# SECRETS TO CREATING AMAZING QUANTIFIABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**ceoresumes.com**

Most people struggle with how to create career accomplishments. A lot of people think they don't really have them. It's not unusual for me to hear from clients, "I can't' quantify my accomplishments," or "My job doesn't work that way," or "I'm not in sales."  However, I would say 99% of people that I work with do indeed quantifiable accomplishments.

I think the reason people struggle with quantifying their accomplishments is because when we think of accomplishments, we're usually operating in a mode of "what we do" . . . our menu of things that we do throughout our day, if you will. Creating accomplishments requires a slight shift in focus from what we do to what happens when we do it. This is what employers need to see on your resume.

This shift in focus is vital, not just for creating your accomplishments, but in how you think about yourself in terms of understanding the value that you truly bring to a potential employer. This is going to help in all areas, in your cover letters, in your resume, and in the way you present yourself in job interviews.

Career accomplishments are the meat of the story in your resume. They should be easy to read and impactful. But before you can begin creating them—it's critical to understand the following point. I have written and read thousands of resumes, and what I have gleaned about career accomplishments is that it seems to me our perceptions of our own accomplishments are mostly often misunderstood and underappreciated. We often just think "Oh, it's just what I do."  That's a common kind of internal dialogue. And again, when I've asked my clients to write down their various career achievements I hear, "I don't think of myself in that way; I can't recall accomplishments like that."

So first you must look at the possibility that you might be devaluing the unique and valuable skills and strengths that you bring to the table. Prepare to own your accomplishments and to accept a stronger and more marketable branding statement of who you are and the value you bring to an employer.

As a resume writer I will sometimes give a first draft to a client and they act shocked or embarrassed by their own accomplishments. They might say "I can't claim this," or "I think that this is overstating what I did."

My typical response sounds like: "Okay, but weren't you a key contributor to the success of this $10 million project?" or "Aren't my numbers or facts correct?" or "Did you not win this award for the job you did on such and such project?" Their answer is invariably "No, that's all correct, there are no errors."

They were simply shocked to see themselves and their value to a company on paper in a positive way. They had never thought about themselves like that before.

There is an amazing transformation that can take place when you see yourself in a different light—a true and objective light and to finish out the above story—usually after a couple of days of reviewing the information and the content of the new resume, the clients will come back and tell me, "Ah yes, okay, I get it now," and then all of a sudden *they step up to match where I've put them—which is where they really were in the first place!*

It's very common to devalue oneself in this way and, once corrected, it often bridges the gap between where you are now and where you want to be. You may have your sights on a dream job that you are very well qualified for but somehow between the way you are thinking about yourself and the qualifications for that job, you can't truly see yourself in that position even though you desire it and think you are qualified for it.

Thus, gaining a true perspective of your accomplishments acts not only as a psychological motivator but a healing agent. The first step is to own your accomplishments so you can confidently start stepping into greater roles, bigger positions, and a bigger salary.

**The First Steps to Creating Career Accomplishments**

**Using indeed.com.**

Use a job aggregator like indeed.com to find 1 to 4 ideal career positions and print them out. Next, highlight the responsibilities and match all the keywords and phrases that resonate with you and that you have in your toolbox of skills and strengths.

When you are done, you will have certain keywords and phrases highlighted and, if you read down your list, you will start to see duplicates, or a pattern, if you will. Let's say you have highlighted complex problem solver multiple times because it is in multiple positions you have picked out that are representative of ideal positions for you. If you see yourself as a complex problem solver—then you simply ask yourself, "Why am I connecting my skill set to that keyword?" Or, "What

have I done in my past positions to make me feel that I am a good solver of complex problems?"

Inevitably your mind will connect to a memory of complex problems that you have solved. Using this information, you can now start to craft your success stories. Also using this simple exercise can ensure that your accomplishments match up with the job that you're going after.

### Keyword your strengths.

You can use ideal jobs, or you can also do this other exercise that is also really helpful. Start with a blank sheet of paper and just start to brainstorm on all the things you love to do the most and have fun with it. So, think about what you're doing when you are loving your job, and that's usually the easiest way to get all the true authentic information bubbling up to the surface.

