

Telegraph Column, “*CareerU*<sup>®</sup> For Success”  
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### “Emphasize Transferable Skills When Changing Careers”

Oftentimes I work with clients who are not aware of their transferable skills, or how these skills add value to other industries and careers. In fact, many of my clients are convinced in their minds that they will need to go back to school every time in order to change careers. Although specific formal education and training is required to enter some professions (Law, Teaching, Medicine, etc...) other professions can be entered by emphasizing transferable skills. What are transferable skills? They are skills that directly transfer from one job to another, and in many cases- add value to the new profession.

A good example of how a transferable skill can allow entry into a new profession (and add- value in the process) is when an Engineer in Japan is rotated into a Purchasing Career, due to his extensive knowledge on pricing of parts and quality implications. An Engineer knows what parts can be ‘cost-shopped’ vs. which parts cannot- due to quality ramifications of ‘cheap parts.’ A Purchasing Agent, without knowledge in Engineering, may not think twice about cutting part- supply expenses (not knowing the detrimental overall quality- in –performance implications based on that one specific part.) His knowledge of Parts Pricing and Quality Implications is his transferable skill into Purchasing. Thus, in this example, the Engineer brings tremendous value to the purchasing profession. This is true in many other career situations.

Another example of how a transferable skill can add value to another profession is when a Customer Service Representative changes careers into Quality Assurance. The transferable skill this time is “Problem-Solving.” In customer service, the individual is problem solving with people and various departments every day. In Quality Assurance, the individual is problem solving with people-parts-and various departments every day. The Customer Service Representative adds value to the Quality Department with their strong conviction and passion of “Let’s do it right the first time. If we don’t, I know first hand the negative impact it has on our organization.” The unique perspective of the customer service representative drives the positive morale and conviction within the Quality Department to “Do it right the first time.”

In my own career, counseling many mid-life professionals who’ve said, “If I only knew you in high school, life would look so much different now. I would have pursued Architecture rather than just settling for a business major- not understanding my options.” After hearing these sentiments over and over again, “If I had only known you in high school...,” I finally decided to DO something about it. I’m contracting with a high school- providing career counseling for juniors. In this example, I haven’t changed careers- I’ve re-focused my industries, adding transferable skill and knowledge value within education.

If you are thinking about changing jobs or careers- think not only about how your unique perspective and experience can add value to multiple jobs- but also how you can add value to multiple industries. You’ll be amazed how many options you truly have in your growing career.