**Every resume must include meaningful accomplishment statements**

by [Sharon](http://sharongraham.ca/author/sharon/) from: <http://sharongraham.ca/category/resume-strategy/>

Canadian job seekers who write their own resume often list job duties and responsibilities. For the typical employer, the candidate’s contact information followed by a simple compilation of job descriptions is meaningless. To find and select the best candidate, the employer needs to understand the differences between applicants. The best way to help an employer select a candidate is to include meaningful accomplishment statements that feature individual strengths.

**Use proven strategies to create SMART accomplishment statements**

[Resume strategists](http://www.careerprocanada.ca/CRSCredential) often liken the art of writing accomplishment statements to [storytelling](http://careerprofessionals.ca/bullet-points-accomplishments/). They use many techniques to help clients identify and articulate meaningful accomplishments. Most commonly, to help clients express achievements they use a SAR/CAR Strategy. This approach is not new. It is a familiar technique that [strategists use to help clients extract and verbalize high-impact stories](http://careerprofessionals.ca/how-to-read-an-interviewers-mind-and-ace-the-interview/) by identifying a Situation (or Challenge), Action, and Result. Then, to bring meaning and structure to the statement, they apply a SMART formula. This strategy empowers individuals to convert personal accomplishments into high-impact statements that are Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Results-Oriented, and Time-Bound.

Employers prefer SMART statements because they provide a clear idea of what an individual is capable of accomplishing. Compare this task-based statement: *“Accountable to oversee an HRIS implementation project.”* with a SMART statement: *“Led a six-month HR Information System (HRIS) implementation merging legacy systems from three divisions covering an overall staff complement of 1500; improved data accuracy 10%, enhanced management reporting detail, and reduced payroll processing time by three days.”*

**Quantify accomplishments to amplify results**

When it comes to accomplishments, numbers talk. Validate accomplishments with dollars, percentages, and other values to show measurable results. Recruiters who are scanning resumes typically notice and hone in on those digits.

Numeric accomplishments can amplify the transferable value an individual brings, but there are many other ways to quantify results. When an individual is unsure of an exact number, a good technique is to lead in with “more than” or “less than.” For example, a warranty adjudicator might expand on *“processed claims”* by indicating *“processed* ***more than*** *100 claims per day.”* Adverbs such as “significantly,” “greatly” and “extensively” are helpful when the scope needs to be strengthened. *“****Significantly*** *increased the number of claims processed per day.”* Candidates must use these techniques judiciously and ethically to ensure that they never misrepresent their results.

**Address the employer’s buying motivators**

Employers are like customers with a shopping list. To fill a job opening, they go to market. They scrutinize applicants, searching for the candidate that best fits their shopping list “the job posting.” The employer’s job requirements are called “buying motivators.” Ideally, a candidate must pinpoint and fulfil all of the employer’s buying motivators.

Buying motivators usually address an employer’s base need – making money, saving money, fixing something, or building something. It’s easy to identify a strong buying motivator for a management-level employee: *“Streamlined the department and strengthened internal controls,* ***improving profit by 25%****.”* A junior candidate can do the same: *“Answered telephone courteously, screened calls, and routed clients to the correct department* ***saving managers valuable time in transferring calls****.”*

**Add a good mix of accomplishment statements**

SMART statements tend to be most effective, but there are many different kinds of accomplishment statements. A strong resume strategist will understand and select from diverse techniques to bring out the best. Here are some other types of accomplishment statements:

* **Results Statement.** This type of accomplishment statement is extremely effective when space is limited or there is a long list of powerful results to share. Results statements are short and to the point. They omit the actions and focus solely on results. *“Reduced annual turnover from 45% to 5% saving tens of thousands in recruitment and training costs.”*
* **Achievement Statement.** Although we sometimes see the words used interchangeably, an achievement is not exactly an accomplishment. It is something that a candidate has earned or awarded. An honour or special recognition can be a valuable addition to a resume. Often, an achievement is the acknowledgement that comes after a task or goal that has been reached. *“Recipient of Costie Corporation’s Employee of the Month Award for outstanding teamwork and exceptional customer service delivery.”*
* **Impact Statement.** Usually the most important (large or broad) accomplishments or achievements need to be specially featured in a resume. Impact statements work well within a profile or at the top of a list of accomplishments. An impact statement can also be a strong header for a subset of smaller accomplishments within the big statement. *“Propelled the organization’s revenue to double each year for four consecutive years.”*
* **Generalized Accomplishment.** [Resume Strategist Mastermind](http://www.careerprocanada.ca/MentorshipProgram), Blanche Pilkington recommends [generalizing some accomplishment statements](http://www.careerprocanada.org/generalized-accomplishment-statement/) in order to encourage employers to contact the candidate. A generalized accomplishment is designed to purposely omit some particulars so that the recruiter or employer will reach out to the candidate for the details. *“Implemented a range of process improvements, analytical tools, and inventory management techniques to decrease turnaround time by 20%.”*

