



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Don't Shortchange Yourself when Talking about Your Accomplishments**

You know that employers don't usually find candidates that are exactly what they are looking for. In most cases, they go with the "best fit." They may have an obscene list of skills they are looking for in their perfect candidate. However, it is rare that anyone will fit the position perfectly. So, compromises are made.

As a prospective employee, you want to stay in the running as long as possible. You may be considering a position that requires five major skills. You may have three of them and then related experience on the other two. Make sure you point out the related experience rather than giving up on the two "required" skills. That related experience may make the difference between getting the job and not being considered at all.

#### **Look for related experience - connections**

When you look at the requirements of the job, look for experiences that give you some connections to the requirements, even if you don't have the exact skills the employer says the position requires. Here are some ways to look at your background for connections.

**Management experience.** Many companies look for people with some management experience. You may not have been a formal manager before, but that does not mean you have no people management skills. Have you ever been a project manager? If so, then you have probably managed people as well. Have you ever been a team leader? You have also done some people management. Of course, this does not mean that you should represent yourself as a Director. However, if you have managed people before in some capacity, you have some experience you can talk about.

**Project management.** Many openings require people with project management experience. However, don't think of project management as a title. Think of it as a role. You may never have held a project manager title, but you may have performed in a project management role. Look at your responsibilities in prior jobs. Have you had to plan and manage a large piece of work? This would have to include managing one or more people as well. If you have, then you have done some project management. Discuss these examples. Don't make it sound like you have managed a million dollar project. However, have a story to tell about the times you managed projects.

**Technical skills.** If a job requires a skill that you do not have, look for something similar that you have done. Let's say a position requires Oracle database skills. You have never worked with Oracle. Do you just give up and say "No, I don't have it," or do you point out related connections? For instance, if you have SQL\*Server experience, make sure you point it out as a substitute. If you have worked on the mainframe, perhaps you can point out your DB2 experience. If you have no relational database experience, look for other databases that you are familiar with.



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**Analysis skills.** This one works the same as the previous examples. You may never have had a position as a formal Analyst. However, almost everyone has to do analysis as a part of their jobs. Think of the analysis work you did on previous projects or in the support area.

**Leadership.** Many positions require you to show leadership. What story can you tell if you have not been in a formal management or project management role? Don't forget to consider non-work experience, like times you had leadership positions at church or within your neighborhood, or even on your tennis team. At work, think about time you have spent running meetings, performing in a mentoring role, or coordinating company functions. You may have had many opportunities to lead without being in a formal leadership position.

### Summary

Make sure you don't get the wrong message - if you don't have the skills required for a position, you don't want to lie or make up facts. Even if you get the position, you will have set up a false expectation that you will find hard to live up to. However, remember that many of the skills required for a position come from being in certain roles – not from a title you may or may not have held. You may have managed people but never been in a formal management position. You may have managed projects, but never been called a project manager. You may have tons of analyst skills, but never have held a formal Analyst title. You may have many technical skills that are similar, but not exactly the same, as a technical skill required in a new position. Represent yourself truthfully, but give yourself credit for all of your experience. Companies rarely find a perfect candidate for their openings. Your combination of perfect skill fits, plus the skills you have that are close, but not exact, may be enough to win a new position.