

5 Soft Skills You Need to Win as a Payroll Professional

When applying for payroll positions, it's relatively easy to demonstrate you have the required technical skill set. For example, your [resume](#) lists your educational background and payroll certifications, and you can talk about your years of experience working with particular platforms. But the majority of employers also seek something more: soft skills.

According to a recent Robert Half Finance and Accounting [survey](#), 54 percent of CFOs interviewed say they look for soft skills and hard skills in equal measure when hiring staff-level employees. What's more, 10 percent value interpersonal abilities *above* technical expertise.

Clearly, having the right set of soft skills is vital to career development and advancement. Here are some nontechnical abilities employers look for in new payroll hires, plus tips for how you can demonstrate them during a job interview.

1. Integrity

Payroll is a sensitive area. You have access to highly confidential information about everyone in the company, so it's vital to have discretion and the highest standards. That's why [interview questions](#) you get might include asking about a time you had to deal with an ethical dilemma. If you can find an online version of the employer's code of conduct, study that before your interview.

2. Communication

Payroll staff field queries from all departments and pay grades. That's why excellent communication abilities — both written and verbal — are important soft skills for [payroll specialists](#). Managers will be looking for signs of a solid communicator throughout the hiring process, so [wow them](#) with a short but well-written cover letter, a well-crafted resume and confident responses to interview questions.

3. Attention to detail

Small errors in payroll can be very costly to a company in terms of time, money and stress. Payroll specialists need to be extra diligent when entering data and making calculations. As part of your pre-interview preparation, think of the ways you are good at attention to detail. As an example, do you have a method for double- and triple-checking your work? If so, mention it.

4. Continuous learning

Being someone who is naturally curious and asks lots of questions is important in a payroll position, as it allows you to adapt well to changes in [financial reporting](#), payroll software and more. So, in your job application, be sure to mention your commitment to on-the-job learning.

Also ask about what kinds of [professional training](#) and soft skills development the prospective employer offers.

5. Flexibility

Can you change gears quickly? How well do you deal with interruptions? A typical day in the payroll department can be unpredictable, and an effective payroll specialist can juggle multiple requests. For the interview, think of instances when you've had to meet several pressing deadlines in one day. Emphasize how you remain cool under pressure and work closely with colleagues to get the job done.

Soft skills are an essential part of career development, so be sure to work on your personal characteristics as diligently as you would any technical expertise. And when interviewing for a new payroll position, don't be shy about highlighting all the in-demand traits you possess.

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