If you feel stuck, by the way, when you do brainstorming like this, take a break for the day because it gives your subconscious mind a chance to really work on these ideas. We often don't give ourselves permission to think this way or think about these things, so don't feel frustrated if nothing is coming to you right away. Sometimes it takes time because of how we've conditioned ourselves not to think in this way.

### Turn your strengths into stories.

Now you want to look at your list and ask yourself, "Why do I feel this way?" Perhaps you wrote "motivating" as one of your strengths, or "realizing cost savings." Ask yourself, "Why do I feel like I'm good at controlling costs or why do I feel that I'm motivating?" This will help trigger your memory to the actual events that you're connecting with that determined strength.

Taking this a step further, perhaps with motivating maybe you connect this strength to a time that you motivated your boss to let you take on a project that generated a certain amount of revenue for the company. Or maybe you motivated a national sales team with incentives that increased the company's client base. So this is a very simple way to authentically draw out the key strengths that you want to use in your next position.

### Writing your strengths as accomplishments—a simple template.

Now you want to write a simple template for each story. The template goes like this—there are only three lines:

**The problem.**

**What you did to address the problem or challenge.**

**The result.**

So problem, action, result. That's it.

Again, the key here is really and truly not to make this complicated. Keep your answers short. In fact, when you're relaying these stories not only in your resume but in your interviews, you're going to want to keep them preferably thirty seconds, max under a minute because otherwise you'll lose your listener. So, a good way to think about this is to understand how products are marketed. Less definitely increases the impact so we want to use the same principle.

**Begin your accomplishment with the result first.**

Start your accomplishment statement with your results. What most people will do is finish their accomplishment statement with the result. Here is an example:

> *"Planned and configured electrical services for two facilities that saved one client $3 million."*

What we want to do is lead with the result so that the statement has greater impact so the correct configuration would be "Realized a $3 million savings." That's much stronger right off the bat. It keeps the reader reading. There is a natural curiosity to more fully understand how you got that result.

> *"Realized a $3 million savings for one client through innovative planning and configuration of electrical services for two facilities."*

Here is another example for a project manager that has a result at the beginning and the end:

> *"Saved one client $1 million in fees through alternative planning and design changes. This project was awarded best private project under $20 million by the AIA, 2010."*

**Getting your facts and figures.**

Now what if your accomplishment doesn't have a dollar figure in it? Or what if you don't know exactly what dollar figure or percentage is? First of all, you can give approximate figures because what you're really trying to do here is give your reader a general framework. Your resume isn't a legal document but, rather, a marketing piece that serves to demonstrate the size and scope of things you have worked on

or money you have made and/or saved a company or client. If you've been working with a Fortune 50 company and you saved someone $25 million, that's a whole lot different than writing that you saved $400,000. So, think of this exercise as "framing" your story—using exact or approximate figures—which helps the reader to understand where your impact level is.

If you really want to check your numbers or percentages, here is one way to do it. Contact someone you used to work with and say, "Hey Joe, remember that project we worked on . . . would you say that it boosted our customer satisfaction rate by at least 30% and maybe it saved us over $600,000 in refunds that year back in 2008?" If Joe says to you, "Oh at least that," then you know you have your number and your verification.

I also want to address what you can do if you don't have numbers . . . if you can't save $400,000 or $30 million? Percentages aren't as strong as dollar figures but they're the next best thing. You can even quantify without giving percentages, but this is an example of a percentage accomplishment:

> *"Increased PMP certifications by 260% in less than 12 months in support of the service organization's knowledge management program by setting up an onsite employee preparation course."*

Here is another example:

> *"Reduced turnover from 112% down to 8%, capturing over $487,000 in training costs through spearheading an analysis and restructuring of internal HR operations."*

And this:

> *"Increased efficiencies by 22% in two facilities through restructuring the hourly and salaried compensations systems to align with local area markets."*

This truly demonstrates how nearly everything that we do in our job trickles down to some type of quantifiable result whether we were operating independently or on a team. Speaking of being on a team—I bet you are wondering how to couch your collective accomplishment on your resume. Let's say that you were on a team that saved $4 million. Then you can say something like this:

> *"Key contributor to a $4 million reduction in operational costs via administrative process improvements."*

I have worked with countless clients who told me they had no real accomplishments—but after following the simple steps I have outlined here they

were able to shift their focus and quickly manifest wonderful accomplishments they could use in their resumes.

