

# How to Write Achievement Statements

An achievement statement tells people what you've accomplished. They make you interesting and should have the hiring manager asking himself: "Wow!!! How'd he *do* that?!? I gotta talk to this guy!"

Achievement statements come in two general types. First are awards and rewards. Salesman of the year, five Employee of the Month awards, bonuses, and so on are reward- and award-type achievements. This kind of achievement is easy to document because you cashed the \$5,000 check or put the plaque on the wall.

The second type answers this question: "When everything fell down around our ears, what did I do to fix it?" An alternative question is, "When the unexpected happened, how did I make things work out?"

Answers to either of these questions will also answer one of the following questions:

1. How did I make the boss money?
2. How did I save the boss money?
3. Which of the boss's problems did I make go away?

This second type is not as easy to quantify, but quantification is important. Dollars made or saved, time saved, process improvements, better systems, good training given, new accounts developed, old accounts rescued, and a myriad of other situations are all the bases of achievement statements.

When you write an achievement statement, it will come from a story. You need to develop the story as well as the statement because one event may include two or five achievements. In addition, when you interview, you'll need to answer questions about the achievements, and the best way to do that is to tell the story that led to the statement.

As you go through your old performance reviews, your boss may already have written some of your achievement statements for you: "Jack completed every project on time and under budget over the year." These are possibly the best kind of statement because you have documentation of the accomplishment, and it's a more-or-less disinterested party who wrote it.

Most of the time, though, you'll write your own. So go back to the question noted above: "When everything fell down around our ears, what did I do to fix it?" Go back to that time. Feel what you felt then. See what you saw and hear what you heard. Then "flesh out" the story from that event. How long did it take? What obstacles did you have to overcome? Whom did you have to persuade, coerce, lead? What was the result? Did this last one answer one of the three earlier questions? It should have.

When you write the statement, use a past participle of a strong verb. "Saved", "earned", "built", "led", "rescued", "built" and so on are this kind of word. There are many. Your industry has its own jargon and shorthand terms. Use them where possible.

An achievement is usually (but not always) measured in dollars or man hours, percentage improvement or lessened tensions. As often as possible, you want to use a number. Dollars are always a good measure, but percentages are great, especially as they get closer to 100% or 0%, whichever is better in the context. Time frames are good for putting things into perspective (a weekly award is not as impressive as an annual tribute). For instance, if your new process saved 5¢ per copy, that's not

impressive, but if there were 650,000 copies, that's \$32,500/month or \$390,000/year. A 2% reduction in man hours may not seem like much, but 500,000 man hours in a year grabs the reader's attention.

So, what does an achievement statement look like? Here are a few examples:

- Salvaged \$67,000 in quarterly revenue by planning, writing, revising, illustrating, and producing an OSHA-required document in  $\frac{2}{3}$  the scheduled time.
- Awarded Salesman of the Month six consecutive months.
- Developed a process that saved 25% of the time required to polish a critical element in the aircraft frame.
- Trained twelve co-workers on new software in three weeks; all passed the qualification, and none had a discrepancy in the six week validation test.