



Career Workbook

How (Exactly) to Highlight
Your Future-Ready Soft
Skills When Job Searching



SOFT SKILLS

You've learned to swiftly adapt in the face of rapidly changing requirements? You're a confident communicator, even when talking to stakeholders far outside engineering? You thrill at the chance of collaborating and problem-solving with colleagues across other disciplines?

Great! **Now let's help you show off those much-sought-after-skills, so you can stand out to employers.** Soft skills, like collaboration, adaptivity, and communication, are often the most distinguishing factor between job applicants. But planning to talk about them at the interview stage may be too late: **One study¹ revealed that 93% of employers think soft skills should be evident from a jobseeker's resumé.**

To get the most out of this workbook, you can print it out and grab a pen or simply settle in at the computer. With a few thought-provoking prompts and some clear guidance to implement, you'll be ready to tweak your application materials in all the right ways.



¹ Malinsky, G. (2022, July 13). 93% of employers want to see soft skills on your resume—here are 8 of the most in-demand ones. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/13/in-demand-soft-skills-to-put-in-your-resume.html>

FIRST THINGS FIRST: LET’S GET SPECIFIC

SECTION 1

Before you can jump into the how-to steps of highlighting your strengths, it helps to know what exactly you want to highlight. Anyone can list generic skills on their resume; to bring those skills to life, you need to dig into the details.

Start with a specific soft skill you want to highlight, then take a minute to pinpoint a time when you really demonstrated that skill on the job.

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Now, try capturing that skill in action using the **STAR method**, a storytelling approach that can help elicit context and specificity.

Situation (what specific project or challenge were you working on? What was at stake?)

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Task (what responsibility did you have or what role did you play?)

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Action (what did you do to overcome the challenge, rally the team, or address the situation, etc?)

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Result (what was the outcome of the action you took?)

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Take some time to think through a handful of your soft-skill strengths, and jot down anecdotes or details for each. (This will come in handy later!)

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HIGHLIGHTING SOFT SKILLS ON YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

SECTION 2

Often, the very first impression a hiring manager gets of a candidate is his or her LinkedIn profile, so it's crucial you use this valuable space to put your best self forward.

Step one: Breathe some life into your bio

Communication is the cornerstone of modern work, so even if this isn't the skill you want to trumpet loudest, you'll want to flex your ability to write in an engaging way. Let's say your intro looks something like this:

Graduated from the University of California Berkeley. Obtained a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering (concentration: Energy and Sustainability). Member of ASME and AEE.

Not exactly a paragon of personality! Notice that the sentences are short, abrupt, and technically incomplete—and that they read as businesslike and bland. Now we can take that same text and build on it, injecting vibrance and a bit of personal detail, so the reader feels like you'd be easy to communicate or work with. Like this:

I'm a graduate of UC Berkeley (Go Bears!), where I obtained a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. Because environmental concerns have always been important to me, I chose Energy and Sustainability as my area of concentration. A lifelong Californian, I'm currently lead ME for a renewable energy company based in San Francisco, and I'm a member of ASME and AEE.

Note how the text isn't much longer and yet it's far warmer, sounding more like a human speaking than a robot reciting its qualifications. **Ready to transform your own "about" section?** Here's how:

1. Make every sentence a complete one, writing in the way you would speak aloud to someone you'd just met.
2. Inject one small moment of personality—not too much, not too little. It can be related to your alma mater, as in this example ("Go Bears!"), or something else within your profile. Just make sure to keep it short and sweet. Job search experts always reiterate that you should never put things like "Expert Donkey Kong player" or "Ice cream enthusiast" on your resumé to stand out, but on LinkedIn it's okay to be slightly more informal (within reason, of course).

3. Indicate who you are, not just what you've done. Things like "Because environmental concerns have always been important to me" and "a lifelong Californian" go a long way in painting a picture of who you really are.

4. Connect sentences together for better flow. In the first example, the text feels abrupt and robotic in part because each data point is given its own (very short) sentence. In the second example, the information is organized logically and naturally, with related information (went to UC Berkeley, got BS there) collected in one sentence.

Step two: Activate the skills section

If you don't already have a skills section on your profile, you can easily add it and then choose from a lengthy list of suggested skills. You want to balance both hard and soft skills, of course. And while it might be tempting to click every single option, keep in mind that doing so will make this section unwieldy. Try to pick no more than 10 soft skills and roughly the same number of technical or hard skills.

Step three: Solicit low-effort, high-impact endorsements

Everyone dreads being asked to write recommendations for their coworkers, right? But endorsements are super easy—with just a simple click, colleagues can vouch for your ability to flex skills like "leadership," "creative problem solving," or "interdisciplinary skills."

