Showcasing Your Skills on a Resume

Technical and Soft Skills to Sell Your Military Experiences

Bank of America

Published October 2015

Introduction

A resume is your introduction to a potential employer — it's your ticket to the interview.

Creating a good resume allows you to market the following in a succinct and impactful way:

- Military transferable skills, experiences and accomplishments
- Background
- Education

The purpose of this presentation is to:

- Describe differences between technical (or functional) and soft skills and provide suggestions for referencing each on your resume.
- Provide tips on converting military experiences to civilian language.
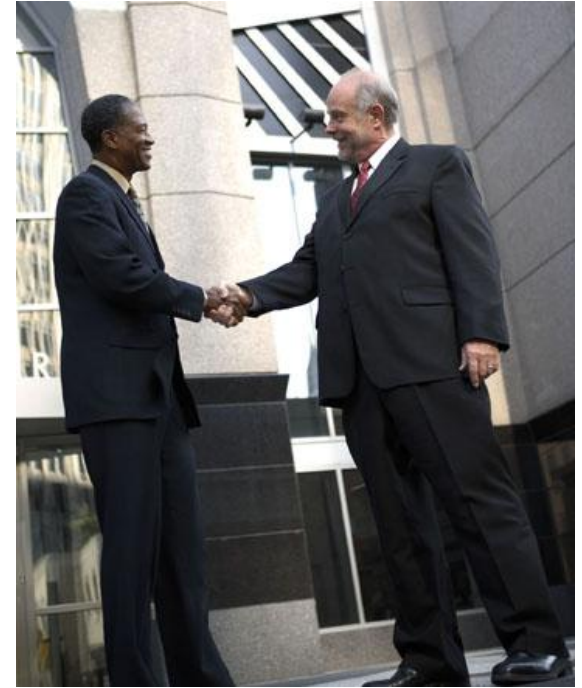
Introduction, continued

Your ability to match your military experiences to specific job skills, in civilian terms, is key to moving forward in the selection process. Your experiences/skills represent your accomplishments.

It's important you write for the intended audience:

- Recruiter / hiring manager who will likely see your resume first
- Hiring business manager who may be making the final selection

The better your skills and experiences match those of the job, the greater your chances of being offered an interview.

Keep in mind, you likely have more relevant skills and experiences for a new, civilian job than you think.

Types of skills

There are two types of skills to be included in a resume:

1. Technical (or functional)
2. Soft

Many jobs require a mixture of both skills. The table provides a brief comparison.

Technical skills	Soft skills
Basic knowledge required to perform a task	Describe who we are, rather than what we know
Includes experiences on the job as well as education or training (both formal and informal along with certifications)	Includes personal attributes enabling a person to interact effectively (such as communicating effectively or accepting responsibility)

Technical skills

As it relates to technical skills, there are **general technical skills** and **specific technical skills**.

For example, using a computer is a general technical skill, but using Excel to create databases is a specific technical skill. For technical skills, it's important to describe your level of expertise and training with each item, such as courses, seminars and/or certifications.

Here are two examples:

General technical skills		
Software	Word	Intermediate
	Excel	Expert
	PowerPoint	Basic
Specific technical skills		
Information Security	Experienced in Tenable Nessus, Host Based Security System (HBSS) McAfee, Intrusion Detection System (IDS) / Intrusion Prevention System (IPS), Snort, Network Mapper (NMAP), Active Directory, Storage Area Network (SAN) storage	

Technical skills, continued

Technical skills are not limited to computing. For example, a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) gives you technical skills in finance, balance sheets and other business documents and processes.

The functional knowledge of how a particular business operates is also considered a technical skill. For example, working as a bank teller gives you functional knowledge of the job.

Technical skills, continued

The technical skills section of your resume should:

- Be factual about your skills and expertise.
- Accurately reflect your skills, including level and training.
- State specifics of your experiences, including tasks performed or functional knowledge of a job or type of business.
- Mention programs by name and/or comparable system if you have used programs or systems similar to those mentioned in the job description.
  - For example, "Proficient in {insert program} (which is comparable to {insert comparable program})."
- Use civilian terms, instead of military-specific terms.
  - For example, indicate you operated a light truck, not a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMVV).

Technical skills, continued

Carefully scan the description of a job for which you're interested. Pull out required or desired technical skills. Customize and prioritize the order of your skills (keeping in mind skills should be factual and most relevant listed first), accordingly. As a result, you may have multiple versions of your resume, tailored to each specific position.

