

Explaining your **accountabilities** and your **achievements** in your **resume**



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Accountabilities

Hiring managers and recruitment consultants are interested in finding out the purpose or value or contribution of what you did, not just the tasks you undertook or the duties of your jobs. They often already know the types of duties and tasks that comprise the jobs you have done because they are relatively standard between organisations. In addition, most hiring managers will have undertaken that type of job earlier in their careers or they have managed people doing that job for many years. Recruitment consultants will have recruited to similar positions on numerous occasions and will be familiar with the main duties of the job. Therefore, spelling out your duties can be a waste of space.

The reader is more interested in the level of your accountability and the purpose of what you were or are doing. They want to know what you were or are accountable for ensuring or achieving in undertaking the tasks or duties comprising your job. This means you need to delve into the purpose and the value each role has been designed supposed to add to the business of the organisation.

It is important to indicate the core or underlying purpose of each role: what, at the end of the day, the role was designed to contribute to the organisation. The question to answer are: why does this role exist, what value is the role supposed to add to the business of the organisation?

This level of information helps potential employers and recruitment consultants understand, in a nutshell, what you are or were required or asked to achieve in the job and helps them understand the level at which you were or are working. This in turn helps them determine whether you are capable of operating at the level of the positions for which you are applying.

Providing the reader with information at this level, will also help differentiate you from the competition because most people don't go to this depth. It will provide employers with greater insight about your abilities and the level of responsibility you have had. It will help convince employers that you know what you are talking about and have thought through your value to the organisations with which you have worked.

Achievements

Achievements have three elements:

- What you did
- How you did it
- The result or benefit or outcome or impact or value of what you did

Achievements are things you did which added value, made atangible or noticeable difference and contributed to the business of the organisation. They are not skills you learned, abilities you developed, knowledge you gained or awards you won.

If you express an achievement as: "Reviewed and restructured the company's sales force", this does not provide much useful information to the reader. The typical response to such a statement of achievement would be something like: "so what?" They want to know how you did it and what the impact was. Reviewing is not an achievement. It is a task or process. "Re-structured" is far too nebulous and vague to be of much use to the reader.

The achievement might be re-worked as: "Increased the company's revenue base by 10% by de-centralising the sales force and delegating decision making authority which enabled a higher proportion of sales to be closed in the field."



If your achievements are quantifiable, don't just provide dollars or other "raw" numerical data because these are not very meaningful until they are put into a context. For example, if you increased sales by \$1m from last year, this might be impressive if the company was a \$5m a year enterprise. However, if the company was a \$500 million a year business, a \$1m increase is not nearly as impressive. Therefore, express increases in sales, decreases in costs, increases in market share and other changes to an organisation's key performance indicators as percentages or fractions.

If you improved customer satisfaction to 90%, or if you increased on time in full delivery to 95% or if you reduced machinery downtime to 1%, indicate the previous period's figure. This provides the reader with an understanding of the magnitude or scale of the improvement. (For example: improved customer satisfaction from 75% to 90% within 12 months by) at market demographic would be more impressive because most of the wealthy citizens of that country would not want to be seen dead in one (no offence to Kia Motors, but it's horses for courses).

If an achievement is not easily quantifiable, you can still provide a meaningful indication of the value of the achievement. For example: "Reduced duplication and enhanced the re-usability of test suites by improving testing and planning through discussion forums which enabled team members to share knowledge and identify areas for improvement."

The general pattern is: what you did, how you did it and what happened as a result. (what, how and so what.)

If you were not the person wholly or fully accountable for an achievement, indicate your role or contribution to it. Saying you "participated in" or were "involved" in something is not sufficient. An employer will rightly ask the question: "What was your role? What was your level of participation?"

Avoid weak and vague terms and phrases. Make your achievements as concrete and explicit as possible, while not getting bogged down in excessive detail.

It is not useful to provide information in your resume about awards or rewards received or information about skills you learned and developed in a job. These are typically not the types of achievements in which an employer or recruitment consultant is interested. They want to know what you did to earn those awards or rewards or what you did with what you learned. That is, if the company rewarded or awarded you, the reader wants to know what you did to earn them. If you learned new skills, the reader wants to know how you applied them to the benefit of the organisation.



Examples of Achievements

- Reduced employee turnover by 50% by increasing salary levels and introducing performance based incentives which enabled the organisation to compete with other employers in the industry for the first time and increased the organisation's overall capabilities by enabling it to attract higher calibre candidates.
- Mapped the systems architecture and developed the plans to integrate fixed and mobile technologies which enabled the company to offer unique bundled services and become the first in the region to offer client billing services and converged fixed-mobile packages.
- Grew the company's online business online with a 30% increase in subscriptions and click through rates which enabled it to focus on pushing the creative envelope online and produce several category firsts.
- Developed the secondary insurance market which included raising \$US10m in seed capital to enable the business to move to the next stage and become part of the company's public listing.
- Increased profits by 10% in a highly competitive environment by focusing on the less price sensitive customer segments who valued service, eliminating the need to use price to attract new customers.
- Reduced employee turnover by 20% and significantly increased productivity by introducing a performance management system that recognised contribution, challenged staff to accept responsibility and empowered them to make decisions.

- Reduced employee absenteeism to less than 2% and eliminated non-genuine sick days by designing and implementing a “no-fault” absenteeism program which rewarded employees with lump sum payouts of unused sick leave for the year.
- Virtually eliminated duplication and enhanced the re-usability of test suites by improving testing and planning through the implementation of discussion forums which enabled team members to share knowledge and identify areas for improvement.
- Elevated the perception of the company as a contributor to the community by establishing a community fund which has distributed almost \$200,000 to local not for profit organisations and has resulted in the publication of an average of 20 articles a year.
- Increased production capacity by 15% by redefining and restructuring work flows which enabled the company to consistently meet or exceed promised manufacturing and delivery turnaround times and enabled the company to more accurately forecast and more capable of accommodating demand fluctuations.
- Developed and launched the company’s performance management system ensuring a direct link with its Core Values, role clarity and goals at the individual, business unit and corporate levels. This has provided staff with clarity, aligned staff with the company’s strategic direction and has improved skills and capabilities aligned to business needs and enabled the company to more effectively identify, develop and retain talent.
- Achieved national and international recognition for design and marketing excellence by launching and securing market acceptance of new branding for the business and a range of new products.



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Tom Hannemann is one of Australia's foremost Executive Resume Writers & Interview Coaches. He has been helping senior executives, managers and professionals across all industries advance their careers since 1993. Resume Australia is delighted to partner and work with Tom, who leads our Executive Resume Writing Service in Australia and across the globe. He focuses on helping our senior executive candidates develop cutting edge Executive Profiles, CV's and Director Profiles. Tom has over 20 years experience in Human Resources, senior management, business development and senior management consulting roles. He is SEEK's resume writing expert and has worked with one of the world's largest recruitment firms. Tom Hannemann is a specialist in providing career advancement services, with strong business acumen supported by an MBA from Australia's top two business schools. Having reviewed thousands of resumes & interviewed hundreds of candidates, Tom brings his unique experience to the resume writing process and works closely with our clients to develop a resume that secures interviews!