objective is an option as well.

The interview, the last chance to market your skills, is a good opportunity to summarize the information you provided in your cover letter and resume. Use examples of how you successfully used skills in another job or through an experience in your life and how these instances would apply to success in this job. Answer questions using key words that highlight your transferable skills.

Be specific. Highlighting too broad of a skill does not give the employer a clear idea if you will meet their hiring needs. For example, leadership skills can include so many different definitions. Instead, specify if you demonstrated leadership in teams or working to bring different groups of people together.

Be sure to word phrases in your resumes and cover letters in a way that captures the transferable skill but remains true to the skill you have. Remember to emphasize, but don't exaggerate. It is critical to be truthful about all the information you provide potential employers. Have someone review your resume and cover letter once you are finished integrating your transferable skills, and this will assist in successfully standing out as a job applicant.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us).

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