



## Stories About You - At Your Best

**GOAL:** To build stories around your successful experiences that can be woven into the narrative of conversations and interviews that are part of the job search process. These stories will represent the skills, experiences and personal traits that establish you as the ideal candidate for a new role.

To complete this exercise, you'll want to first take a few minutes to consider various "high point" experiences or projects you've completed that stand out in your mind - work, volunteer, or personal. They should represent you, at your best. I recommend a minimum of three stories, while 5-7 is ideal.

Each experience, or story, should:

1. Feel good as you describe it. It's something that makes you proud and is an accomplishment.
2. Have a clear beginning and end. In other words, it started at a specific time, and then it ended. You are not describing a day-to-day work experience. Rather, you might choose a short project, or an assignment within a work experience.
3. Allow you describe specific skills and characteristics that contributed to your success.

Here are two examples of what this might look like:

### ***Example #1***

**The Employer** (if applicable): Blue Cross/Blue Shield

**My Role/Title:** Customer Success Manager

**Brief Description:** After training new customer service reps (CSRs) for six months, I noticed that they could benefit from more current examples of how to handle difficult customers. While our training materials were well-written, we had no video or audio to help the examples come to life. I thought creating some videos illustrating how to deal with conflict would be helpful, and although I wasn't sure I'd get support, I asked my boss what she thought of the idea. She liked it and encouraged me but made it clear I had to get my regular work done too. So, I invited a few of my colleagues to work with me. Together, the team identified three difficult scenarios to capture and add to our training program. Not only was this tons of fun, the new trainees reacted very well to the videos



and they were rated highly for their initial performance when handling difficult customers. Splitting the responsibilities among us also made it easier for me to stay on top of my regular job.

**Example #2**

**The Employer** (if applicable): None/Me

**My Role/Title:** Throwing my parent's a 40th anniversary party

**Brief Description:** I decided to do this with my siblings. We each took on a part of the job. My responsibilities were to locate a suitable venue for the party and engage a caterer. I did a lot of online research, consulted with people I trusted, and personally visited three venues. I also checked out four caterers. In order to make a good decision for all of us, I made sure all the siblings were aligned on budget and what the expectations of the food and the place were. That gave me the confidence to make the final decisions and negotiate the contracts. The event was a great success and everyone raved about it.

Now, beginning on the following page, identify at least 3 of your own achievements. They can be at work, or in a volunteer or personality capacity, and write a brief narrative of what you did, the steps you took, any challenges you faced, and describe the outcome.

After that, you'll go through the process of identifying the skills and traits that you relied upon, and finally, you will sort through the skills and traits in terms of your preferences for work.



## STEP 1: MY "HIGH POINT" EXPERIENCES

### EXPERIENCE #1

The Employer (if applicable):

My Role/Title:

Brief Description:

### EXPERIENCE #2

The Employer (if applicable):

My Role/Title:

Brief Description:

### EXPERIENCE #3

The Employer (if applicable):

My Role/Title:

Brief Description:



## STEP 2: MY SKILLS AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

(a.k.a. What I can do and how I show up...)

Now, you're going to take a closer look at each experience and identify the **skills and personal characteristics** you used to accomplish each of the experiences you described. Think of your skills as what you can do, and your characteristics/traits as who you are. Continuing with the Blue Cross/Blue Shield example, here's what that might look like:

Employer: BC/BS

My Role/Title: Customer Success Manager

### Skills I Used:

- Innovation
- Problem solving
- Communication skills
- Presentations
- Conflict resolution skills
- Project management
- Team-building

### Personal Characteristics Required:

- Creativity
- Courage
- Persistence
- Patience
- Attentiveness
- Likeability

Using the table on the following page, make this list for each experience you identified. The objective is to get as complete a list as possible of the skills and characteristics you can offer potential employers, partners, and clients.

Begin your list using the table on the next page.





### STEP 3: WHAT I ENJOY

Now, take a look back at each skill and characteristic in the previous table and follow these steps:

**STEP 1: Put a star (\*) next to each skill you enjoyed and next to each characteristic that you displayed comfortably.** (For example, being a teacher requires the characteristic of patience. Only put a star next to patience if you displayed patience consistently and with relative ease.)

**STEP 2: Put a check mark next to those skills and characteristics you were good at.**

**STEP 3: Look at all of the skills and characteristics again and put a line through each skill you really disliked,** even if you were good at it.

**STEP 4: Put a line through each characteristic that gave you trouble.**

When you're done, list every skill and characteristic that has a star next to in the table below.

Job Skills I Enjoy	Job Skills I Do Well	My Work Characteristics

Together, the process you just completed should give you a good idea of the types of skills you'd enjoy using at work, and the personal characteristics you have to offer an employer. And you should have a nice start on a list of things you do well.



You will also identify, for your own knowledge, the characteristics and skills you may need to work on regardless of the job you want. It's also not uncommon to find a few things you are good at, but really don't like much - it happens!

Before we move on, take a look at each of the three lists on the previous page. Is there anything missing? Add it now, and be sure to note where you demonstrated that skill or characteristic. For example, maybe you didn't demonstrate your strong command of Spanish in any of the experiences above, but you are bi-lingual. That's a skill you should list. Another example might be writing, maybe you have a personal blog and enjoy writing. Or you have other hobbies that demonstrate a specific skill. Add those to your list above.