

YOUR SKILLS

To Gain Employment



People can face uncertain futures if they lose jobs where they have built or honed most of their work skills. Finding a new job may require a complete rebranding of those skills to attract and win over employers in high-growth industries.

WHAT IS REBRANDING?

Rebranding is a process by which a product or service developed with one brand or company is marketed and distributed with a different identity. When looking for work, the first step in rebranding your skills is to:

- 1. Determine your objectives.** Put together a checklist of what you are pursuing in the job market, start by asking yourself these questions.
 - Do I want to perform the same type of work in a different industry?
 - Do I need to look for a different type of work?
 - What are my goals for pay and working hours?
 - How far am I willing to travel to work?
- 2. Study the employable skills ranked highest among all employers.** Although every employer is looking for a specific set of skills, all employers admire and look for certain basic skills. Once you know what most employers want, you can tailor your job search to show how well you meet these requirements.

TOP 10 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- 1. Communication skills** – Listening, speaking and writing. Employers want people who can accurately interpret what others are saying and organize and express their thoughts clearly.
- 2. Teamwork** – In today's work environment, many jobs involve working in one or more groups. Employers want someone who can bring out the best in others.

- 3. Analytical and problem-solving skills** – Employers want people who can use creativity, reasoning and past experiences to identify and solve problems effectively.
- 4. Personal management skills** – The ability to plan and manage multiple assignments and tasks, set priorities and adapt to changing conditions and work assignments.
- 5. Interpersonal effectiveness** – Employers usually note whether an employee can relate to co-workers and build relationships with others in the organization.
- 6. Computer/technical literacy** – Although employers expect to provide training on job-specific software, they also expect employees to be proficient with basic computer skills.
- 7. Leadership/management skills** – The ability to take charge and manage your co-workers, if required, is a welcome trait. Most employers look for signs of leadership qualities.
- 8. Learning skills** – Jobs are constantly changing and evolving, and employers want people who can grow and learn as changes come.
- 9. Academic competence in reading and math** – Although most jobs don't require calculus, almost all jobs require the ability to read and comprehend instructions and perform basic math.
- 10. Strong work values** – Dependability, honesty, self-confidence and a positive attitude are prized qualities in any profession. Employers look for personal integrity.

PUT A "NEW SPIN" ON WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU DO

Once you are certain about your objectives and employable skills, it's time to update the positive "spin" about your skills and experience. This new "spin" trains you to emphasize skills, experience and versatility – and to stop defining yourself by the job titles you have previously held.

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Develop New Promotional Materials

The resume is still the primary marketing tool for a job hunter so when you're looking for a job in a different industry, a functional skills-based resume can be the best format for you. By showcasing the skills an employer wants, you are giving him/her every reason to consider you as a candidate. You must identify the skills you possess, the value you added in previous positions and the beneficial outcomes resulting from your work.

KEEP YOUR RESUME SHORT AND CONCISE

Don't use the following jargon:

Assist, Contribute and Support – These words say you helped at work, but they don't say how. Use words that tell the employer what you did at work.

Successfully and Effectively – Use these words sparingly. Without more explanation, these words don't tell the employer what part you played in effecting a good work outcome. Your achievements will be more impressive if you give concrete examples of what you've done and how you've been successful.

Responsible for – Instead of just listing your responsibilities, stress your accomplishments. Use figures to show how you affected growth or reduced costs. Include the number of people you managed, the amount of the budget you oversaw or the revenue you saved the company.

Interface, Utilize and Synergy – Don't flower your resume with meaningless jargon or buzzwords. Say work, not interface. Say use, not utilize. Leave buzzwords like synergy out of the resume.

SHOW 'EM YOU KNOW 'EM

Once you've detailed your own capabilities, the next step is to show how well-informed you are about the prospective employer and why you are interested in working for the company.

Pre-interview Research

Research the company and/or the industry ahead of time. If you display a certain level of knowledge about the company, you are more likely to separate yourself from others.

Research the company's website. When you are invited for an interview, ask if there is any literature available that provides an overview of the company. You can also scan recent newspapers and magazines to get an understanding of major issues in the industry.

After the Interview

- Record the names of people you met.
- List the key points about the job.
- List any questions you struggled to answer.

Within 24 hours, type and mail or email a one-page letter to each person who interviewed you. Thank them for the interview. Indicate your understanding of the job and how much you want the job. Make sure your letter is perfect in grammar, spelling and appearance.

After one week, call the person who interviewed you. Review the points you made in your letter. Keep notes of this telephone call. Be prepared for the possibility that you did not get the job. If that happens, say you would be happy to be considered for future opportunities.

And, of course, you may get a call offering you the job when you least expect it. Once you have been offered a job, be sure to ask about:

- Job description
- Salary
- Working hours
- Location
- Duration (length of time the job will last)

Weigh the offer against your original objectives. Does it meet them?