

HIGHLIGHT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

We can't emphasize enough how important it is to highlight accomplishments in your job descriptions. This is the number-one item that makes or breaks a resume, and it is the one area that people struggle with the most. First, you need to understand what is meant by "accomplishment." To have accomplished something in your work, you did not have to negotiate a multi-billion-dollar deal or find the answer to world peace (although those would certainly be worth mentioning). You simply need to have done something that produced a favorable result. This could be as simple as turning in work that wasn't awful. The main thing you want to get across when describing your jobs is that you did them well. Employers want to hire people who have proven themselves as valuable employees.

Here are some questions to help you think of contributions you've made:

- Were you commended for your work on a particular project?
- Were you the expert or go-to person in your office for any particular thing?
- Were documents that you drafted used with little or no edits?
- Were you trusted with additional responsibilities-over and above others at your level?
- Did you receive positive performance reviews?

- Did you contribute to marketing efforts?
- Did you have any ideas that resulted in more efficient/streamlined operations?
- Did you develop trusting relationships with clients?
- Did you bring in clients?
- Did you resolve disputes?
- Did you save your employers money?
- What did you do that made your company/firm better for having hired you?

Think outside of the legal realm for a moment. Instead, think about all of the restaurants you've been to and all of the people who have waited on you in your life. There are huge discrepancies between a great waiter and an awful waiter; right?

Say the awful waiter and the great waiter both worked at the same restaurant for the same duration of time. And say both waiters decided to leave the restaurant business behind in order to move on to something else.

Here's waiter #1's job description:

Hank's Bar and Grill, Santa Fe, NM *Waiter*, June 1998-Present Took orders from customers; relayed orders to kitchen; brought food to customers.

Here is waiter #2's job description:

Hank's Bar and Grill, Santa Fe, NM *Waiter*, June 1998-Present Generated repeat business by delivering excellent customer service; spearheaded new tip-sharing system; frequently relied upon to cover shifts on moment's notice; promoted to head waiter in a five-month period.

Which one would you hire? Even though waiter #1 and waiter #2 both only have restaurant experience, one gets the impression from waiter #2's job description that he is capable of excelling in other areas as well. That's because his resume shows a strong work ethic, people skills, leadership qualities, and a commitment to excellence. Waiter #1's resume shows none of those things.

If you simply write down the things that you have done, employers have no way of knowing whether you simply did them or did them well. For this reason, you want everything you list on your resume to illustrate one or more of the following attributes:

- 1) Leadership
- 2) Responsibility
- 3) Skill
- 4) Achievement

You can still list duties and responsibilities. However, simply describe them in a way that highlights these attributes.

Highlighting Accomplishments in the Middle/Later Portion of Your Career

Once you've been practicing a while, hopefully it will be a little easier to highlight some accomplishments from your positions. At this stage, one important thing to do is to quantify your achievements:

- How many trials have you argued?
- How many cases have you settled?
- How much money did you save your client/company/firm?
- How much did you settle for?
- How much new business did you bring in?

You also want to explain your role in projects and their successful resolution. If you worked in-house, what type of legal problems did you prevent? What types of policies did you implement? How did they make things run more efficiently?

If you've been practicing in a law firm environment, do you have portable business? Are you a rainmaker? Have you settled or won cases that seemed impossible?

Here is a list of examples to get you thinking about how to convey what you've accomplished in your career:

Negotiated complex technology and service agreements that saved more than \$40 million

Played a prominent role in developing an innovative plan to coordinate the defense of nationwide products liability litigation

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Negotiated enterprise-level agreements with software vendors and implementation partners, resulting in multimillion-dollar savings

Led company through acquisition of major competitor, increasing revenues by 15%

Represented clients in more than 150 bench and jury trials

Handled approximately 2,000 civil and criminal cases

Successfully managed extensive SEC examination of employer's operations, resulting in a regulatory review highly complimentary of newly implemented compliance procedures

Instrumental in negotiating settlement of complex trademark litigation through mediation in federal court, thereby controlling litigation risk, avoiding trial, and saving substantial costs associated with trial and possible appeals.