

SOAR With Your Strengths

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I recently started working with an outplacement service provided by my ex-employer. (Their goal was to help me find a job, but I did consider that one possible job might be working for them.) The first task was creating a substantial profile of my work history on their website with the goal of providing them sufficient information to create a spectacular resume for me. The most challenging part was entitled SOAR; in this section you tell the stories about the challenges and successes in your career. After putting in the hours to make this great, it was clear that this exercise would be valuable to anyone, at any stage of their life.

SOAR stands for Situation, Opportunity, Action and Result. In a concise, but conversational mode, you define:

- A situation or problem you recognized
- The opportunity you identified to resolve it
- The action you took to resolve it
- The concrete results

What might this look like? Here are a few “fictional” examples. They may or may not represent real people

1. My company was struggling to compete with a start-up. After analyzing our strengths, I realized that Fortune 500 companies generally feel safer doing business with established firms, especially those with a lower risk tolerance. I developed vertical marketing for some key areas, such as financial institutions emphasizing our experience and our viability. This resulted in \$2MM in increased sales over the next quarter.
2. People were increasingly concerned about software pricing on the mainframe, even as hardware prices decreased. I thought we could help them with that. I created code that would allow our systems software to exploit zIIP processors so that most of the CPU could be offloaded, reducing the costs. After implementing this for my management software, my company saw a 20% increase in sales and competitive displacements in the first quarter.
3. My capacity plan showed that we needed a processor upgrade, but that wasn't in the budget. I worked with the application teams to rewrite a lot of poorly performing code, resulting in more efficient, streamlined code that used far less CPU. We deferred the upgrade by one year, saving \$1.5MM and continuing to support demand.

You might say, “I'm not looking for a job right now. Why do this?” First, it is a great way of being clear about your value to your company. Second, you can use this knowledge to communicate your value to your management; it is very useful in preparing your performance review. This enhanced recognition of

your concrete value can lead to promotions and raises. Without this, you simply have a list of tasks you have performed. Tasks have too much gravity; they do not help you SOAR.

Of course, these elements will help you write a more powerful resume too. This is exactly what employers seek. But it is more than that. Too often, we lose sight of why we are doing this and begin to feel like a cog in an immense machine whose purpose is unknown. SOAR connects you to your purpose. It can also help you see that what you are doing is not where you should be.

Start today. The best time to write about how great you are is when you are already feeling good. Be your own best PR agent. SOAR!