CAREER TRANSITION CHECKLIST

7 STEPS TO SUCCESS

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1. UNDERSTAND THE SECTOR AND ITS EMPLOYERS

Before embarking on your job search, spend some time getting to know the different kinds of employers engaged in development work, from consulting firms to nongovernmental organizations to funding agencies and beyond. Understand the role each of them plays in the system and, as a result, what kinds of professionals and skills they seek to carry out their missions.

TRY THIS:

On Devex, you can search thousands of organizations engaged in development work to find ones working on the issues and in the countries that interest you. You can learn what skills and professionals they hire, the projects they work on, and the types of jobs they typically recruit.



2. IDENTIFY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND ROLES

Most global development employers still value a master's degree in development, and overseas experience, but also need certain technical skills and operations expertise. Focusing on certain types of positions, rather than, say, your "dream" development job, gives you a better shot of getting your foot in the door.

TRY THIS:

Look into areas like human resources, monitoring and evaluation, program management, and business development, as recruiters tend to value experience applicable to these positions regardless of the sector. For example, if you have data analysis experience, your statistical, quantitative, and qualitative research skills may be highly transferable to M&E roles.

#PROTIP
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"Skills in project administration or new business development are very highly regarded, so ... experience of managing projects, even if they are within a different sector, are very valuable."

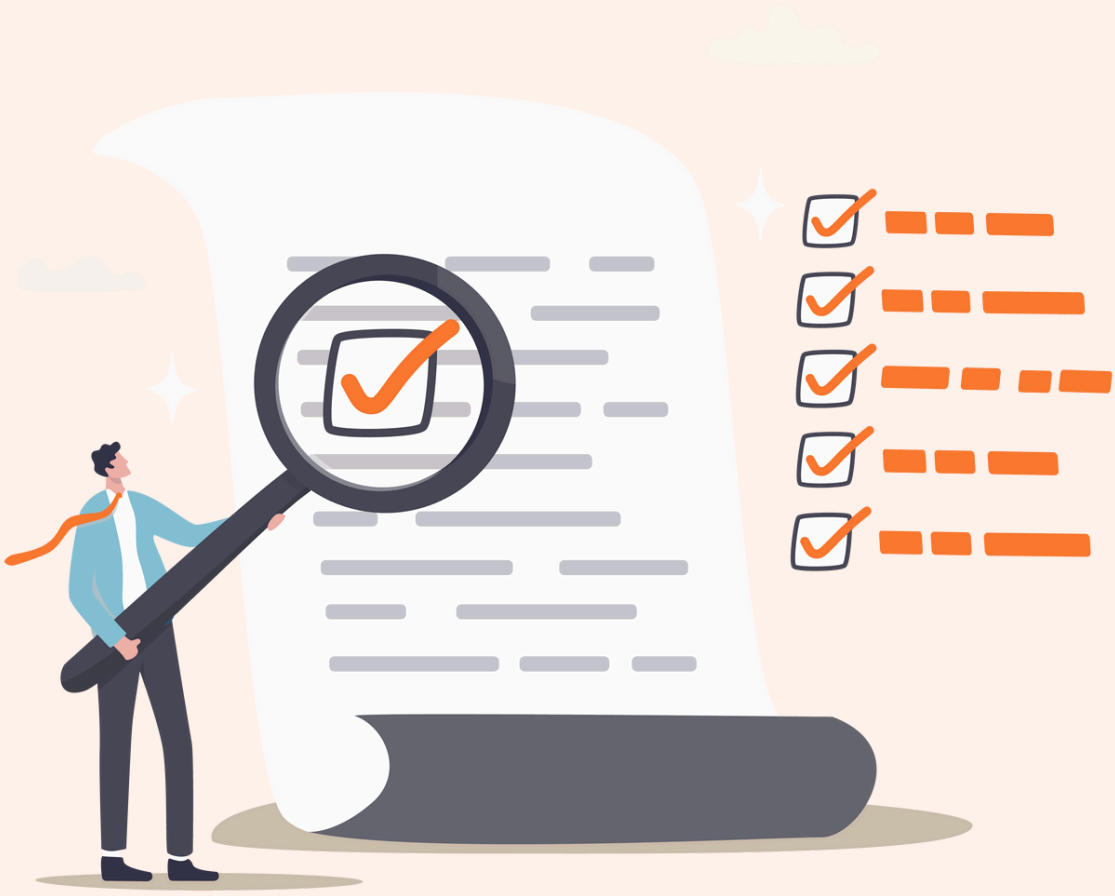
Maria Chaney
Former staffing specialist, Tetra Tech

3. MAP YOUR SKILLS TO DEVELOPMENT JOBS

Once you have a sense of the development employer landscape and what kinds of jobs might be a good fit, map your current skills and experience to the jobs that most closely align. The jobs where you see the most overlap with your skills and experience will be the jobs you have the best chance of landing.