Here are three examples:

Job description	Resume
Requirements: • Input information into databases and manage staff calendars • Use Microsoft Office, including Outlook and Word	Skills: • Office administrative support for ten-person team • Expert user of Microsoft Office, including Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint
Requirements: • Web design in multiple languages • Ability to design with multiple tools in different systems	Technical Skills: • Programming languages — Java, C, C++, JavaScript and SQL • Tools — Borland JBuilder, Sun ONE Studio (Forte), Macromedia Dreamweaver MX and Oracle SQL Plus • Operating systems — Windows (XP, 2000 and NT), IBM OS/2 2.0, HP-UX 9.0, DEC VMS 4.1 and Unix (Linux and Sun Solaris)
Qualification: Minimum one year customer service	Experience: Provided two years of logistical support for 82nd Airborne Division Fort Bragg. • Successfully coordinated the procurement, supply, and maintenance of equipment, with the movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of personnel

Soft skills

Now, let's transition to learn more about soft skills.

Soft skills describe who we are, rather than what we know. These type of skills are personal attributes enabling a person to interact effectively and harmoniously with others.

For example soft skills include, but are not limited to, communication, critical thinking, time management and work ethic.

Your military experiences provide you opportunities to develop soft skills in ways not available in the civilian world.

Soft skills, continued

Unlike technical (or functional) skills, soft skills are generally applicable across numerous job titles and various types of business. Being able to demonstrate good soft skills is critical when looking for a job. It's often said that functional skills will get you an interview, but soft skills will help you get — and keep — the job.

It can be challenging to quantify soft skills since many cannot be trained or certified; however, there are ways you can prepare to talk about or give examples of your soft skills.

Let's review definitions and examples for common soft skills.

Soft skills, continued

Communication includes writing, speaking and listening.

Keep these tips in mind:

- The ability to effectively and appropriately use communication tools (such as email or phone) is important.
- Interpersonal communication skills (the ability to participate successfully in groups or teams) are critical in the workplace.
- Non-verbal cues (such as facial expressions) also affect communication.

Examples of communication-related skills:

- Managing a team of people
- Working effectively with people from different backgrounds
- Resolving a conflict — even when different languages and customs are involved
- Deescalating situations and finding solutions
- Sharing time-sensitive, urgent messages under duress

Soft skills, continued

Communication, continued

Identify examples of how you have communicated successfully and be prepared to discuss.

Ask yourself:

- Can I express my thoughts and needs clearly?
- Does my communication build bridges with peers and help to resolve conflict?
- Am I an active listener, paying close attention to the speaker and asking questions to ensure full comprehension?

Soft skills, continued

Critical Thinking is the ability to objectively analyze and evaluate an issue in order to make a decision or form a judgment.

In the definition, 'objectively' means with an open mind, without personal prejudice. Critical thinkers look at issues from different angles, taking other people's views into account. They also research an issue and thoroughly analyze possible solutions.

Examples of critical thinking-related skills:

- Solving a difficult problem by researching, asking questions and analyzing the issues
- Gathering consensus on an important issue
- Small team tactics and obstacle mitigation
- Breaking down a problem into individual parts to be studied

Soft skills, continued

Critical Thinking, continued

Identify examples of how you have used your critical thinking skills and be prepared to discuss.

Ask yourself:

- Am I resourceful, seeking information and advice from a variety of sources?
- Can I approach problems creatively, being open to unexpected resolutions?
- Will I take ownership of a problem and work until it's resolved?
- Can I develop solutions using minimal resources within tight timelines?

Soft skills, continued

Time Management is the ability to manage your time, and, is critical to success.

Properly prioritizing tasks allows you to work on more than one task at a time and stay on schedule. Delegating tasks and even politely saying no to some tasks, when necessary, will help manage your time.

Examples of time management-related skills:

- Completing a task, project or mission on time or ahead of schedule
- Working on more than one task during a period of time
- Becoming efficient at certain tasks and having time to take on additional responsibilities

Soft skills, continued

Time Management, continued

Identify examples of how you have used your time management skills and be prepared to discuss.

Ask yourself:

- Do I have a schedule for the tasks I need to complete?
- Are my tasks prioritized?
- Do I check the priorities regularly?
- Can I reorganize priorities / adapt to a changing environment?
- Can I stay focused on a task, taking breaks to avoid burnout?

