5 ways to impress a potential employer in a different industry

If you're looking to move into a new career or industry, it can feel like a pretty big leap –even a daunting one. Perhaps you need to look outside your own industry to find work, or you're interested in trying something new.

But you don't necessarily need to have trained or worked in an industry before to find yourself a job in it. By showcasing your transferable skills – plus your interest and dedication – you can make the best possible impression to employers when you try to land a new role.

Leah Lambart, career coach at Relaunch Me, shares five key tactics that can help you impress a potential employer in a new industry.

1. Research the industry or role you're interested in

Whether you're looking at changing jobs or trying out a new field, it's important to understand the industry, get a sense of what it involves, and the skills and attributes that could help you be successful in it.

Lambart recommends reading industry blogs and newsletters, attending industry events or virtual conferences, and setting up a job search alert on SEEK to help you understand the key responsibilities and selection criteria of the roles you're interested in. "This will allow you to evaluate the transferable skills that you have, and to identify gaps in your skill set that you need to address before attempting to make a career change," she says.

You could also use networking sites to identify and contact people working in your area of interest – this could be via a video call. "The majority of people are happy to help, provided that the request is completed in a professional and courteous manner," Lambart says, adding that an informational interview can give you insights you wouldn't be able to get otherwise.

The informational interview: What it is and why you should do it

2. Highlight your transferable skills from your current or previous roles

"Don't underestimate the skills you have, even if you have been in the same role for many years or out of the workforce," Lambart says. "Many skills are transferable across industries, particularly for roles that require soft or non-technical skills such as communication skills, organisational skills, relationship-building skills, negotiation and problem-solving skills."

It's down to you to make the connection between your experience and the new job or career you

want and demonstrate this to the potential employer. If you can discuss your transferable skills using specific examples and explain how you can use these skills to help them, they're much more likely to see that you're an ideal choice for the role.

If you're not sure where to start, this transferable skills checklist can help you identify what your own unique skills are.

3. Upskill to increase your opportunities

Once you've researched the industry, spoken to others and thought about the transferable skills you have, you should have a clearer idea of which skills you need to gain or update.

The next step is to actually work towards gaining them, Lambart says. "Free or inexpensive online courses may be a great option for gaining industry knowledge or technical skills without having to enrol in an expensive and time-consuming course. Attending seminars, webinars and industry meetups are also great ways to get up to speed with industry and technology updates."

By taking a short course you will not only increase your skills, but also boost your confidence and potentially help to build important new networks, she adds. "Completing a short course will also signal to employers that you are proactive and serious about relaunching your career in that particular field."

4. Showcase your passion by volunteering and meeting people

While you can achieve a lot alone, it's important to connect with others and tell them what you're trying to achieve. Lambart says the key is to be open-minded in who you speak with and to aim broad. "Talk to people in your network and look for opportunities to meet with people outside of your network. If you are a social worker keen to make a career change, then it's no use talking only to your social work colleagues and connections. Meet new people in different industries and find out what they do." See if you can connect with others via video chat, or join an interest group or industry network online.

You could also try volunteering in a way that's tailored to your area of interest. This will allow you to acquire additional skills, learn about a new company or industry, expand your networks and potentially open up pathways to paid work. "It will also allow you to showcase your passion and commitment to potential employers," Lambart says. There are ways you do this remotely – here are some ideas on how you can volunteer from home.

5. Tailor your resume, cover letter and SEEK Profile to your desired role or industry

When you're trying to break into a new role or industry, your current resume or SEEK Profile are likely in need of updating so they can properly support the move you're trying to make. "Your resume and profile need to be far more compelling when changing careers to get you in front of

potential employers," Lambart says. "Recruiters and hiring managers need to be able to clearly see your motivation for changing careers and the key transferable skills and attributes that you can offer." If these details are hidden, your resume and cover letter aren't working as hard as they could be. Put some time into tailoring these documents when you apply for jobs. You could also create a transferable skills-based resume.

Breaking into a different field or job can feel daunting. But doing research, leveraging your transferable skills, upskilling, connecting with others and updating your resume are all strategies that can help you impress potential employers so you can make that leap.