

## Chapter 3: Distinguish Yourself---Personal Branding

*What makes you special?*

*"Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind."*

Dr. Seuss

As you research the careers by which you are matched at [O'Net](#) and discover the details about these careers, you start formulating in your mind how you truly align with these career fields and what you bring to the potential employer.

Assuming you have met the career training, experience, and education requirement, the next thing to think about is how you present yourself to the potential employer seeking to hire someone like you.



What this chapter covers:

- What's your story --" Tell me about yourself."
- What are you proud of? What would you change if given the chance?
- Develop a STRATEGY - What's YOURS?
- What is YOUR Value, Contributions, Accomplishments, and Lessons Learned (what do you bring to the table)/Differentiators - What makes YOU different?
- Time to brag with Metrics - what you have accomplished quantifying the impact of what you have done. How you contributed.
- Awards, unique activities, volunteer efforts, class projects, team involvements, initiatives are taken, leadership roles and recognitions >>>Celebrate your victories.
- Deeper dive into your successes...and what you were THINKING/Attitude when you succeeded. Visualize your success!

Seeking employment does not begin and end with seeking and applying to a job posting, especially when you want to join a team where you contribute with compensation. First, you must believe in your specialty! YOU ARE SPECIAL AND UNIQUE! Now, smile as you nod to this statement.

Next, take this belief into action.

>>> (Optional) You can go to the online course workbook. [workbook. This is part of the online course exercise in Module 3: Tell Me About Yourself](#)

Now that you have a three-stage outline of yourself that has captured your attention and energy from the time you were a youngster growing up, you can see your uniqueness and specialness in this world for yourself. You should be proud to share and leverage this as you start your career pathway to success. This is also how you answer the inevitable question, "Tell me about yourself."

You know that in a social setting, meeting someone for the first time, there is a curiosity about the other person that usually starts to get met by asking personal questions. Two people meet up for a blind date, and the uneasiness is lifted when they begin sharing something of themselves with the other person. That same uneasiness is felt by the person or persons tasked with selecting the new team member for the employer. So, the moment you start sharing yourself with them, that uneasiness lifts and a rapport starts to take place.

Now that you have your unique and special story to tell, you can eagerly look forward to it when someone asks you to tell them about yourself. You can look them in the eye and, with confidence, tell them how you are unique and what makes you special and the one they are looking for to join their team.

## **Developing your strategy**

Strategy, putting it simply, is a plan. In this case, the plan is for what you say and what you do as a candidate for a career position. To be effective in executing this plan, you need to prepare.

The Roman philosopher Seneca is credited with saying "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity" (the ancient Romans actually spoke Latin, so this is likely a translation). Time to enhance your luck by being prepared. You already know what to say when someone prompts you to "tell me about yourself." Now, you need to strategize for leveraging what you know.

The best way to plan for what to say about what you know is to prepare and practice. You might have heard of the S-T-A-R method when relating your accomplishments to an interviewer. The acronym stands for:

S - Situation

T - Task at the time

A - Actions that were taken in response to the situation and task

R - Result of the actions that were taken

We are going to modify the S-T-A-R method slightly to reflect a little more efficient technique, known as the C-A-R method which takes a more active tone. It stands for:

**C - Challenge** you were confronted with  
**A - Action** you took to solve the challenge  
**R - Result** and impact of your actions

We cannot emphasize enough the power of storytelling in an interview or even a conversation. Storytelling engages the listener and allows them to share in the experience and feel what you are talking about, making more memorable the experience you are talking about. The more an interviewer can be inspired by your story, the more top of mind you will appear when they are finalizing decisions on who to hire.

Ideally, you want to have at least three C-A-R examples of challenges you experienced and how you positively and/or creatively generated results that resolved the challenge.

Example: Someone applying to manage a team in a retail store. In the interview, the interviewers ask about a time when they handled a disgruntled customer.

**C - Challenge**: Frustrated customer called in after receiving the wrong size from an online purchase

**A - Actions**: Listened calmly to a customer's complaint, empathized with their situation in a reassuring tone, reassured them that we will resolve to their satisfaction, then granted credit to their credit card and invited them to shop online or in the store with a 25% savings coupon.

**R - Result**: The customer left smiling and ordered multiple additional items in the store — we saved a customer and generated additional loyalty and business!

Creating your CAR means diving deeper into your successes...and what you were THINKING/Attitude when you succeeded. Visualize and fully describe your success with your CAR.

Obviously, a person will have plenty of CARs to share. This is where it can get tricky.

You will need to read the job description for the job posting and research the company to learn about its mission, vision, goals, objectives, and core values. Then, you can better anticipate the interview questions and how it will be possible to insert an appropriate CAR as it applies to their mission, vision, goals, objectives, and core values, as well as the relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the career position.

Having your own CARs to share YOUR Value, Contributions, Accomplishments, and Lessons Learned (what you bring to the table) will demonstrate your effectiveness and create a favorable impression as to what you can accomplish once hired.

>>> (Optional) You can go to the online course workbook. and complete the exercise:

The CAR exercise. [This is part of an online course Module 3 working in the digital workbook.](#)

Your CARs are also your Differentiators - What makes YOU different?

If there are two people left to be chosen for the one career position slot, how do you show up as different from the other candidate? Simple, your story and your CARs.

## **BRAG with METRICS**

There is a place for bragging about your accomplishments on the resume, and that will be covered in another chapter. In making your strategy for how you show up as a career position candidate, you will need to make a list that includes metrics, and specific numbers that quantify the results of your actions.

The potential employer wants to get an idea of the measure of your future contribution to their team, so they need to know past accomplishments in metrics. Make sense?