Soft skills, continued

Work Ethic is composed of five factors working together:

1. Integrity
2. Sense of responsibility
3. Focus on quality
4. Commitment
5. Sense of teamwork

Examples of how the five factors work together include:

- If you have integrity, your superiors, manager, peers and direct reports (also known as subordinates) will trust you and you'll likely be a successful teammate.
- The sense of responsibility and commitment you developed in the military will help you deliver quality products or services on time.

Bank of America

Soft skills, continued

Work Ethic, continued

Employers look for people with a strong work ethic.

Examples of demonstrating a strong work ethic include:

- Recognition by superiors or peers for work well done
- Promotion to a position with more responsibility
- Awards you or your unit/company received
- Performance rankings among peers

Identify examples of your work ethic and be prepared to discuss.

Ask yourself:

- Am I willing to take the extra step toward improving quality?
- Can my superiors, manager, peers and direct reports count on me to deliver?
- Do I have trusting relationships with all units and in every interaction?

Soft skills, continued

Other soft skills: There are many other soft skills written in job descriptions or mentioned in interviews, such as:

Soft skills	Description
Leadership	Can you step in or speak up when direction is needed, while remaining mindful of the rest of the team? Will you have the courage to ask questions that need to be asked?
Self-Confidence / Self-Motivation	Do you believe you can do the job? Will you project a sense of calm and trustworthiness, inspiring others to have confidence in you? Do you push yourself to get the job done?
Highly Organized	Can you easily describe the status of a task and schedule? Can you find the information and supporting documents in a timely manner? Do you complete tasks in a sensible order?
Customer Service and Satisfaction / Customer-Centric	How did you provide good service across units and while interacting with other facets of an operation? (These are customers — identify the customers you have worked with and things you did to ensure satisfaction.)

Ask yourself: How can I talk about these skills and give examples from my experiences?

Experiences

Most job descriptions recommend or require specific experiences. Think about your experiences and convert to civilian language, understanding your military experience was likely referred to differently.

Military experiences	Civilian translation
If you worked in a position where you engaged in the following, your experiences translate to the civilian sector in different ways: • Developed plans to react to a vast array of disease and illness. • Designed new public health programs and managed existing ones. • Ensured units were educated on safety procedures when utilizing hazardous materials.	• Business Continuity • Instructional Design / Strategy Management • Training / Public Speaking / Corporate Safety
If you worked in a position where you delivered services or goods to a person or company outside your team or worked with other units, civilians or contractors — those people or organizations were your customers. You provided good service and customer satisfaction.	Customer Service and Satisfaction / Customer Centric
Think about times you influenced someone up or down the chain of command: • Did you describe a situation and then recommend solutions to the challenges? • Did you inform and motivate subordinates and peers about the need to perform a mission?	Sales, Influence, Communication
Many military jobs require analysis and comprehension of complex data such as military intelligence, inventory control and researchers. A requirement within a job description for a Financial Manager at a bank reads: "Ability to analyze and comprehend complex financial data." Keep in mind: • Although the requirement indicates "financial" data, "financial" may not be the most critical word in the sentence. • Instead the important skill is the ability to analyze and comprehend complex data. • Focus on your experiences associated with a skill and your willingness to apply those experiences in a new business.	Analyze and comprehend complex data

Experiences, continued

When it comes to experiences:

Ask yourself: Can you apply for a job in an industry in which you have not worked?

Frequently, the answer is yes; however, it may depend on how specific the required technical skills are and the degree of functional experiences required.

Review a job description carefully, focusing on the required technical and soft skills. Match your skills to those listed in the job description.

If a job (such as Paralegal or Trader) requires specific skills, certifications or licensing which you don't have, the job may not be a good fit; however, if you have the needed skills, then look at what experiences are recommended or required.

Tips for success

In summary, the better your skills and experiences match those of the job, the greater your chances of being offered an interview. It is important to remember these points when incorporating technical and soft skills in your resume and accomplishments:

- It's important to write for the intended audience, specifically:
  - Recruiter / hiring manager who will likely see your resume first.
  - Hiring business manager who may be making the final selection.
- You likely have more relevant experiences for a new job than you think.
- Develop different versions of your resume to highlight skills tailored for each position.
  - This helps you avoid having an overly lengthy resume.
  - Remember, your resume is not an autobiography of everything you have done.
- Differentiate your skills (technical and soft) and match them to the job description. Be sure to demonstrate work similar to the required experiences, translated into civilian language.
- Emphasize you're willing to apply your skills to a new work environment and express your desire to learn.