

NEXT STEP

Why should I hire you?



Knowing and describing your skills is essential to do well in interviews. But more importantly, this same knowledge is important to help you decide what type of job you will enjoy and do well.

Employers often discuss how most of the people they interview might have the required job skills, but employees sometimes cannot describe these skills accordingly and thereby prove that they can't do the job they seek. Many fumble at the basic question "Why should I hire you?"

Knowing and describing your skills is essential to do well in interviews. But more importantly, this same knowledge is important to help you decide what type of job you will enjoy and do well. For these reasons, identifying your skills is a necessary part of a successful career plan.

THE THREE TYPES OF SKILLS

Most people think of their skills as job-

related skills, such as using Excel. But there are other types of skills that are important for success on a job—and that are important to employers. It's simplest to break these skills into three types—self-management, transferable, and job-related. Identify those that are most important to you.

SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Self-management skills (also known as adaptive skills or personality traits) are the things that make you a good worker. They describe your basic personality and your ability to adapt to new environments, as well as provide the foundation for other skills. They are some of the most important skills to emphasize in interviews, yet most job

seekers don't realize their importance—and don't mention them. Here are some: honesty, punctuality, ability to follow instructions, ability to get along with co-workers and supervisor, productivity, good attendance, deadline oriented, hardworking. Think beyond the list and decide what your self-management skills are.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills are skills that can be used on more than one job. Often these skills are things that you naturally do well or that are an essential part of your personality, and are the foundations for other skills. We all have skills that can transfer from one job or career to another. For example, the ability to

organize events could be used in a variety of jobs and may be essential for success in certain occupations. Identify your top transferable skills. They can be: analyzing data, budgeting, compiling/recording facts, researching/locating information etc.

JOB-RELATED SKILLS

Job-content or job-related skills are those you need to do a particular occupation. A sound engineer, for example, needs to know how to use various studio equipment and wires and cables. Before you select job-related skills to emphasize, you must first have a clear idea of the jobs you want. It's best to hold off developing your job-related skills list until you have defined the job you want.

How did I get here?

If I were given a choice at eighteen, I would have chosen to study commerce. However it did not turn out that way and today I am a graduate of Development Studies working as a trainee with BRAC.

My journey began when I was interning at an NGO during high school. I wanted to study commerce only for superficial reasons. During that internship, a colleague asked me what I wanted to do with my life and I bluntly jested that I wanted to be an extremely affluent and busy corporate worker. She was not impressed and that put me to thinking that there are in fact other more original options out there.

However, after I graduated high school, I did not truly have a wealth of choices regarding what I could study. I was applying for an AusAID scholarship then and the choices they offered were in fact limited. Yet I believe it was for the better.

Asian or South Asian culture puts more value on professions in engineering or medicine than any other. Had I not applied for that scholarship I believe I would have become another engineer or doctor among many. It was my uncle who suggested that I take a look at development studies, which was being offered under the scholarship. I did not know much about this particular field then but after a little research on the internet, I became interested. This was a definite turning point in my life as this scholarship picked me up from my relatively modest world of thoughts and plunged me into another far diverse. It enabled me not only to acquire valuable skills but also form my own ideas.

I remember profoundly my very first lecture for the



introductory development studies course. Most of the discussion flew over my head but however much I did comprehend, I had never thought of before. This part of my life was remarkable as I got to spend three years mixing with people with many different viewpoints and one solitary year of honours research under the supervision of an extraordinary academic.

Now that I am back in Bangladesh, I get frequently asked why I did not attempt to stay back in Australia. There are no definite answers for such a question. But I like to believe that I am back here in order to plunge myself again into this space so I may gain new ideas and experience and also share whatever skill I can offer.

Currently I am working in microfinance at Moulvibazar. This job at BRAC is great because I get to travel to distant parts in Bangladesh and meet people from all walks of life. I am finding myself frequently sharing many diverse thoughts with all the people I am meeting. These range from Adivasi issues to cricket. Sometimes we go for some betel leaf or a cup of tea and at one instance I was even able to attend a local wedding. It is not that everything here is to my liking and at most times I do not think the way the local people do. But I am hoping that an intimate understanding of the grassroots people would help me think better in the future as a development professional.