Jot down a list of at least five colleagues (former coworkers is fine!) that you'd feel comfortable reaching out to.

Now, follow through with a specific, direct ask that makes it clear you want them to focus not only on your technical prowess but also your soft strengths. You can adapt this script to suit your needs:

"I'm polishing up my LinkedIn profile to better reflect my soft skills. If you have a spare minute, can you visit my profile (share the link!) and add endorsements you think I've demonstrated in the past? I think of leadership and collaboration as my biggest strengths, but I'd really value your perspective. Thanks!"

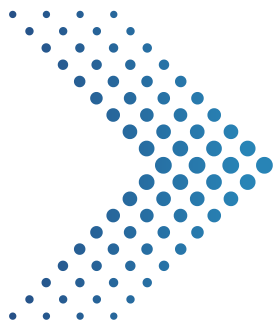
HIGHLIGHTING SOFT SKILLS ON YOUR RESUMÉ

SECTION 3

Do you have your own CV handy? Great, pull it up. Chances are, it features the familiar categories: Objective, Experience, Education, Certifications. **But here's a very simple (and perhaps obvious) question: Does it contain a "Skills" section?**

By simply listing your skills—both technical and soft—you will likely set yourself apart from your fellow candidates. [Research](#) shows 10% of jobseekers don't include a "skills" section on their resumé—and one study estimates that failing to do so can hurt your chances of getting hired as much as being unemployed for a year.

This section needn't be long. In fact, it can look a lot like this:



KEY SKILLS

- AutoCAD
- EPDM
- Multidisciplinary Collaboration
- Analytical Problem-Solving

Take a few minutes to list your own skills in this same format.

Next, turn your attention to the meat of your resume, where you list the experience and accomplishments at past companies. This is where the STAR exercises from above can really come in handy. **The goal here is show, not tell—and to weave your future-ready soft skills throughout your resume.** So try to include one specific, context-rich demonstration of your skill into each rundown of your former duties.

PREPPING FOR THE INTERVIEW

SECTION 4

So, you've landed an interview—congratulations! Now is a great time to prepare some answers to the questions that will likely arise, with an eye toward keeping your soft skills at the fore. Don't worry: You're not starting from scratch. All of the work you've done to this point will help make this process faster and easier.

Question: "Tell me about a time when you came up against a challenge and how you solved it."

Your objective: To highlight your tenacity, creative thinking, and problem-solving.

Potential answer:

(Sample answer: "A project deadline was moved up significantly, and it fell to me to rejigger our timeline to make that target date—during a time when two team members were out sick, and one was on vacation. I pulled in help from other departments, wrote up a new schedule for deliverables, pulled an all-nighter, and we finished the project with time to spare.")

Question: "How do you handle interpersonal conflict?"

Your objective: To highlight your even-keeled and solution-oriented approach, while also being magnanimous about how the situation unfolded.

Potential answer (feel free to leverage the STAR method above, if that helps!):

What might a strong response look like? Maybe something like this: *“There was a disagreement on the team about how to solve a technical issue, and I invited the person who disagreed with me to sit down and list the potential upsides and downsides of each way forward. We wound up deciding on a third approach that we would never have thought of without that strategy session.”*

Question: “How would you rate your communication skills?”

Your objective: To make clear that your communication skills are excellent—without tooting your own horn.

Potential answer:

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A winning response might look something like this: *“It’s not uncommon that I talk to an external client, the CEO, a manufacturer, and my team of fellow mechanical engineers all on the same day, so I have a good deal of experience in modulating my message based on the audience.”*

Question: “Tell me about a time when you had to perform a task outside your wheelhouse.”

Your objective: To shine a spotlight on your flexibility and show how capable you are of learning new skills.

Potential answer (again, the STAR method can be your secret weapon!):

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Potential response: *"After someone on an adjacent team left their position, there was a need for someone to fill in on a big project until a new ME was hired. By observing the team lead for a day, studying XYZ skills, and brushing up on my college calculus, I was able to support the team in finishing their project on time."*

You'll notice that each of these answers has something in common: **They all simultaneously convey the strength of your soft skills while also foregrounding the team instead of you as an individual.** That also registers with hiring managers, who like hearing that you're not a hotshot, but a collaborator.

DON'T FORGET

Your resume, LinkedIn profile, and the interview are central components of the hiring process, but of course this list isn't exhaustive. Ancillary touchpoints—cover letters, emails, recruiter correspondence, thank-you notes—all matter, too, and you should think of them as opportunities to subtly demonstrate your communication, flexibility, and problem-solving strengths.



ASME
membership