

GET THE JOB

Telling Your Story

Most open positions are going to attract an extensive list of qualified candidates.

That makes it harder to stand out by résumé alone, no matter what experiences you bring to the job. In that case, standing apart might come down to how well you're able to recreate your own narrative. Here's how to tell the story of your work life, and secure that coveted next job.

WHY IT MATTERS

Your first impression usually happens in the form of pieces of paper or digital representation of your résumé and cover letter. But even the most imaginatively written cover letter doesn't give a prospective employer the whole picture. How you respond to their questions, and how you frame both the challenges and successes of your career, says a lot about what kind of employee you'll ultimately be for their company. These stories serve several purposes: Your answers can break the ice while underscoring your leadership or problem-solving capabilities. They also put a human face on all the facts and figures from your application.

KEEP IT SHORT

Resist the urge to overshare.



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It's smart to include a personal anecdote or two, but avoid spending too much time discussing anything that's not directly work-related. Remember to share stories that are clearly constructed, with an interesting beginning, relevant middle and proper conclusion.

Clear narratives also convey

a sense of organization and focus.

Bring up specific moments when you took the lead or mentored someone. It all doesn't have to work out in the end but when it doesn't, describe what you learned.

BECOME A 'STAR'

If you struggle with concise

and well-presented stories, rely on the STAR model of storytelling. Begin with a situation (or "S"), perhaps an obstacle that needed to be overcome or a project that had stalled. Next, discuss the task at hand (or "T"): Explain how you or your team decided to approach things. Then move into your actions (or "A"), outlining how

the task was completed. Finally, talk about the results (or "R"). Explain as thoroughly as possible how you contributed to the outcome, or how your help played a key role. If the outcome wasn't what you'd hoped, remember to outline how you grew as an employee or manager through this experience.