

Getting Started: STAR Statements and Your Resume

Drafting a resume is a good way to begin your career search. On the one hand, your resume will give people you meet a quick sense of who you are and what you've done. More importantly, though, the process of composing your resume will help you identify and articulate your strengths and key accomplishments—which in turn will help you communicate your value confidently when you start networking, writing cover letters and interviewing.

The Accomplishment-Based Resume

In a traditional resume, you would probably itemize your job description, detailing what was expected of you in each role. However, this approach tells an employer nothing about you as an individual.

An accomplishment-based resume, on the other hand, gives an employer more accurate information by describing how you made a difference in that role, as opposed to anyone else who might have held that position. Moreover, it tells an employer that you are somebody who gets things done—and therefore that you would potentially bring value to the job or internship.

Remember, when talking with potential employers, who you are is almost entirely determined by what you've done. To present yourself credibly, you need to substantiate every assertion you make about yourself in a situational example. It isn't enough to say you are a leader, an effective communicator, a team-player and so on; you need to show it. Nothing you say will have more potential impact than when you describe a time when you proved that you are x or have skill y.

STAR Statements

One of the most effective ways for you to communicate your accomplishments is by using a brief narrative structure that includes a targeted beginning, a short explanatory middle, and a strong ending that illustrates clearly what you can do for an employer. You can format these stories using the STAR technique:

Situation: Define the general context.

Task: Identify the key objective.

Action: Describe the action you took or initiated, emphasizing the skills you used to complete the task.

Results: Summarize the outcome in business terms.

Use the following worksheet to develop several STAR examples for each position you've held. As your career search progresses, you'll find that these STAR statements are a valuable reference for more than just your resume. They will also help you:

- **Develop a concise elevator pitch**
- **Write effective cover letters**
- **Prepare for behavioral interviews**

As you learn more about your target industry and function, you may want to revise these statements to make them more relevant.

STAR Worksheet

Situation

General context:

Where:

When:

Who else was involved or impacted:

One problem I had to overcome was:

Task

One specific issue I addressed was:

Action

To solve the problem, I:

Results

The end result was:

Drafting Accomplishment Bullet Points

For each of your last three or four jobs, refer back to your STAR statements to highlight your most significant achievements, particularly those that you enjoyed and that would be relevant to the next stage of your career. Quantify these achievements wherever possible, but don't hesitate to include other types of accomplishments: learning accomplishments, management accomplishments, process improvements, etc.

Depending on the significance and relevance of the experience, find three to five accomplishments for each job and draft them into bullet points. Bullet points typically follow this structure:

Verbs that describe your role in this accomplishment.

What you did.

What was the result? Why—in business terms—was this important to your organization?

Example #1:

Led a team from Customer Services, CRM, National Marketing, IT, Legal and Finance through the planning and development of a \$38M national customer services cost savings initiative.

Example #2:

Teamed with Samsung global ERP division to develop a new sales logistic model, streamlined order fulfillment processes and implemented SAP ERP and i2 supply chain management system for the visual display product division. Effort led to 10 % increase in order fulfillment rate, 30% reduction in account closing time, and 30% increase in inventory turnover rate.

Resume Template

We ask that all Foster MBA students use the Foster MBA resume template for their resumes. You may download a soft copy of this template from the "Sample Documents" section of your Foster MBA Jobs account or from our website: http://bschool.washington.edu/career/career_tools.shtml in the "Put it in Writing" section.

A Living Document

No matter how many times you revise or rework your resume, it will never be "finished." Not only will you want to keep your resume updated with your latest accomplishments, but you also need to revise your resume for each application you submit. This will allow you to highlight those aspects of your experience that are most relevant to each specific job opportunity. (See the Applications section for more details.)

Before late October, you should prepare a working, first version of your resume. Because you will submit this resume to the MBAFocus resume book [see sidebar], it should be a polished representation of your career to date. However, consider this version of your resume as a starting point, one that only shows where you've been.

As you learn more about where you'd like to take your career, you'll revise your resume to reflect where you want to go. This will involve "translating" your experience into the language of the target industry and company.

Resume Books

Rather than just accept applications, some employers actively pursue students they think might be a good fit for their organization. Typically they will identify candidates by searching various resume books.

You can add your resume to the resume books in Foster MBA Jobs. These books are generally used by employers who have a working relationship with the Foster MBA Program.

To reach a wider pool of employers, including many large, national employers, we also give you the option to include your resume in the resume books compiled by MBAFocus.

The MBAFocus deadline is October 29, 2008.