

Transferable Skills



You must recognize that almost every employer universally greets certain skills with enthusiasm. The need for these skills occurs with some regularity in every job requiring decision making and good judgment. Pay attention to skills in the work you are doing or have done, and look for them in the non-paid activity of your spare time. Identify your most powerful talents, with the implied assumptions that every skill can find a home somewhere.

Since some skills are more equal than others, here is a list of 10 that can make you indispensable, and the means by which you may be able to develop them.

BUDGET MANAGEMENT - Get your hands on any budget you can find, no matter how small, and take responsibility for it. Manage how the funds are dispensed, keep control of the budget, learn what fiscal control is all about.

SUPERVISING - Take responsibility for the work of others in a situation in which some accountability is called for. Have direct contact with the work of others; expose yourself to the difficulty of giving orders, hearing complaints, and understanding the other's viewpoint.

ORGANIZING/MANAGING/COORDINATING - Take charge of any event that is within your grasp as long as you have responsibility for bringing together people, resources and events. If nothing else, the headaches of organizing events or managing projects teach how to delegate tasks to others.

SPEAKING- Take a leadership role in any organization, so that you are forced to talk publicly, prepare remarks, explain ideas, and even motivate people without feeling terribly self-conscious. Practice so that you can develop your own style.

WRITING - Go public with your writing skills. Practice putting pen to paper. Write letters to the editors of every publication you read routinely. Write a newsletter, however informal, for a club or organization to which you belong.

TEACHING/INSTRUCTING - Refine your ability to explain things to other people. Since most teaching does not take place in the classroom, but in ordinary everyday exchanges between people, you should become familiar and comfortable with passing information and understanding to others. Any position of leadership or responsibility gives you many chances to teach ideas and methods to others.

NEGOTIATING/ARBITRATING - Discover and cultivate the fine art of dealing openly and effectively with people in ambiguous situations. Learn how to bring warring factions together, resolve differences between groups or individuals, and make demands on behalf of one constituency to those in positions of power.

INTERVIEWING - Learn how to acquire information from other people by questioning them directly. Start by interviewing the neighbors, your friends, and other people easily available. Discover the fine art of helping a person to feel comfortable in your presence, although you are asking difficult or even touchy questions.

PUBLIC RELATIONS - Accept a role in which you must meet or relate to the public. Greet visitors, answer the telephone, give talks to community groups, sell ads to business people, explain programs to prospective clients, or even collect money.

COPING WITH DEADLINE PRESSURE - Search for opportunities to demonstrate that you can produce good work when it is required by external deadlines. Prove to yourself and anyone that you can function on someone else's schedule, even when that time frame is notably hurried.

Adapted from:

The Complete Job-Search Handbook: all the skills you need to get any job and have a good time doing it. Howard Figler; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1979