

Ask Sabina: How can I get an employer to give me a chance when I don't have experience?

Dear Sabina, I'm hoping to change careers and have just completed my diploma in community management, but my background is in childcare. How can I get an employer to give me a chance in a new industry when I don't have any experience? From, Rebecca

Dear Rebecca

Congratulations on completing your diploma. It sounds like you are more than merely hoping for a career change and instead you have already taken deliberate and concrete steps towards moving into a new industry. This approach is crucial because prospective employers need to hear a positive, action-oriented story, rather than one based on dreams and hopes alone.

While your current focus is understandably on your lack of industry experience, I would invite you to reframe your thinking to explore what skills and experience you already have that will help you succeed in community management work. These are your transferable skills, a collection of abilities and learnings that you have acquired over the course of your lifetime that are non-specific to any job or industry, but are important for you to identify, and be able to sell to prospective employers, regardless of industry.

At a guess, I presume that your childcare experience has taught you a thing or two about multi-tasking, liaising with demanding stakeholders (both little people and big ones too!), developing and implementing policy, compliance with administrative requirements, collaboration, budget management, organisation, conflict resolution and time management skills.

Next, make a list of skills you believe are required to succeed in an early career community management role. If you're unsure, check out job ads that appeal and make a note of the skills they are looking for. Then you can begin to join the dots between required and existing skills.

Finally, remind yourself about which aspects of community management appealed to you in the first place. What values, experience, and passion led you to undertake and complete your recent diploma? What kind of impact were you hoping to have? It's vital that your career change story is positive, forward-thinking and not apologetic of your past. While everybody must start somewhere, your current mindset needs to be as an employee who is ready and able to succeed in community management today, rather than someone who is green and needs their hand-held across the bridge from old career to new.

It's your job to build this bridge for the prospective employer so they can focus on your present and future contribution as opposed to being pulled back into your past. On paper, it sounds like you already have what it takes to secure work in a new industry based on skills and qualifications that you currently possess. Now it's time to ensure your mind also believes you're ready to kick off your next career.

Sabina Read

Have you got a question for Sabina that you'd like featured? Submit it to asksabina@seek.com.au



Sabina Read is SEEK's Resident Psychologist. Specialising in everything from workplace relationships to career change, Sabina has a passion for helping people in finding fulfillment in their careers.