



EP 5 - I've Got A Decade of Skills But I'm Seeking New Thrills



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I'm a jack of all trades, master of none who is looking for a new job after over a decade in the same company. How do I sell my skill set AND find the right match?

Initial Thoughts:

- Our asker has done a lot at their company over the past ten years.
- It can be daunting thinking about working somewhere else. Having to start out anew, proving yourself to a new cast of characters.
- If you're fortunate, you're considering this while collecting a steady paycheck. But if you're in a situation where you were let go or rage-quit, you may need to fast-track this process and/or cast a wider net.
- Regardless, coming out of a decade-plus with the same employer, I break this down into two steps:
 1. **Break Down Your Skills**
 2. **Find A Match**

1. Breaking Down Your Skills

- Do a robust audit of your skills
- Group them into different categories
 - Each category will have varying levels of impact on your job search
 - Employers will assess these categories differently depending on their relevancy to their organization
- Categories:
 - Company Specific
 - Industry Specific
 - General Skills
 - Unique Talents

Company Specific

- Software packages
- Policies & procedures
- Existing & potential contracts
- Vendors
- Price structures & Margins
- *It's important to recognize which company-specific skills could be deemed proprietary. They might even be covered under NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements). Regardless, these things will be sensitive to your employer. If/when you leave your current job for a competitor, these are the things they'd be nervous about.*

Industry Specific

- Commodity knowledge & standards
- Awareness of competition: Market share, trends, etc...
- Customer base: Demographics, needs, desires, etc...

- Vendor base: Quality, reliability, cost structures
- Personal relationships/experience with some of those potential clients and/or vendors
- Participation/Awareness of trade organizations

General Skills (Most Companies Look For These)

- Computer experience: This can range from “Microsoft Office” to “I know how to code” or “I can build data analytics dashboards”
- Punctuality & Reliability
- Ability to communicate effectively
- People management (hiring, firing, training)
- Sales / Negotiation experience: *Specific \$\$ or examples speak volumes, if you're able to provide them*
- Project management
- Product and/or Brand development

Unique Talents

- Education
- Past experiences prior to your current position
- Foreign language fluency
- Hobbies: Reading, Musical Instruments, Sports
- Clubs/Organizations you belong to outside of work
- Understanding of business finance
- Social media engagement: *In My Opinion: Many say they can do this, few know how to do it well*

Chris' Storytime: Illustrating With An Example

- Let's say our asker is a baker. Okay, fine, they're a baker wanna-be who failed out of culinary school. They moved to New York City with a couple of roommates. They

bounced around odd jobs until they got mixed up into a cashier job at a new boutique French boulangerie on the Upper West Side. They've been there ever since. Through hard work and surprising aptitude with yeast, they rose through the ranks, kneading skills into their life, often unconsciously, thanks to the countless demands thrown their way over the years. They've baked baguettes, lorded over the cheese display like an aristocratic noble, has mastered the new register system, still takes excessive pride whenever they walk through the stockroom they reorganized three years ago, intermediates arguments with delivery drivers, and they're the *l'esprit supérieur* behind the Jam & Jambon Festival that aided the boulangerie's recovery from COVID.

- With our backstory's established, let's illustrate how our asker might audit their skills using the categories I established before:

Company Specific

- Software packages: Our asker knows the POS (point of sale) like the back of their hand. They've managed inventory levels, entered new products, and are often called upon to train new employees on it.
 - Avoid too much depth on the resume with specific software.
 - However, our asker should definitely mention their deep experience with POS systems, and training employees. Often these abilities translate outside of specific software.
- Policies & procedures: They're aware of how the company says safety first, but doesn't enforce it reliably. They know what should be done, and wishes more people took it seriously.
 - Our asker could mention how they've managed to build deep, amicable relationships with co-workers throughout the years. They know how to establish trust.
- Existing & potential contracts: They're aware of the tight relationship between the owner (let's call him François), and the owner of two large hotels near Central Park. The morning deliveries to these hotels are always mission-critical and one of their core responsibilities.

- Our asker should be careful, but could mention how they manage over \$250k in year-over-year revenue with the boulangerie's main client.
- Vendors: Our asker spent over two years in purchasing. During that time they spoke with all their vendors: Calling in orders, paying invoices, etc... They recall the pain of changing butter vendors after Roberto from Buerre Bros fattened his prices by 20% out of nowhere.
 - Should our asker be interviewing at other bakeries, the experience & the connections to potential vendors are definitely worth mentioning.
- Price structures & Margins: They know why a customer off the street pays \$4 for a baguette, but Francois charges his hotel client only \$2 a loaf. The volume is amazing, but Francois is clever and has built in extra markup for his famous eclairs that more than makes up the difference in net profit.
 - Our asker could mention their ability to work with wholesale & retail customers concurrently.

Industry Specific

- Commodity knowledge & standards: My heavens if our asker isn't the life of any proper party. They delight with their exhaustive knowledge (and supply) of French baguettes & pastries.
 - Our asker should be taking an exhaustive audit of the various elements of their industry, and the depth of it.
 - For a framework on how to do this, you can refer back to episode 2 and my discussion on T-graphs
- Awareness of competition: Our asker has visited every boulangerie in the city worth its salt. Their close friend Remy manages Pat's Patisserie in Red Hook, Brooklyn.
 - Our asker should be buying Remy lunch and picking their brain about opportunities, what employers are looking for, and/or getting some honest feedback on their self-audit.
- Customer base: Working the register has given our asker tons of experience in dealing with customers face-to-face.