TRY THIS:

For example, if you have significant experience managing large, complex projects, look for jobs managing development projects that may value your experience overseeing budgets, deliverables, and stakeholder coordination. While the subject matter may be different, focus on what is functionally the same.



4. OPTIMIZE YOUR CV

When writing your CV, it will be critical to translate your outside experience to a development audience. Avoid industry jargon from your previous career, and don't assume a recruiter will be able to immediately make the connection that your prior experience is relevant to them. You will have to clearly show them how your skills translate, both by using the right keywords and terminology and by adding context to connect the dots.

TRY THIS:

Lead your CV with a summary that establishes your narrative. Use strong adjectives, such as "strategic," "entrepreneurial," and "fiscally fluent," to convey your strongest skills that are applicable to the position but can't easily be identified with any particular role. These are "great words to use about yourself that could carry you through any transition," says CV writing expert Kathryn Harper.



5. IDENTIFY AND CONVEY YOUR SOFT SKILLS

Development recruiters highly value soft skills, which are qualities that define how an individual will work with other employees and how they will handle obstacles. Communication and collaboration skills, the ability to navigate difficult situations, and an agile mindset are common attributes that recruiters value.

TRY THIS:

While questions on soft skills are often asked in an interview, you should also highlight these skills earlier in the application process. On your CV, consider listing your previous experience with one bullet point per position showcasing how you applied your soft skills, for example, a time when you negotiated a difficult contract in an environment culturally different from your own.

#PROTIP
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"Be mindful of what sets you apart from other candidates and make marketing your soft skills part of the entire interview process."

Siobhan Brooks
Former senior recruitment specialist, Tetra Tech

6. INVEST TIME IN MAKING CONNECTIONS

Based on his experience as a recruiter, social impact coach Spencer Campbell says that job applicants who were referred by someone else are 20 times more likely to be hired, which highlights just how important it is to have connections who will ultimately vouch for you.

TRY THIS:

There are several options for finding relevant connections to the type of work you want to get into. One way to expand your network is to identify in-person events or online discussion forums and work groups focused on your area of expertise. You can also quickly find relevant potential connections on LinkedIn by doing advanced field searches.

#PROTIP

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"Start off by having conversations with people that have jobs that you're interested in and, point blank, ask them: 'Here's my CV. Is there anything in my background that you think is directly transferable to the work that you're doing?' "

Stephanie Mansueto
Principal recruiter, Abt Global

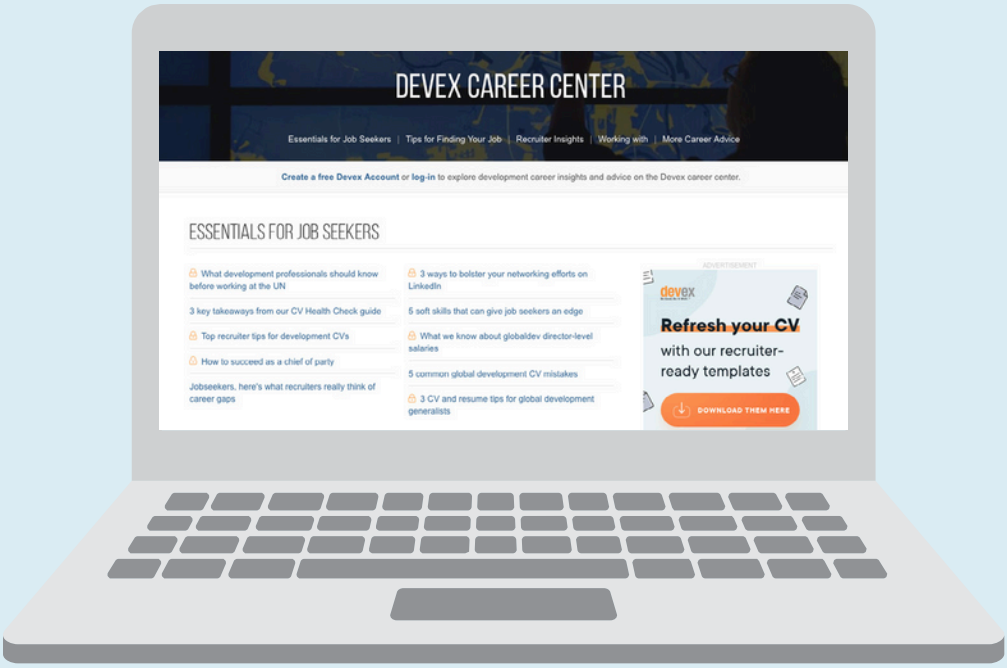
7. ROUND OUT MISSING SKILLS

Depending on the type of role you are targeting, there may be skills gaps to address. For many people transitioning to development, this can be experience working in a developing country or experience working with specific donors such as USAID.

TRY THIS:

Look to round out these skills through training courses, volunteer programs, or by trying to gain some of this experience in your current job. For example, if you work for a multinational corporation, ask if you can help out on a project in an emerging economy or even consider relocating to an overseas office.





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