

The case for hiring someone without experience

Whether you're a recent college or simply want to switch industries, entering a new field can be a daunting task.

For starters, it's unlikely you'll have the just-right experience an employer is looking for. So, what happens when entry-level jobs ask for relevant work experience, and you simply don't have any?

It turns out that, in some cases, not having the perfect background on your CV can fall in your favour.

Several LinkedIn Influencers weighed in the topic this week, with insights on how to optimize a lack of work experience — and get hired fast. Here's what two of them had to say.

Robbie Waeschenfelder, senior director of marketing at Ask.com

"You have a job opening, posted the job and you're getting resumes. Awesome. Now what do most hiring managers and recruiters do? They pick the resumes of people who already have a ton of experience with the kind of job you're hiring for," wrote Waeschenfelder in his post Hire Someone With No Experience! Wait, what?

But, that could be a mistake, he wrote. It seems intuitive to pick candidates who have ideally done the exact same job you need in a different business or a competitor. "But, if you ask me... there is a huge problem: they're not motivated" wrote Waeschenfelder. "What possibly is their motivation to do this job really well? They've literally been there and done that."

That's why Waeschenfelder believes hiring a candidate with no relevant experience could actually be a smarter move.

"They'll put 150% effort into it, learn every detail of the job, half out of appetite to impress and learn, half out of (a positive) anxiety of failing," Waeschenfelder wrote. "There is some risk in them drowning in their new responsibility, but that's not really a highly likely outcome if...they have you to keep them on track and guide them."

James Citrin, senior director at Spencer Stuart

At some point in your career, you've faced it, the big career Catch-22: the "permission paradox". It's that moment when "you can't get the job without the experience but you can't get the experience without the job," wrote Citrin in his post How to Get the Job When You Don't Have the Experience.

“Overcoming this conundrum is fundamental both to launching your career successfully and thriving over the long term,” he wrote. “You are confident in your abilities if only you’re given the chance. The hard part is getting the shot to show what you can do.”

One key to overcoming the “permission paradox” is to recognise you are being evaluated on two points: your potential to add value to the firm, and your track record “in the area most central to the job”.

“Depending on the seniority of the position, these two sources of value...will be weighted in different proportions,” wrote Citrin.

“Your potential value is best demonstrated by your attitude, enthusiasm, work ethic, communications skills, curiosity/quality of your questions, willingness to learn, and your knowledge of the company and role,” he wrote.

Citrin offered five key ways to shift the scales in your favour. Among them:

“Get credentials. This can be in the form of a specialized degree or targeted training,” he wrote. “So go ahead, pick your field of interest, whether it be coding, finance, aviation, or the business of art, and find a respected credential-granting school or organization and pursue it.”

“Be willing to start at the bottom. “Whether it’s in the Internet industry, financial services, retail, hospitality, or any other business that touches large numbers of people, starting at the point of customer interface, whether in customer support, behind the cash register, on the sales floor, or at the concierge desk, will give you a valuable opportunity to learn what’s really going on in the market.” Citrin wrote. “You’ll be able to use this when you seek to work your way up the ladder internally or interview elsewhere.”

“Barter. You may not yet have a job. But if you don’t, by definition you have something else of enormous value, which you may not be fully considering,” he wrote. And that is time. “Treat your time as the precious asset it is. If you are creative and package your time with energy, enthusiasm, and initiative, you can barter your way to opportunity.” Consider what you could do with your time that can help a potential employer now — and offer to do it.