

Sophisticated strategies and proven techniques to enhance your life through work

S-T-A-R-S Story Template

<p>Describe the scope or problem</p> <p>S (Scope)</p>	
<p>Explain the task ... what was your challenge and / or why it was so important</p> <p>T (Task)</p>	
<p>List the specific actions to show you how you resolved the problem</p> <p>A (Action)</p>	
<p>What was the result or accomplishment and what were the benefits? Can the result be quantified or qualified?</p> <p>R (Result)</p>	
<p>Why did it matter? What's the 'So what?' in the story? What skills were you using? What traits and strengths did you employ?</p> <p>S (Significance)</p>	

BE A BETTER STORYTELLER

The reality in today's job market is that you need to be able to describe **who you are in terms of where you add value** –you have to be a storyteller.

As Kristie Hedges, author of *Executive Presence* says, “Stories grab us ... shared stories accelerate interpersonal connection. Learning to tell stories to capture, direct and sustain the attention of others is a key leadership skill.”

She goes on to talk about how important it is to write down your stories, using a strong structure, and having clarity about important points.

Starting with your STARS Stories, we're now going to take this exercise to the next level. Our goal is to **make you a 'better storyteller.'**

This exercise will help with two important things. First, determining your FOCUS by identifying patterns of where you're at your best. Secondly, painting a picture of the audience who most needs and would want what you have to offer.

The truth is, when reflecting on experiences, we often focus on the details of the experiences rather than the patterns. To make an analogy, it's like describing the wheat stalk from the perspective of standing in the middle of the field.

You need to step back to get a broader focal point. Our goal is to help you describe the patterns in the **crop circles**, which you can't do when you're standing in the middle of the wheat field.

The point is to identify **patterns** in your experience by capturing them in writing so you have data to analyze.

To stick with the analogy, identifying those patterns will help you better manage how you farm.

Identifying Patterns in your Irrepressible Skills Stories

Once you have your stories in writing, step out of the wheat field, and review them objectively – what are the **crop circles**.

As we've said, this process is designed to help you identify where you're at your best and to start to paint a picture of the audience who needs and wants what you offer.

One of the simplest ways to accomplish that is to look at your history. Where do you thrive or lose yourself in your efforts? In other words, on what activities do you look up and realize that hours have passed and you've not noticed?

Through the next part of this exercise, our goal is to give you a broader focal point and help you identify those patterns. It's important to complete these next steps as thoroughly as you can.

TIP

Once, we worked with 2 sales executives with similar backgrounds (level, industry, size organization, etc.) who both reported they wanted to develop people in their next role.

And they were both right. Not only was it a strength for each of them, but for each of them, it was their particular sweet spot.

However, when the clients went through the exercises that follow, they each reached different conclusions.

One reported that he wanted to train the new sales force of an organization, because that would create the foundation going forward for the company.

The other reported that he wanted to take folks who were already pretty good at their jobs and develop them into super-stars and get them promoted.

*Each is an example of developing people, but are **differently nuanced**.*

If either of them found themselves in a role that was like the other wanted, they could certainly do it and probably be successful at it. But they wouldn't be as satisfied as they would be if they were in the role they identified that would play to their strengths.

Step One

Looking at the stories you've created, organize them in order of your preference (starting with #1, 2, and so forth). Even if you liked all the experiences, the first story should be your favorite or the one you'd **replicate** given the chance.

The last stories on your list might represent those experiences that although you may have enjoyed them when you did them, your instincts either say "I've **been there, done that**" or they were great, but not as good as the other experiences.

Once you have ranked your stories, note any similarities in the top 3 stories; the same with the final 3 stories. As another option, consider contrasting them.

What patterns exist in terms of similarities? Contrast?

Step Two

Relative to the Career Management Diagnostic, ask yourself the following questions looking for patterns where applicable. Note, sometimes your answers will have significance, other times they won't.

Related to Question #1: What do I WANT to do, because where I'm at my best is where I'm most marketable?