The end game for you, the reader, is that the more stellar you look and the more deeply you communicate the results that you bring, the more quality interviews and offers you will get and the more money you can command.

**Career planning: keep track of your accomplishments.**

I suggest that you keep a notebook or a folder on your computer called "Career Accomplishments."

Every time you have a "win"—you complete a project, you land a client, you drive revenue, improve processes/productivity, or control costs, simply write it in your file.

It takes a little practice and dedication to develop this habit, but your career is WORTH IT! So, jot these things down. From now on, when you update your resume, you will have your accomplishments readily available. This is a great investment in your career, won't take you much time at all, and the payoff is huge.

**Secrets to Creating Amazing Quantifiable Accomplishments**

Shift your thinking from WHAT you do to WHAT HAPPENS when you do it.

Finish your story. Your story has a beginning (the problem) a middle (what you did to fix the problem) and an end (what happened when you fixed the problem—who benefited. How did they benefit?).

Check your numbers. If you aren't sure how much revenue you generated or to what degree you decreased operating expenses, call a colleague or boss that worked on the project with you to get confirmation on approximate figures. Remember your resume is a marketing piece, not a legal document. Do not lie, but do not panic if you are unsure of exact dollar amounts. You are trying to paint an accurate and fair picture for the reader.

Front load your accomplishments. Don't say: "Led an initiative to improve customer service where __, ___, and ____ happened and resulted in customer satisfaction surveys to improve from 67% to 97%." Say: "Improved customer satisfaction by 30% in under 6 months by _____."

Keep your language simpler than you think you might need to. Help your reader by giving them a clear, simple picture of your success. Numbers speak for themselves; three-dollar words lose the reader.

EVERYONE has quantifiable accomplishments. Sales executives, lawyers, janitors, software developers, and waitresses. But few people think in terms of results; rather, they think in terms of "tasks and skills." Shift your thinking to finish your story. It's the results, not the tasks, that companies are interested in. Demonstrate you understand this and you gain a leg up on your competition and a very important secret to your success.

**Here are some examples:**

### PRESIDENT—TECHNOLOGY

Led turnaround and sale of a photonics company at twice the Board's expected price.

Led 140% growth through forging a strategic partnership that generated $14 million in transaction fees.

Drove sales for one technology company from $40 million to $60 million dollars in under 12 months in a global market decline.

### HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR

Realized $3.9 million savings through improving human resource systems.

Reduced turnover from 112% to 18% in 24 months, saving nearly $3 million in training costs.

Drove operational efficiencies 42%, aligning compensation systems to performance requirements.

Saved $895,000 in labor costs while improving on-time delivery from 75% to 100%.

### BUSINESS CONSULTANT

Captured an estimated $300,000 in annual interest savings through partnering with Six Sigma group to implement a process that improved invoice generation processes.

Realized $50,000 in annual savings while simultaneously increasing IT resources through leading the outsourcing of corporate EDI mapping/transmission activities to an EDI Service Provider.

Captured $150,000 in annual savings through an order-to-cash process for clients.

## JANITOR

Saved $20,000 per year by upgrading lighting fixtures to fluorescent.

Reduced visitor waiting time to zero by opening on time every day for three years.

Improved response time for maintenance issues 50% by implementing an email request-for-services system.

## COMMERCIAL CONTRACTOR

Honored with The National CMAA's "Best Private Project Under $20 Million" Award.

Took over problematic aviation project, bringing it in on time and saving $1.5 million.

Perfect track record of completing projects on time and under budget for 15 years.

## BUSINESS SYSTEMS ANALYST

Realized $50,000 in annual savings through centralizing EDI and e-business customer inquiries.

Captured an estimated $300,000 through spearheading an improvement initiative for invoice payment processes.

## DOCUMENT CONTROL SPECIALIST

Resolved pricing issues and automated 80% of company's orders. Worked with cross-functional teams on multiple automation and process improvements, enabling turnkey order processing for the majority of the company's orders.

Reduced non-standard order processing time by 70%. Worked with team as a key contributor to cut average turnaround time from 24 hours to 8 hours through multiple processes and pricing improvements that greatly improved customer service on non-standard pricing orders and improved order processing time by 16 hours.