**Work in and around the employment history**

Most resumes include accomplishment statements within the employment history. However, some of the best statements can be found in other areas. Impact is created by focusing on accomplishments throughout the resume. When using this technique, ensure that the document remains concise. When selecting content, favour accomplishments over responsibilities, tasks, and other duties.

The strongest resumes include accomplishments within all sections:

* **Introduction.** A bookkeeper’s profile statement can include a phrase like this *“Enhanced reconciliation process, cutting 5 days off month-end reporting time.”*
* **Education.** A business student might outline a project result *“Developed a business identity, corporate logo, and advertising collateral from scratch as part of a branding assignment.”*
* **Community.** A fundraising volunteer might say, *“Resolved problems with ticket distribution, contributing to a 20% increase in donations.”*
* **Hobbies.** An aspiring photographer’s hobby can be described this way, *“Retouched a wide range of digital photography and uploaded over 20 online portfolios showcasing special events such as weddings, birthdays, and anniversaries.”*

Most people who read through a lengthy list of accomplishment statements will not remember them all. To create consistency within sections, group accomplishment types together. Start each statement in the list with a different past-tense action verb to add interest and distinguish accomplishments. Prioritize the list in order of importance or significance to the employer. The first accomplishment in the list should have the most impact as it is the most likely to be read. Bury weaker accomplishments within a lengthy list and make sure to end the list with a strong statement.

Resume writing is an art and a science that requires both “flair” and skill. If you are a career development practitioner, employment consultant, or resume writer, you are invited to take your expertise to the next level through my [Advanced Resume Development Certificate Program](http://sharongraham.ca/advanced-resume-development-program/). Learn the strategies that successful Certified Resume Strategists use. As part of the program, you’ll receive a complimentary copy of [The Canadian Resume Strategist](http://sharongraham.ca/bookstore/the-canadian-resume-strategist/), the 150-page [Certified Resume Strategist](http://www.careerprocanada.ca/CRSCredential) eGuide. Debrief on sample resumes and discuss many of the techniques that professional resume strategists have featured in the [Best Canadian Resumes Paperback Series](http://sharongraham.ca/bookstore/best-canadian-resumes/).

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**Case Study: How Julie’s Value Proposition Landed Her the Job Offer**

by [webmistress](http://sharongraham.ca/author/webmistress/)

Let’s face it, there is only one reason that our clients are in career transition — they need to secure a good job. Unfortunately, many other Canadians in our market are also working for that ideal placement. So, how do we help clients stand out?

As [career practitioners](http://www.CareerProCanada.ca), our objective is to help each client get the offer by delivering a unique, powerful, and consistent message. Throughout the process, we are enabling them to “sell” themselves to potential employers by imparting a “Value Proposition”. When applied, a strong Value Proposition effectively presents a harmonious message in the resume, interview, and overall job search.

Let’s take a look at how World of Widgets Inc. (WOW), a mid-sized widget manufacturing company, successfully filled their vacant Territory Sales Manager position.

Muriel, WOW’s busy HR Manager and Recruiter, was tasked with filling the Territory Sales Manager role. The position had opened up because WOW needed to generate an ongoing and sustainable increase in sales revenue, which was lagging.

Shortly after advertising the job posting, Muriel found herself sitting at her desk with a pile of 300 resumes to review. As she meticulously weeded through the stack, she observed that quite a few of the submissions looked like they came from the same cookie cutter template. Most career objectives were similar. Each position outlined would display a long list of job responsibilities. Muriel’s task seemed a little daunting because few of the applicants indicated exactly what they had to offer WOW.