For example, someone interviewing for a sales position for an insurance company might want to espouse that they consistently achieved an average of 88% of their sales goals for the 1.5 years they worked as a year-round intern for ABC Insurance Company.

Or, for someone interviewing as a recruiter for a specific industry, that person can brag that every month, without fail, they recruited over 99% of their assigned positions the entire 5 years working for the agency.

Can you begin to see how you can brag with metrics? You are, in essence, celebrating your success and victories in the presence of your interviewer. This is a special moment in which you share your true self and the amount of effort and energy you pour into something you are passionate about. You are also showcasing your talents, gifts, and positivity.

If you are in college with little experience but have played sports, you can brag about how you led your team to victory with specific examples of helping your team improve. You can say, "As a captain on my team, I helped my team win 20% more games in my junior and senior years than they had averaged over the past 20 years (this shows you are an effective team leader).

If you are just out of high school and did not lead a team, but you contributed to the community as a volunteer, that counts too. You can say, "While I was in high school, I volunteered 20 hours each week to tutor and mentor K-6 people at the local community center (this shows you are community minded and giving of your time, talent, and energy).

Making a list of metrics with accomplishments can include awards, unique activities, volunteer efforts, class projects, team involvements, initiatives taken, leadership roles,

and recognitions. They all count and can show the interviewers how much they can contribute when you join their team!

>>> (Optional) You can go to the online course workbook. and complete the exercise: How Do You Measure Up? [This is part of the online course Module 3 How do you measure up? Your job performance metrics.](#)

Now that you have your list of accomplishments with metrics, you are ready for what comes next.

## **Celebrate accomplishments**

The awards you won, initiatives taken, and their outcomes are examples of acknowledging and celebrating your accomplishments. They are unique activities that speak volumes of who you are as a person and the skills you have acquired.

Class projects while in high school and college count too. They show initiative and drive, two major components of innovation. A company thrives when its employees have and apply innovative skills. It also demonstrates your team membership experience, and if you led that team, it also demonstrates your leadership skills.

In case you are not convinced that this celebration has any value to your job seeking, we invite you to see this list of career skills employers want their employees to possess as found in a survey prepared by NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers):

<b>ATTRIBUTE</b>	<b>% OF RESPONDENTS SEEKING FOR CLASS OF 2022</b>	<b>% OF RESPONDENTS SEEKING FOR CLASS OF 2021</b>
<b>Problem-solving skills</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>79.0%</b>
<b>Analytical/quantitative skills</b>	<b>78.6%</b>	<b>76.1%</b>
<b>Ability to work in a team</b>	<b>76.3%</b>	<b>81.0%</b>
<b>Communication skills (written)</b>	<b>73.3%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>72.5%</b>	<b>67.8%</b>

<b>Strong work ethic</b>	<b>71.0%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>
<b>Technical skills</b>	<b>64.9%</b>	<b>67.8%</b>
<b>Flexibility/adaptability</b>	<b>63.4%</b>	<b>65.9%</b>
<b>Detail-oriented</b>	<b>62.6%</b>	<b>56.1%</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>67.8%</b>
<b>Communication skills (verbal)</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>73.2%</b>
<b>Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)</b>	<b>56.5%</b>	<b>57.6%</b>

Can you now appreciate why celebrating your accomplishments acts as a means for your employer to see your skills and get a taste of the potential value you bring to their team?

### **Perseverance demonstrated**

Taking a deeper dive into demonstrating these accomplishments, you can appreciate the attitude and fortitude it takes to go from concept to completion. Marcel Schwantes, Contributor for Inc.com, says 8% of people actually accomplish their goals.<sup>1</sup> According to the blog: Project Management Statistics: Trends and Common Mistakes in 2022, 70% of projects go uncompleted.<sup>2</sup> If company projects never make it to the finish line, money and time are lost. When they see a job seeker with a track record of accomplishments, they see someone who will work on a team and get things done.

Someone who demonstrates perseverance also demonstrates sticktoitiveness, focus, attention, and attentiveness, someone who has what it takes to get the job done and done well. If an employer is seeking someone like you, why wouldn't they be eager to meet you and schedule an interview?

<sup>1</sup> [Science Says Only 8 Percent of People Actually Achieve Their Goals. Here Are 7 Things They Do Differently | Inc.com](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://teamstage.io/project-management-statistics/>

## Chapter summary

- You need to know and appreciate your self-worth and the value you bring to an employer.
- See all that you have accomplished and be proud to share this with a potential employer.
- Develop the strategy and stories that best fit your uniqueness, capabilities, and career path.
- See, share, and celebrate your achievements because they demonstrate your character and characteristics that attract your employer to you.

### TL;DR AI ChatBot/ChatGPT Question:

#### The Question:

How do I best develop soft skills?

#### The AI Response:

1. Practice active listening.
2. Take on responsibilities outside of your comfort zone.
3. Work on communication and presentation skills.
4. Take part in team-building activities.
5. Develop empathy and understanding of others.
6. Develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
7. Develop positive self-talk.
8. Be adaptable and open to change.
9. Develop your self-awareness.
10. Take time to practice self-care.

#### Author's Comment on AI Response:

Soft Skills, what I prefer to call Success Skills (nothing soft about them!), are key to succeeding along your chosen path. Developing these skills will aid you in your personal and professional journey so that you will be ready and able to take advantage of opportunities as they come your way. And with these skills, more opportunities WILL come your way! An organization worth exploring that covers a majority of the ChatGPT attributes listed is [www.Toastmasters.org](http://www.Toastmasters.org). Don't forget, the journey is the reward. You also want your LinkedIn profile and resume, as it reflects your personal brand, to demonstrate your active engagement and successes in pursuing your growth and development.

