



What Are Transferrable Skills?

by Marco Altamirano Jun 04, 2015

The good news is that if you've been through a graduate program, then you have transferrable skills. The trouble is figuring out what they are and how to pitch and leverage them for your job search.

In other words, if you think that your academic background is more or less irrelevant for non-academic jobs, the key is to figure out how you can make it relevant.

The problem is that when most graduates think about their skills, they usually think about their hyper specialized research in 17th century Spanish poetry or their dissertation on protein interactions in living plant cells. Luckily, your transferrable skills are not limited to your research specialization, but you'll have to think more generally in order to discover them. Spanish, writing, and editing are transferrable skills, but your familiarity with the octosyllabic footing of poetic verses is probably not.

The skills you want to focus on will depend on your educational background and the industry that you're trying to get into. But to get started, just think about what you've done in grad school in the most practical terms possible.

Practically speaking, grad school is a giant, multi-year, time-intensive project. Already you have skill number one managing long-term (and perhaps collaborative) projects. Moreover, all the steps you took to finish that project are also skills. This can make for a fairly impressive list of abilities:

- 1) Analyze qualitative and/or quantitative data
- 2) Make sense of data
- 3) Develop arguments from data sets
- 4) Critique arguments
- 5) Deliver presentations
- 6) Explain complex problems in simple language
- 7) Collaborate with teams
- 8) Writing and editing
- 9) Effective communication
- 10) Establish and cultivate professional long-term relationships
- 11) Fundraising
- 12) Creative problem solving

The generality of these skills is a strength, not a weakness: it makes you versatile. Once you've compiled a list of such skills, the next step is to figure out which of your skills are the most relevant to the job you're trying to get. And if you focus on those relevant skills, your academic background will stop looking impractical, and you'll be able to pitch your education as an interesting and attractive asset for the job in your resume, cover letters, and interviews.

Resource: info@gradsquare.com