

# Building your professional profile

## Introduction

Your time abroad will have opened your eyes to new perspectives and experiences, which may give you a unique advantage as you enter the post-graduation job market. Incorporating your experience into your professional profile – typically the first impression you will make on potential employers – will help set you apart.

Use this guide to help you better understand your career values and transferable skills – and learn how to effectively convey your global experience in a professional setting.

---

## SECTION 1: Understanding your career values

Throughout your global experience, you likely learned a lot about yourself. How can that translate into your professional life or career?

Our values help define who we are and guide our behavior, both personally and professionally. Identifying your career and personal values can clarify what really matters to you, enhance your self-awareness, and guide you to a more satisfying career.

### Using the Values Worksheet on the following page:

First, rank each of the column categories for how you prioritize them in your professional life, where 1 is the most important and 4 is the least important. See definitions below:

- a. Environment – the physical environment, company culture, and working conditions
- b. Opportunities – the conditions and motivators available in your role
- c. Professional Relationships – who you're working with
- d. Personal Drivers – your personal values in relation to your work

Then, within each list, circle each of the individual values you consider important in both your career and life planning.

## Values worksheet

<b>ENVIRONMENT</b> Priority: _____	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> Priority: _____	<b>PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS</b> Priority: _____	<b>PERSONAL DRIVERS</b> Priority: _____
Work from home	Goals and results driven	Teamwork focused	Organization prestige
Hybrid office	Detail-oriented	Trust and respect among colleagues	Position status
Open to relocation	Logical approach	Cultural diversity	Belonging
Open floor plan	Relationship driven	Competitive environment	Community
Private office	Innovation	Cooperative and collaborative	Independence
Safe environment	Ability to see tangible results	Recognition for accomplishments	Focus on service
Fun & positive environment	Incentives	Supportive management	High-level of responsibility
Aesthetically pleasing surroundings	Challenging work	Work friends	Staying at one place for a period of time
Quiet environment	High-risk work	Mentorship opportunities	Work-life balance
Outdoor working opportunities	Adventurous work	Open communication	Making a difference
Seeing colleagues in person	Growth possibilities	Work independently	Connection to values & personal mission
Job security & stability	Autonomous work	Boundaries for work-life separation	Accountability
Freedom over schedule	Collaboration	Shared values	Integrity
Relaxed & flexible work pace	Creativity/self-expression	Colleagues provide intellectual challenge	Delivering quality service
Action-oriented	Change and variety	Lack of office politics	High earnings/salary
Organized structure	Leadership and managerial experience	Supportive environment	Comfortable & stable income
	Working on cutting edge of knowledge		
	Intellectually stimulating		
	Social activism focused		

 **After identifying the values that are important to you, reflect on the following questions:**

- 1** Look at your original category rankings. After circling the individual values within each category, did your category prioritization change? Why do you think that is?
- 2** Looking at your values list, choose 5 that are the most important to you. List your top 5 values below.
- 3** Are there any values that don't interest or resonate with you at all? Which ones, and why?
- 4** How will you incorporate your values into your next job search?

## SECTION 2: Identifying your transferrable skills

We all have skills and abilities that either come naturally to us, or that we have worked to develop. Skills can be broken down into hard or soft skills:

**Hard skills** are specific expertise necessary to complete a job, often acquired through formal education and training programs. They can be defined, evaluated, and measured.

*Examples: skills conferred by a degree or certification, languages, field-specific skills, or technical skills.*

**Soft skills** are attributes and personality traits that impact interpersonal interactions and productivity, that can be applied to numerous contexts.

*Examples: creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, emotional intelligence, time management.*

Both hard and soft skills can also be transferable skills – talents and abilities that can be used in many different jobs and career paths.

*Examples: problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, teamwork, writing, effective communication, attention to detail, relationship building.*

**➤ While abroad, you likely tapped into your natural skills/abilities, as well as strengthened or learned new skills/abilities. Respond to the following questions:**

- 1** What hard skills did you gain during your time abroad? Tell a story/provide an example that illustrates how you acquired or improved this skill while abroad.
- 2** What soft skills did you gain during your time abroad? Tell a story/provide an example that illustrates how you acquired or improved this skill while abroad.
- 3** What hard or soft skills did you not make as much progress on while abroad, that you want to continue working on?

**Dive deeper:** Use the following skills assessment worksheet to take stock of where your skills currently stand and where you would like to develop further.

## Skills worksheet

Throughout your global experience, you grew and developed both old and new skills. Using the chart below, write an “x” in the areas in which you...

- Feel Competent – this is a skill that you feel you have some experience with
- Feel Confident – this is a skill that you feel secure in your abilities and can utilize without second-guessing yourself
- Would like to develop further – this is a skill that you feel you could continue growing in
- For any skill you’d like to develop further, what is one way that you could intentionally work on growing that skill? Write that action plan in the box.

Skill	Feel Competent	Feel Confident	Would Like to Develop Further
Ability to navigate situations even when the outcome is unpredictable			
Curiosity to learn about what I don't know or don't understand yet from different experiences			
Awareness of my own values and personal beliefs			
Ability to observe cultural differences and similarities			
Capacity to empathize with others and respect the “why” behind other cultures’ behaviors, even if I disagree			
Ability to make decisions confidently			
Ability to think critically to solve problems and consider multiple perspectives			
Capacity to understand non-verbal communication across cultures			
A self-awareness of communication styles and competence which allows me to clearly express thoughts and feelings across communication barriers			

## SECTION 3: Crafting your professional presence

### LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional networking platform with over 930 million users in over 200 countries. LinkedIn is one of the most popular networking tools to help build your brand and network. It is also a great tool for exploring employment opportunities, researching an industry or company, and connecting with recruiters. Below are some tips to help you strengthen your profile, become more searchable, stand out when hiring managers are looking at your profile, and better your professional networking skills using this platform.

