

Can your resume help you change careers? The answer is yes, if you create a resume that emphasizes the skills and attributes you possess that are transferable to the career path you want to pursue.

Use a functional or combination format

Most resume writing experts recommend a functional or combination format resume for people who want to change careers. This is because a functional or combination resume helps you showcase your qualifications in terms of skills and attributes rather than in terms of job you have already held.

A potential employer screens resumes by looking for the qualifications that are required for a particular job. In most cases, if they read a resume that lists job experience in different career field or industry they will screen that resume out. They do not stop to consider if any of the skills from the non-related industry are transferable to the position they have open. Your job is to create a resume that draws out those transferable skills and communicates them to a potential employer so that you increase your chances of getting into the interview phase of hiring.

Think about skills and attributes

The first step is to think about the skills and attributes needed in the new career that you want. Make a list of what potential employers look for in that field, and then turn to your own qualifications. Look at your accomplishment statements and pick out the ones that illustrate the skills and attributes needed for the new career.

For example, let's say you have a great deal of experience as a salesperson and now you are interested in becoming a corporate trainer. Start with a list of the skills and attributes necessary to be a successful corporate trainer. The list might look something like this:

- Organization and preparation prior to class
- Presentation skills for teaching class materials
- Interactive and discussion skills for engaging students in learning
- Research and development of new class topics
- Writing skills for developing class materials
- Interpersonal skills for working with students individually or in small groups

Now start to think about what skills you have developed as a salesperson that are transferable to the job of corporate trainer, and make a list of them. It might look something like this:

- Organization and preparation prior to meeting with clients
- Presentation skills for communicating with clients
- Interactive and discussion skills for gaining trust and moving clients toward a buying decision

- Research into client needs and development of strategies for how your products or services can fulfill those needs
- Writing skills for developing sales materials and client proposals
- Interpersonal skills for building and maintaining client relationships

Can you see how the skills of a salesperson could be transferable to the requirements of being a corporate trainer? Now you are ready to build accomplishment statements and group them into categories that match the skills and attributes a potential employer requires for a corporate trainer.

The interview phase

The goal of a resume written for a career change is to get you into the interview phases of the hiring process. Once you are there, it is up to you to answer the interviewer's questions in a manner that is open, honest, and emphasizes the ways in which your skills and attributes can effectively transfer to a new career.

It is often helpful to do some practice interviews in advance, using a trusted friend or a career counselor to role-play with you. Work through the kinds of questions you can expect and develop answers that will help you sell yourself as a good candidate for the job. Remember that your resume can get you in the door, but it is up to you to demonstrate clearly to a potential employer why they should hire you.