- Were you **FIXING / REPAIRING** a problem or business pain? Helping to **AVOID** a problem or business pain? Or, were you helping to reach an **ASPIRATIONAL GOAL**? In other words, helping to reach an articulated vision? (Typically, we do all 3, but one may be more evident than the other.)
- What strengths were present? Are these examples of experiences where you lost yourself in your work and even lost track of time?
- Are there aspects of your work to which you were drawn that speak to your passions and interests (i.e. things that you can talk about for hours)?
- Can you learn from the negative aspect(s) of your stories? In other words, are there aspects of your stories that made you angry / annoyed that can help you articulate what you'd want instead?
- Are there themes in terms of:
 - The process you used?
 - The functional expertise you offered?
 - The outcomes or impact you delivered?
 - The reason you were consistently selected over other colleagues / team members?
- What impact did your efforts have on the organization / department / function / project? Was it the same contribution? Was it the same problem you were tasked with solving?

When you're at your best, what patterns exist? Note them here.

Related to Question #2: How will my PERSONAL PRIORITIES impact my next step?

- What were the environmental factors (e.g. culture) of the organization / business unit / function / department / team / taskforce? Is that important? Note, the more completely you can pinpoint the environmental factors, the better.
- Are there patterns that speak to the leadership attitude of the organization? In other words, are they collaborative? Open to transformation? Focus on the means to end, rather than just the end result?
- What skills / expertise were you using? Does it represent what you like best about yourself?
- Which of your personal traits were evident? Are they consistent with the adjectives you'd use to describe yourself?

What are your top priorities? Note them here.

Related to Question #3: Who NEEDS what I have?

- In what function, role, or capacity were you serving? What was the structure (i.e. matrixed or traditional?) Are those factors important?
- In what industry were you working? Is that important?
- Where was the organization in its organizational lifecycle? Startup? Mature? Turnaround? Is that important?
- What was the size of the organization? Is that important?
- What was the organizational problem you were helping to solve? What value were you offering? In other words, what were you paid to deliver?

What are the patterns relative to each of these factors:

Industry:	
Function:	
Product / Services / Therapeutic Areas:	
Size (e.g. Budget / Beds / Revenue)	
Size (Employees):	
Lifecycle:	
Leadership Attitude / Philosophy:	

Step Three

Do another quick review of the top 3 stories you've written and apply what we call the "Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How" test.

The goal of this is to examine your experiences from another perspective. Some of these might not be important to you, but it would be helpful to explore.

- With whom were you doing this? Who were the people? What were their qualifications? Personalities? Values? Etc.
- What specifically were you doing? And, for what purpose?
- Where were you doing it? Did the location matter? For instance, consider the geographic location or where within the organization you were working (headquarters, division, hospital, clinic, etc.).

- When were you doing it? Where were you in your career? Did the timing matter?
- Why were you doing it and for what purpose? Was it tied to the organizational mission?
- How were you doing it?

The answers to these questions may not matter. If that's the case, it's okay. If they do matter, they're offering important insight into the nuances of what will create greater levels of satisfaction for you - your personal *Flourish Factor*.

Note your observations in the space below.

Identifying In-Demand Skills

Skill /skil/

Is defined as the ability to do something well; expertise.

Synonyms: expertise, skillfulness, mastery, facility, ability, capability, capacity, talent, genius, adeptness, aptitude, deftness, competence, accomplishment, proficiency, know-how

Source: Dictionary.com

As great as it is to know what you ideally want to do, that can't happen in a vacuum. You need to build a composite profile of the skills that are in-demand in the marketplace. Taking into account the 4-options we discussed earlier, this is your reality-check.

This is the work you're doing to answer the "Who needs what I have?" question. The more clearly you can identify your audience, the easier it is to develop a message to hook them into wanting a conversation with you.

EXAMPLE:

If you decided as part of (Question #1: What do I want to do?) that you are, in your heart of hearts, **Cinnamon Rice Chex Cereal**.

But, when you do this step, you discover the demand in your market is too small to help you realistically address your personal priorities (i.e. Question #2: How will my personal priorities impact my next step?).

In that case, you have a decision to make, do you want to stay in that narrowly defined niche where it may take longer to find your next step? Or, do you want to expand your approach and position yourself more broadly as Rice Chex Cereal, because there is a bigger demand for that.