Finally, Muriel came across a resume that seemed to have some of what she was looking for. The individual had a background that was quite similar to WOW’s posted position. She pulled out that resume and decided to give the applicant a call and see if she could get her in for an interview. During the brief phone interview, the applicant stumbled at most of the questions. She was not even able to answer the simple question “Tell me about yourself.” Muriel decided to close the conversation with a polite “We’ll get back to you.”

Muriel went through this process a couple more times, each time deciding not to schedule an interview. Glancing at her watch, she realized that she was going to have to cover ground much more quickly. Accelerating her pace, she went through the stack and only briefly scanned each resume. Muriel found two that seemed quite good. In the first one, the applicant outlined his key selling points upfront in a strong profile. The second one was Julie’s.

In her resume, Julie provided a unique message in a “power statement.” She outlined what she had to offer in the opening line: “Effective Territory Sales Manager with proven results increasing sales by bringing in clients and developing long-term business relationships.”

Interested, Muriel reviewed Julie’s resume. She noted that the document seemed to have a theme running through it — and she liked what it was saying. Julie had focused her message by packing her resume with keywords and phrases such as “business development,” “revenue generation,” “prospecting,” “networking,” and “relationship building.” And, she reinforced her message with accomplishment statements like “Generated $1 million revenue in the Ontario region by both increasing sales within the existing client base and bringing in new business from referrals.”

Julie and the other applicant, Mark, were called in for interviews. They were both dressed impeccably. Each showed up on time and displayed outstanding manners throughout the process.

During Mark’s interview, he focused on answering questions with typical responses. Although his answers were not too bad, Muriel noticed that every once in a while, he would wander off into territory that really was not applicable. She found it hard to focus on what he had to offer. So, when he started to ramble, Muriel tried to keep him on track by cutting him off with a fresh question.

Julie had prepared well for her interview. In addition to studying the company and practicing her responses to questions, she also concentrated on knowing her value proposition inside and out. Julie’s main message sounded something like this: “I can increase sales by bringing in clients and developing long-term relationships with them.” Julie also had prepared about ten more supporting statements and examples, so that she could show exactly why WOW should hire her. In her responses, she stayed on target and focused on what she had to offer.

Needless to say, Muriel thought Julie did exceptionally well. Julie was called in to meet the President soon after the first interview. Again, she answered with clarity and focus, selling her message throughout the process. After acing that interview, Julie easily secured the WOW job offer that she was looking for. Her value proposition had certainly paid off!

**Developing a Value Proposition**

Here are the steps your clients can use to create a Value Proposition that will “wow” employers:

1. Identify their very best strengths and skills.
2. Study the company and industry being targeted.
3. Understand the position and learn what the interviewer is looking for.
4. From this information, create a concise statement that highlights their unique offerings.

Remember, Julie? She was applying to a Territory Sales Manager position. This is how she created her value proposition:

1. Julie knew that her strength was the fact that she could bring customers in and keep them. She also knew that she could generate sales.
2. She had studied the company and industry and knew that their sales had been stagnant.
3. She understood from the job posting that the company was looking for someone who could “generate an ongoing and sustainable increase in sales.”
4. Julie created this value proposition: “I can increase sales by bringing in clients and developing long-term relationships with them.” The message clearly addressed all three areas indicated above.

**Designing an Effective Resume**

The key to developing an effective resume is to know your client’s Value Proposition. Sell what he or she has to offer upfront in the power statement. Ensure that the message is consistently delivered throughout the resume. The final product should answer the employer’s question: “Why should we hire you?”

Julie opened her resume with a power statement that highlighted her value proposition. Throughout her resume, she consistently focused on her message by incorporating supporting statements and keywords. Julie reinforced her position by creating strong accomplishment statements that were directly tied into her value proposition. She effectively sold herself to WOW by telling them how she could help them achieve their goals.

**Acing the Interview**

In order to win the job offer in an interview, it is most important to answer the single question “Why should we hire you?” Since your client’s interview is likely to be conducted in relation to the resume, you must ensure that that the value communicated in both the resume and interview are consistent. To prepare for the interview, have your client practice responding to questions with vivid examples of how he or she used certain strengths to achieve the employer’s objectives. With practice, they will be able to present a clear and concise response to your prospective employer.

