

How to Get Experience if Nobody Will Hire You With Any

It's an age-old dilemma facing job seekers ranging from new college graduates to workers trying to transition into a different industry: Employers want to hire people with experience, but how do you get that experience when nobody wants to hire you because you don't have any?

While getting a foot in the door may be difficult, it's not impossible. Here, experts show how to put your best self forward to convince employers that you can do the job.

Examine transferable strengths

Lacking history in a given field doesn't automatically translate into being an undesirable applicant. Oftentimes, things learned in one workplace are valuable in another.

Look at how your past field and your desired one might be comparable. Processing insurance claims is similar to processing medical claims. If you wanted to move into health care from financial services, it would be reasonable to make this comparison.

Look outside the workplace

Employment is not the only thing that shapes a candidate. Do an analysis of activities you have taken part in outside of work and list the skills you have used. These activities could include anything from chairing a PTA committee to upholstering a chair at home.

Create a functional résumé

Your task is to show a prospective employer what you can offer, not what you lack. Thus, ditching a regular résumé dedicated to career history in favor of a functional résumé that focuses on abilities may be helpful.

If you lack experience, your résumé should highlight examples of professional skills, such as problem-solving, time management or other skills related to the particular industry and position you desire. Most importantly, you should outline how your skills will be beneficial to an employer as well as detail the ways in which you can apply these skills in the position you are seeking.

Having a cover letter that includes a referral from a personal contact may go a long way. Having a recommendation from someone the employer respects will help to counteract any negatives he may see in your background.

Sell yourself in the interview

Armed with a solid sense of what you bring to the table, the interview is the time to make the connection clear to the hirer. This involves not only knowing your strengths, but also how those abilities fit with the company's goals and needs. It's really important to spend time understanding the role before the interview takes place so you can position yourself accordingly and be prepared for any questions that come up.

If the interviewer does bring up lack of experience, experts suggest trying to redirect the conversation back to skills you do possess. What not to do: lie.

Don't pretend. The interviewer knows if you have experience or not. For example, a hiring manager asks a candidate if they have experience using Microsoft Excel. If the candidate does not know what a pivot table is then the manager knows that he or she does not have in-depth knowledge.

Show dedication

Finally, it is critical to demonstrate to employers that your interest in their industry is more than a passing thought or an attempt to land any job. Ways to do this include:

- Researching a company before an interview.
- Consistently reading up on the field.
- Attending professional conferences.
- Talking (and networking) with appropriate people.

Or, go a step further:

Complete an internship or volunteer your time within the industry you are seeking employment. These options will help you build relevant skills, demonstrate commitment to the industry and gain some experience.

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