#### Your profile should:

- Have a short, memorable, and professional profile description.
- Include an appropriate headshot: high-quality, professionally dressed, and simple. With a photo, you'll get 14x more profile views.

**Quick Tip:** When selecting your LinkedIn Banner, consider using Canva to explore templates that will allow you to personalize your image and highlight your brand.

- Include a strong summary that brings your experience and personality together. Use this space to describe where you've been and where you want to be.
- Include all educational experiences. List every school, major, study abroad, service-learning or internship, or certificate programs.
- Have the "Skills & Endorsements" section completed with relevant keywords and phrases in job listings in your career field.

**Quick Tip:** Also use these keywords and phrases in other parts of your profile, resume and cover letter.

- Have as many sections completed as possible: Organizations, Volunteer Experiences, Honors and Awards. These are just as important to include on your profile.
- Be updated regularly to include all your academic and professional experiences.
- Include a unique URL: Set your LinkedIn profile to "public" and create a unique URL. Put this URL on your resume so that employers can find you.

## When using LinkedIn for networking, you should:

- Ask relevant contacts to write you a recommendation. This lends you extra credibility.
- Join groups relevant to your professional interests and follow industry leaders. This will help you learn the current dialogue and lingo to your field of interest.
- Post from time to time, with thoughtful insights to articles, updates and milestones from your career, and collaborations with others.
- Be mindful of how you ask contacts to connect or when sending a message to individuals. LinkedIn is also a useful tool to connect with others and seek out informational interviews or ask connections about open positions. First impressions also happen digitally.

## Ways to incorporate global experiences on LinkedIn:

- Join our alumni group on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8459266/>)
- Write a post recapping your experience abroad, including any skills or lessons learned.

**Quick Tip:** Be sure to tag individuals or organizations (like WorldStrides) that helped you prepare for your global experience or while you were abroad. This helps expand the reach of your post, while also thanking your professional mentors, colleagues, or network.

- Be sure to update your language proficiency if this improved after your global experience.
- Be sure to include any certificates or accolades you earned while on your program in relevant sections on LinkedIn.



**Quick Tip:** Be sure to also check out your university Career Center website as they may have additional resources or advising sessions to help you get started. Your student email and university affiliation may also get you extra perks or discounts for LinkedIn Premium or LinkedIn Learning.

## SECTION 4: Networking

The primary motivation for networking is building connections, fostering relationships, and sharing information. Usually, this is done in a one-on-one, informal group, or professional social setting. Some examples of networking opportunities may include professional conferences, career fairs, and conversations with university alumni or faculty. You are likely to build better relationships and connections when approaching others with an authentic desire to connect and when you share common interests. Networking can often lead to job and business opportunities, grow your career knowledge, and help you explore your interests.

### Mentorship

There are many instances in your professional life when mentorship can help you navigate various situations and provide honest feedback. Mentors can be instrumental as you establish your career goals. They can also be an invaluable source of accountability, encouragement, connection, support, and confidence.

“

“Mentorship is the exchanging of knowledge and perspectives between mentor and mentee. Mentees are guided on how to navigate their careers through their mentor’s prior experiences. Mentors also benefit from this relationship as they can grow in leadership and widen their perspective on previous knowledge.”

Anikka F.,  
TEAN Seoul 2022

### Informational interviews

Informational interviews allow you to learn more about your field of interest from current professionals in the industry. These interviews let you gather information about the field or specific companies of interest, seek advice on how to qualify for an industry job, and create new networking connections.

Consider whether you know someone in your desired career field who you could ask for an informational interview. After meeting with someone, don’t forget to thank them for their time and insights.

### Questions to ask:

#### Work life:

- What’s your typical workday like?
- What types of projects do you work on?
- What skills are needed for your job?
- What are the most challenging parts of your job?
- What’s the culture like within the industry (or company)?
- Do you feel like you have a good work/life balance?



## Industry:

- What developments are on the horizon that could affect future opportunities?
- Why do people leave this industry (or company)?
- Who are some top industry leaders today?

**Quick Tip:** This can be a great opportunity to follow these leaders on LinkedIn!

- What is the job market like right now?
- Which companies have a good track record with team morale and/or retention?
- How do you keep up with trends in this industry?

## Skillset and experience:

- What skills do managers look for that are not typically written in job descriptions?
- What can I be doing now to ensure that I have the required skills/experiences to land an entry-level job in this field?
- Are there courses or certain experiences I could do to better qualify me for this industry (company, to advance in this field, or position)?
- What key attributes define those who are successful in this field?

## Career growth:

- What is a typical path for advancement in this field?
- How do most people enter this field? Has your experience followed this pathway?
- What is a reasonable salary I could expect if/when I entered the field?
- Which companies have a good track record with promoting someone like me?

**Quick Tip:** This can be a good question to ask if you are underrepresented in this field.

- Would you change your career path in any way, and if so, why?

## Wrapping up the conversation:

- Are there certain LinkedIn groups, industry leaders, hashtags, publications, or companies I should follow to stay up to date with the field?
- Who else do you recommend I speak with?
- Is there anything else I should know before applying or entering this industry?
- Is there any advice you wish you received when you first started out in your career?