Prevented pricing and order problems and disputes. As part of a core team of pricing experts, participated in weekly problem/resolution meetings with sales, marketing, and management teams to ensure smooth trouble-free pricing and order processing.

**CHEF**

Earned recruitment into the higher position of Cook 2 at The Grill restaurant within 60 days of being hired.

Took over entire banquet kitchen management in response to a short staff within 3 weeks of being hired. With very little instruction, managed the work of 3 absent line cooks and was commended for exceptional skills and effort.

Saved $130,000 annually in food expenses by leading process improvements in ordering and vendor management.

## Additional Accomplishment Tips:

After you finish creating your career accomplishments, you want to essentially "wrap" everything else in your resume around these successes. So, your qualifications summary, your core competencies, everything surrounding your key accomplishments should be short snapshots of each other. In other words, everything should flow and have a nice continuity. If you are being true to yourself and emphasizing the right skills and strengths for the position that you want this should happen easily and naturally.

For your qualifications summary, you want to focus on an overview of the results that you produce to tell who you are and what you can do for a company versus opening with a statement that leans more towards you and what you're looking for.

When we send correspondence to a company or we give someone our resume, it's not about what we're looking for; we have to think like a consultant. It's about what the company is looking for and seeing if there's a match there. So put on your consultant's hat and approach your initial meetings with potential employers in this way: "What are your problems, what are your challenges, and what can I do for you?" Then the end result, of course, is going to be more meaningful and authentic and everyone is going to get what they want at a higher level.

Another quick tip is not to generalize your resume but DO write it for everyone. Your resume has to be written to demonstrate your expertise, but multiple people in multiple departments are probably going to be viewing it. So, you want it to be

equally compelling to people who are directors of human resources, even if you go through key decision makers. It might ultimately end up in the hands of HR, presidents, various managers, and maybe even staff. Spell out acronyms at least once and watch the three-dollar words and technical jargon.

Other red flags include mentioning specific companies you worked for so that the reader just attaches you to those companies instead of visualizing you working for them. And again, too much detail, technical information, too many sentences that are only decipherable to people intimately associated with what you do, or sentences that are too thick to get through that you lose you reader—are all red flags.

Editing can be a tricky task. Sometimes it is tempting to include much more information than is really needed. When you are editing your resume, think of it like a movie trailer. You are giving your reader a taste, a preview of the coming attraction . . . which is YOU in the live interview. The purpose of your resume is to get the reader wanting more . . . wanting to know more about you.

### CREATING CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENTS—A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

In summary, your career accomplishments are tantalizing highlights (stories) of your strengths and aptitudes. You want to showcase these in your resume and you want to communicate them (in less than one minute) in all of your upcoming interviews!

The secret to creating incredible career accomplishments is to make sure your stories reflect those things you truly love to do the most, and to make sure your stories are quantified ($$%%). Use this simple template to create at least FIVE of your favorite accomplishments.

**Accomplishment Template**

**Problem:**

**What I Did:**

**Result:**

**Here are a couple of examples of working drafts:**


**Example #1**

**Problem:**

My clients are frustrated with their job search.

**What I did/do:**

I develop marketing plans, resumes, and information products that are highly motivating, simple, and effective for them to use.

**The result?**

The majority of my clients land their jobs of choice in under three months with an average of $20K increase in salary.


**Example #2**

**Problem:**

Company was not marketing successfully to the Baby Boomer population in California.

**What I did:**

Researched and designed a marketing program targeted to that market—developed a marketing campaign, worked with advertising company to develop the appropriate communication strategies, sponsored such and such event, etc.

**The result?**

Grew targeted market share by 200% in under 8 months.

 **. . . notice the WOW factor when you read "the result?" That's what your potential employer feels about YOU when you simply and easily communicate WHAT happens when you do what YOU do!**

*Tip:  Career accomplishments do NOT have to be earth-shattering, but rather reflective of what happens when you are doing what you love. You will be AMAZED at how "big" your success becomes when you write it out and communicate it. Story topics are limitless! They can include:*

- How you turned around an unhappy client or your successful turnaround of a struggling company.

- How you diffused inner office politics or to how you orchestrated a political campaign.

- How you improved your own work-life balance (and your health and enthusiasm for your work!) to how you improved the work environment for a whole corporation.