Julie’s technique was to develop a number of statements and examples that supported her value proposition. She practiced them thoroughly. By the time she was at the interview, she was able to walk in with confidence.

Selling your client is easier than you think. Once you have helped them to develop a strong Value Proposition, advise them to start to use it in all aspects of the job search. With a consistent, powerful, and compelling message, your clients will secure fantastic job offers in no time at all.

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**10 Ways to Create Strategic Resumes**

by [Sharon](http://sharongraham.ca/author/sharon/)

Clients hire professionals to write strategic resumes. And, professionals need to have superior skills to provide top-notch documents. For this reason, most resume writers and employment consultants regularly take [professional development](http://sharongraham.ca/advanced-resume-development-program/) to upgrade their resume writing skills.

Some practitioners prefer to turn to the Internet to learn the basics. It is very tempting to download a resume template and modify it for a client. However, when you rely on templates, you automatically stunt your ability to distinguish your client and write a strategic resume.

Follow these steps to write a strategic resume and give your clients exceptional value:

1. Instead of relying on resume templates, start with a blank page.
2. Forget the “canned” statements and focus on concise, but creative wording.
3. Outline why the employer should hire your client instead of other qualified candidates.
4. Show your client’s uniqueness by focusing on attributes that most candidates don’t offer.
5. Impress the reader with the talents that often bring your client compliments.
6. Instead of chronological or functional format, strategically position every section.
7. Stay away from logging lists of responsibilities, tasks, and duties.
8. Outline only the most impressive accomplishments and show measurable results.
9. Go beyond education and experience to include committees, publications, and other areas that reinforce unique value.
10. Create a branded design element and look for your client’s resume so it reflects a professional image.

[Click here to learn more about templates versus branded resumes.](http://sharongraham.ca/resources/compare-templates-and-brands/)

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An Opposing point of view, sort of…

Branding Your Resume – How to Create a Lasting Impression.

August 29th, 2013[Jessica Holbrook Hernandez](http://www.greatresumesfast.com/blog/author/great-resumes-fast/)

[From:](http://www.greatresumesfast.com/blog/2013/08/29/branding-your-resume-how-to-create-a-lasting-impression/) http://www.greatresumesfast.com/blog/2013/08/29/branding-your-resume-how-to-create-a-lasting-impression/

All this talk about the importance of branding your resume for your job search … what it really comes down to is name recognition. You want to set yourself apart so the hiring manager remembers your name and calls you for the interview. But how do you really know if you’ve created a personal brand for yourself and infused that brand into your resume? Here are some top indicators that you’ve successfully branded your resume.

**TARGETING**

You’ve targeted your resume to one specific position and customized the job title, professional summary, and keywords to highlight your most relevant experience and expertise in relation to this target position. The opposite of this would be a very bland and generic objective statement or blanket career summary that could describe almost any professional.

**VISUAL BRANDING**

You’ve used various visually appealing elements to brand yourself and your resume. Using color, shading, boxes, charts, graphs, work samples, design elements, and occupational icons to set your resume apart from the competition. The opposite of this would be a boring old resume template that makes you look like every other job seeker.

**VERBAL BRANDING**

Examples, testimonials, case studies, one-liners, slogans, mission statements, and success stories could all be used as part of personally branding your resume. Each one of these is so unique to you that it can’t help but distinguish you from other applicants. No two job seekers would have the same verbal branding. Not including these elements runs the risk of making you look and sound similar to all the other applicants vying for the same position.

Personal branding, when broken down into these three areas, is easier to tackle. Simply take one element at a time and address it within your resume, and before you realize it you’ll have a completely branded representation of YOU. You’ll notice your resume response rate increasing, and you’ll be more confident about presenting yourself to the employer for consideration. Rather not tackle branding your own resume? That’s OK too. We use a comprehensive resume and personal branding strategy session when we work with our clients, and my writers are masters at defining a client’s personal brand and value proposition and then marketing that message on their resume. For more information about our [award-winning, five-star resume writing service](http://www.greatresumesfast.com), feel free to call me at 1.800.991.5187 or e-mail me today.