The Secret to a Winning Resume: Achievement Bullets

One of the most important elements of your resume is creating the list of **achievement bullets** that explain what you accomplished at each job. When I review resumes (and I've reviewed and written literally thousands), the most common mistake I see is that the bullets are task-driven, instead of result-driven. What that means is they describe yours _tasks and responsibilities_, instead of the _results and impact_ of the actions you took.

A task or a responsibility is not very persuasive because anyone can be given a responsibility. When you are given a responsibility in a job, you are passive. What you do with that responsibility is the action you take, and those actions produce results – that is your active participation.

For example, as a Career Coach at Hult International Business School, I am responsible for teaching the Professional Career Development course to our MBAs. Now, just having that responsibility doesn't necessarily mean I do it well, right?

That's why a task bullet on my resume such as this one isn't very compelling:

- **Taught Professional Career Development course to 600 MBAs and Master's students each year.**

I might be the worst teacher in the school or the best; the reader can't tell by the way that bullet is written, because it is task focused.

Instead, I can ask myself, what is the result of the action of teaching the course? Well, the result is that I improve the students' ability to run an effective job search, which in turn, increases their employability. Now I can write a much more persuasive achievement bullet for my resume:

- **Increase students' employability and capability to run an effective job search (result) by teaching the Professional Career Development Course to over 600 MBA and Masters students each year (action).**

Here are three more examples of a BEFORE task focused resume bullet and the AFTER resume bullet, which includes the result.

Task driven: Provided information to clients about business hours, services, and account balances (action).

Result driven: Ensured client satisfaction (result) by providing efficient and warm customer service to callers while communicating accurate account information (action).

Task driven: Attended agriculture exhibitions and discussed company products with potential customers (action).

Result driven: Increased brand awareness (result) by designing and implementing promotional events at agriculture exhibitions (action).

Task driven: Managed a team of five professionals (action) from project management, finance, communications and IT.

Result driven: Completed project on-time and on-budget (result) by leading a cross-functional team of five to effectively complete project deliverables (action).

Starting to see how it works?

When thinking about the results you achieved in your past jobs, there are many different types of accomplishments:

- Developed a new program, service or product
- Ensured client satisfaction
- Enabled an important decision to be made
- Achieved a project within the budget or timeline
- Increased revenue or sales, decreased or eliminated costs
- Implemented a new system or process that made things more efficient
- Achieved results above goals/expectations
- Contributed to major decisions affecting the company/organization
- Ensured compliance with policies and procedures
- Received award or recognition for exceptional performance

The Problem-Action-Result Framework

In order to create strong accomplishment bullets for your resume, start by thinking about some problems that you faced in your last job. Write out your notes in three sections:

Problem – what was the problem or situation you were facing?

Action – what action did you take to solve the problem or remedy the situation?

Result – what was the end result or impact of the action you took?

Example:

Problem: I receive donation requests every day, but the specific information about the request (the who, what, where, when) are scattered throughout emails and documents. I need that information several times a day, and it takes a long time to go find it each time.

Action: I created a color-coded excel spreadsheet with all of the information (organization, address, date of request etc) that I need for each organization that requests donations.

Result: I was able to quickly and correctly find the information I need during update meetings and when writing correspondence/ sending donations to the organizations, which improved my efficiency.

Achievement bullet for resume: Improved efficiency of filling donation requests (result) by creating and implementing an excel spreadsheet that organized all donation and company information (action).

Use questions to dig deeper

If the result of your actions is not immediately clear to you, try asking yourself the following questions, which often illuminate the result of your actions:

- *What would have happened if I didn't take that action? What would have fallen apart or what could not have happened next?*
- *Who benefits (clients, internal departments, executives) from me taking that action?*
- *What did I ensure could happen NEXT, by taking the action that I took?*

The key to writing a strong resume bullet is to put the result at the front of the sentence.

Explain the result and follow it in the second half of the sentence by what action you took to create that outcome. While this format is ideal, there are some bullets where it will make the most sense to have the action first, followed by the result.

Here are 10 additional result-statements that may inspire you, ranging from very simple to more complex.

- Improved cross-functional communication (result) by implementing and managing a weekly status meeting between teams (action).
- Ensured proper inventory levels (result) by analyzing historical data, and forecasting weekly sales to predict consumption (action).

- Expanded client base and increased sales (result) by developing a new product based on unmet client needs (action).

- Decreased costs by 30% (result) by negotiating with suppliers to maximize savings (action).

- Increased business revenue (result) by managing the VIP and new client marketing program, which included writing copy for personalized communications, determining targeted discounts, and distributing special offers (action).

- Earned top performance rating (result) by exceeding performance objectives while providing training, data quality and consulting services to the pharmaceutical industry (action).

- During a time of short staffing, trained new staff member and delegated tasks while supervising the quality of final deliverables (action), allowing project to be handed over to new employee while maintaining client confidence (result).

- Successfully avoided $500K loss (result) by identifying an error in the expense processing system before invoice was sent to client (action).

- Ensured the firm was compliant with new regulations by completing 100% of account remediation by the hard deadline.

- Increased brand awareness in the community (result) by spearheading an online social media campaign across multiple platforms (action).