The writer is a graduate in Development Studies from The University of New South Wales. Now he works for BRAC, occasionally jumping into rural ponds and getting chased by chickens.

HITOISHI CHAKMA

This is the first episode of "HOW DID I GET HERE?" We try to give you a firsthand experience of people who ended up being in a job they didn't expect. Whether they like it or not is what we try to find out here. If you also faced a similar situation, mail us your interesting story at nextstep@thedailystar.net
WORD LIMIT 500

HOT STUFF

GOT IT SKILLS?

Develop this & get your head in the cloud

It should come as no surprise that "Cloud" is one of the hottest buzz words in the tech world right now. And with that popularity comes an increased demand for the skills that will help organizations make the move to the cloud. Investing in cloud training in 2013 will expand your skill set to include cloud deployment and implementation, making you a more marketable candidate for potential jobs. Beyond the cloud, you should be thinking Big Data/Analytics and Java/Mobile Application Development. But remember, just getting the technical skills alone isn't all you need to widen your career prospects and potentially increase your salary. Rich Milgram, CEO of career network Beyond, put it this way:

"Learning a technology is the easy part. Having the mindset to apply it, having the mindset and logic process it, being thorough and detail-oriented while doing so, these are the critical skills."



Define your interests

Finding the perfect career is difficult for most. We'd love to follow our heart and be what we wanted as a kid. Astronaut? Sure thing. But how do you merge your interests with your skills and pick the career that's just right? You find out what you're particularly good at. Basically, build on your strengths.

The goal is to be the best in your field. The only way to do that is to take your strengths and keep building them till there is no equal. If you can draw, expand laterally. Learn digital techniques for drawing. Try styles that are not your comfort zone. Being bad at something also shows you what you should avoid. Because a bad skill can be improved but only just so in most cases. In terms of job happiness, being bad at something is really demoralizing. But you don't count it out unless you've tried everything.

Let's start with interests. These can be functional (e.g., how do we improve the social marketing of our product?) or pertain to a particular industry such as leather or automotive accessories. A combination will bring about the best choices. So, how do you figure out what you're good at and what you're interested in, and then translate that information into a functional area and industry?

1 TRY IT OUT

If you like something, read up on it. Google it. Talk to the people in this field and see if they have insights that will

either get you more involved or show you this is not what you wanted. See if you can do an internship or be an apprentice/volunteer. To make best use of your time, do small experiments. If you think you'd be good at interior design, try painting a wall properly. Study colours. Maybe even try building a scale model. Build a social networking page and use the colours to your benefit.

But if you do try something in the view of turning it into a career, plan to do it big. Have it in manageable chunks, but the end goal should be big. It's easy

Pick a field that makes you want to go to work

to 'try out' some Facebook page management but to make it into a marketing career, you need to plan on a product/service that needs to be promoted. It should include a plan of how far you can take it.

2 TALK TO PEOPLE

Find out from people who tried or are in the field. Learn what they do, how they do it, where they work, what's it like. It's also networking. People love to discuss their achievements so ask away. You're good at writing and want to know what a copywriter does? It's not just

writing a few words. Expand the range of people you ask to get a more balanced idea of where the field/industry is and how it operates. People in banking can have different viewpoints depending on whether they are from the private or public sector. Send people a survey if you think they would feel more comfortable being anonymous.

3 DIG DEEPER INTO YOUR INTERESTS

Find out the underlying aspects of your interest. You like to paint but you're not considering yourself as the next Picasso. What does painting do for you? Does it mean you're better with shapes and spatial activities? Perhaps you can go into interior design where colors and space utilization play a big part. Perhaps you like online gaming but don't want to take it up as a career in itself. Maybe it's the teamwork or coordination aspect that is interesting. These are the things that drive your interest. Try this out for all things you are interested in, find the underlying drivers.

Once you do that, you can identify specific companies offering you a task that fits in with your interests drivers. And then, things may just change. It all adds up to experience and helps to refine your career interests. Picking a field that makes you want to go to work is something that will help you grow and excel.

E R RONNY

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