- Vendor base: They know all the vendors they currently use - but if they're being honest they only look outside that group when there's a problem.
 - Key for our asker: Their knowledge of the procurement process - this translates across most industries
 - Worth considering reaching out to trusted vendors, who might be interested in hiring someone with knowledge & experience from a customer.
 - Likewise, consider jumping to one of your customers, as long as you've developed strong relationships & have some knowledge of the people & operations you'd be getting involved with.
- Participation/Awareness of trade organizations: Are you involved or even aware of trade groups in your industry? Most industries have them (for example: the Bread Bakers' Guild of America)

General Skills (Most Companies Look For These)

- Computer experience: Our asker's got extensive experience with POS systems, has done some PowerPoint presentations, fooled around with some Excel, and generally knows their way around a computer. The key here is highlighting your strengths while displaying that you "know enough to be dangerous" or that you can adapt quickly to similar systems.
- Punctuality & Reliability: Our asker is someone any prospective employer can depend on? They're pathologically early & should be proud of it!
- Ability to communicate effectively: Our asker clearly knows how to talk to people at varying levels of organizations: From Françoise's buddy who owns the hotels, to the most harried customers, to the shady vendor who doesn't like paying invoices on time.
 - They should highlight how they approach conflict, preferably with a solid, high-stakes example.
- People management (hiring, firing, coaching): Our asker has managed the cashier crew for the past four years, amidst all of the daily responsibilities heaped into their basket. They truly are a jack of all trades, which helps them know when an employee isn't cutting it.

- Our asker should use this opportunity to highlight how they rallied their crew for the Jam & Jambon festival!
- Sales / Negotiation experience: They should be as specific as they can be - while respecting the sensitive nature of their current employer's business. For example, how much rotating, spoilable inventory do they manage? Did they work with a vendor to get better payment terms during the pandemic?
 - Examples matter, even for outside industries! They can be easily grasped and commonplace across many fields.
- Project management: Give one or two highlights. Short & sweet & loaded with specifics & if available links to press articles
- Product and/or Brand development:
 - Why have they've stayed with their employer for over a decade?
 - Is there pride in what they're a part of, in the name they represent?
 - Do they take personal stock in the success of a product or service?
 - Lessons learned speak volumes for their initiative, ability to think outside the box, and willingness to take risks.
 - These lessons, inspirations, and the understanding provided by these examples are what resonates, and ultimately translates, to other employers.
- *I'm going off the deep end to highlight an important point: Our asker should be focusing on the real lessons behind their examples. An audit like this also helps you hone in on the types of work & corporate values that resonate with you, which can help focus your job search.*

Unique Talents

- People do business with people, not organizations.
- Same holds true with job hunting: People hire people.
- Be yourself. You never know what an interviewer might key in on when reading your resume.
- Personally, I skip to the bottom of resumes before going back to the top. What kind of person would I be hiring?

- I've actually been hired for a crucial job purely because my interviewer say I played collegiate roller hockey. You never know.
- Mention degrees of any level associates or above. After ten years employed, nobody gives a madeleine about your high school experience, so stick with college if you have it.
 - Degrees always matter, but if you get the chance to answer questions about it highlight what values & journey you've derived from it. NOT giving a blow-by-blow of what courses you took.
- Don't sugar-coat your resume or interview with overstatements of your ability.
 - **Be your authentic self!**
- Regarding past experiences prior to your current position:
 - Don't dwell on the reasons you left / were let go / or want to leave - Focus on how they've informed your continuing journey.
 - List as many past experiences as you can. Your interviewer will review and might have some connection or similar experience with one of them. Have stories 'queued up' for those instances, which tie them into more recent successes.

2. Find a Match

- So you've done an honest & exhaustive skills assessment - Why go through that exercise?
 - You'll have a better idea of what skills may or may not be relevant to prospective employers
- Now you should be asking yourself some questions:
 - Do you like your industry and want to stay in it?
 - Why are you looking to change jobs?
 - Don't discount experience: Is there something your current employer could do or change that would get you to stay?
 - Of the skills you detailed, which ones brought you the most fulfillment? Why?

- When you're interviewing for a job, insist on meeting the team you'd likely be working with. You're trying to make sure they're the right fit for you, as well as the other way around!
- With a decade-plus of experience, you likely have some strong connections within & tangential to your current job/industry.
 - Since you've been out of the job market for so long, ask around (if you can) about what the market looks like.
 - What skills are in demand?
 - What are people getting paid for similar levels of experience & skill?
 - Who is even hiring right now? How many applicants are applying?
 - If someone has had a job open for a while, what are they looking for that they haven't found in a candidate yet?
- This may be obvious but needs to be said: Be discreet - ensure you trust who you're talking to so it doesn't get back to your current employer.
- Are you looking outside your industry?
 - I'd suggest starting with assessing what you care deeply about, including your specific needs for salary, benefits, etc...
 - Realize that you may be starting out lower in both position & compensation due to lack of industry-specific experience
 - Focus on the skills & experiences that translate best to industry you're interviewing for.
 - Your resume should look different in this case than the if you were applying in your current industry.
- Scouring LinkedIn for 2nd or 3rd level connections with companies in the spaces you're looking at.
 - Make sure your profile is up to date - but be sure not to let changes post to your feed: These could get picked up by employer or co-workers!
- Searching company websites for job listings - see if you can find info/bios on people likely to interview you.

- Run open searches on them - are there any shared connections or interests?
- Again: Cast as wide a net as you're able - but remember: **Your goal is to find the right fit, not the first fit.**

🗨 **Episode 5 Quotes:**

This episode's quote that's credited to Kennon Sheldon. I discovered it while reading [Transcend by Scott Kaufman](#)

"The happiest person is the person doing good stuff for good reasons."