

Telling Your Story Using the STAR/SOAR Model

Sharing a specific example of how you completed a major task or project you were assigned, or succeeded when presented with an obstacle, allows a listener/reader to visualize how you work by contextualizing your experiences and skills. It demonstrates your ability to produce results and provides a concrete image for the listener/reader to remember you.

We recommend you create examples using the following Situation Task Action Result or Situation Obstacle Action Result (STAR/SOAR) model for each of your key accomplishments, as well as your transferable skills and personal qualities. These examples can be a fundamental part of developing your résumé, cover letters, and talking points for informational and employment interviews, and therefore are worth spending some time on.

Use the following prompts to complete your STAR/SOAR using the worksheet provided.

- **Situation** – Describe vividly the environmental condition; ie. department, organization, timeframe.
- **Task or Obstacle**– Describe what was expected or asked of you in terms of responsibilities OR the challenges or obstacles you had to overcome.
- **Action** – Detail the specific action steps that you took to handle the tasks or address the obstacle.
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- **Result** – What impact did you have on the situation? Identify concrete outcomes of your actions, providing quantitative or qualitative results when possible.

Following are some examples of STAR/SOARs provided by former Peer Advisors and Interns.

STAR/SOAR #1

Situation: Last spring, I worked with five other Colgate University volunteers to run the weekly Spanish Club for elementary school students at Hamilton Central School. The aim of the Club is to teach the kids beginning Spanish through interactive 45-minute sessions.

Obstacle: The program was only in its second year and needed a lot of development. We had no lesson plans, no materials, and little teacher assistance.

Action: We met once a week before the sessions to agree on a lesson plan for the week, brainstorm and plan activities, gather the needed materials, and delegate responsibilities for the coming session. I was in charge of brainstorming and planning lesson plans and activities. I outlined the semester so that we would cover one topic

per week, such as greetings, colors, letters, numbers, animals, verbs, etc. Most of the activities I planned incorporated music (sing-along songs), movement (dances, hand signals, etc.), games (Spanish duck-duck-goose, etc.), and snack food (animal crackers for animal vocabulary, fruit loops for learning the colors, etc.).

Result: The sessions were a huge success! The activities engaged and entertained the kids, while educating them about basic Spanish vocabulary and phrases. The weekly lesson plans built upon one another, and the kids definitely improved as the semester progressed. The parents were grateful too; we received extremely positive feedback on parental evaluation forms. The program is now in its third year and has expanded in the number of students involved (now over 40), the number of volunteers (now 15), and the breadth of subject matter covered.

STAR/SOAR #2

Situation: I worked with three other students and an independent film company to create a short, professional documentary the summer between my freshman and sophomore years of college.

Task: We were given four weeks and all of the professional equipment we would need, but nothing more. I was appointed “producer,” meaning I oversaw all phases of the filmmaking process, with the specific responsibility of initiating and leading preproduction. We had one week for preproduction, in which we had to choose and research a topic, secure subjects interviewees, and schedule all future filming.

Action: I brainstormed with everyone I knew to come up with potential ideas for the documentary. I explored these potential leads to gauge their feasibility, and my group eventually agreed on a topic: competitive Rubik’s cubing. Then, I exhaustively researched the subject matter to learn all of its “ins and outs.” Once I had an understanding of the subject matter, I contacted everyone in the Rubik’s cubing community that I had learned about through my research. I also posted announcements online advertising for our documentary and requesting interested subjects.

Result: My research and persistent pursuit for “ins” within the community finally paid off: my emails and announcements attracted numerous interested subjects. I continued to correspond with promising subjects and successfully scheduled interviews with over ten people. In only one week, I led the group in effectively preparing for the next two weeks of production during which we obtained over 100 hours of footage with 11 different subjects. The documentary was selected for showing in the Southwest by Southwest and Tribeca Film Festivals.

STAR/SOAR #3

Situation: I was hired as a summer intern by Safety Insurance’s Fraud Investigations and Prevention team.

Task: Our objective was to identify fraud patterns and develop detection mechanisms.

Action: I researched more than 500 volumes of client and health care provider records, analyzing and manipulating large amounts of data to reveal fraud patterns. I also met with a focus group of employees who would use new fraud detection software to define and rank criteria for building the new detection training. Finally, I compiled information summarizing the time and resources devoted to this project and prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the General Counsel to submit to senior management.

Result: Senior management used this presentation as the basis for the development of company-wide policies that maximized company savings and recoveries.

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- **Situation** – Describe vividly the environmental condition; ie. department, organization, timeframe.

- **Task or Obstacle**– Describe what was expected or asked of you in terms of responsibilities OR what challenges or obstacles did you have to overcome?

- **Action** – Detail the specific action steps that you took to handle the tasks or address the obstacle. (Tip: In “What Color Is Your Parachute?,” the author encourages you to pretend that you are telling this story to a whining four-year-old child who keeps asking “An’ then whadja do?”)

- **Result** – What impact did you have on the situation? No matter how big or small, the listener/reader wants to hear the outcome. (Tip: Quantify or qualify your results if you can – “Initiated a program that was attended by more than half the dorm residents, far succeeding expectations.”, “Established xxx week as one of the highest profile events on campus.”, “Increased the collaboration with other groups/offices that have led to additional co-programming opportunities, including...”)