In identifying In-Demand Skills, leverage technology to help identify the most in-demand skills.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Begin by identifying at least **3 ideal job postings** considering the profession and the industry you are targeting without considering geography. This is a research exercise and current openings in your specific market may not yield the quality of data you need to complete it.
- 2) Sources to use include job boards (e.g. Indeed, LinkedIn, etc.), niche industry job boards or online communities, company websites, and networking.
- 3) Remove headers and company information from the job descriptions. This step is important as you're trying to identify the most commonly cited skills and experience, not the company.
- 4) Paste the collective job descriptions into a word cloud site such as www.wordsift.org and www.tagcrowd.com.
- 5) Notice that you can see the most frequently used keywords in context using this tool.

- 6) Identify the top 10 most repeated keywords in the word cloud. Again, make sure you're focusing on functional areas of expertise and skills, not adjectives or characteristics.

TIP

How do you know it's an ideal job posting? Although not scientific, here is a "good rule of thumb."

Consider color coding the requirements, such as:

GREEN - *I've got the skill and can do what they need*

YELLOW - *I've got the skill but perhaps it's rusty or not used in the same environment / function*

RED - *I don't have the skill or maybe I don't even know what it is*

Now evaluate how much green is on the page versus how much red?

If the majority of the posting isn't green, it's not likely an ideal posting.

What Are Your Workplace Priorities?

When considering your personal priorities, it's important to have a holistic perspective of what you need and / or want from your next role.

The following exercise is designed to prompt you to dig into a deeper level of granularity when considering those priorities.

In consideration of efficiencies, this is also information that could be used later to evaluate and negotiate opportunities.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Place a Checkmark ✓ next to all items that you would consider **Nice-to-Have**.
- 2) Next, put a line through the ✓ (creating an **X**) identifying the items that you would you consider **Must-Haves**.
- 3) Circle any **Deal-Breakers**.

Make note of the most critical "Must-Haves" and "Deal-Breakers" so you can use the information to evaluate options.

What are Your Workplace Priorities?

Company Focus	Focus of Position	Compensation
<input type="checkbox"/> Company Size	<input type="checkbox"/> Matches Brand / Focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Base Salary
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales Volume	<input type="checkbox"/> Duties / Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Bonus (Guaranteed / Potential)
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Incentive
<input type="checkbox"/> Public / Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Independence	<input type="checkbox"/> Profit sharing
<input type="checkbox"/> Profit / Non-Profit	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenge	<input type="checkbox"/> Performance Evaluations
<input type="checkbox"/> National / Global Footprint	<input type="checkbox"/> High Risk / Low Risk	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Compensation
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic	<input type="checkbox"/> Job Visibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare Benefits
<input type="checkbox"/> Product / Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Reporting Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Vision / Dental / HSA
<input type="checkbox"/> Centralized / Decentralized	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Line Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance (Life, Disability STD / LTD)
<input type="checkbox"/> Division / Subdivision	<input type="checkbox"/> Dotted Line Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> D&O Insurance
<input type="checkbox"/> Management Depth	<input type="checkbox"/> Level of Travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Retirement / Pension Plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Condition	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional Vacation
<input type="checkbox"/> Political Climate	<input type="checkbox"/> Title Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Car / Car Allowance
<input type="checkbox"/> Company Growth History	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Company Growth Trajectory	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Club Membership
<input type="checkbox"/> Profitability	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Future Growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Turnaround Options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tax Assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> Stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Expense Account
<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability to Acquisition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Dues
<input type="checkbox"/> Reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology / Tools
<input type="checkbox"/> Market Dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition Assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Analyzing In-Demand Skills

DIRECTIONS:

- 1) Apply the data from the *ideal job descriptions* portion of this exercise, and using a table, like the one that follows, list out the requirements from each posting -- side-by-side.
- 2) Examine what knowledge, skills, expertise, and credentials the job market is seeking in roles you would define as ideal. Target the following information:

Job Titles - what is the market calling the role you're targeting?

For instance, if your last job title was "Director of Purchasing," but all the postings you've listed are calling it "Director of Procurement" OR "Director of Global Strategic Sourcing" (which is purchasing), what does that tell you?

Spoiler alert: you need to use the new industry language or risk being perceived by your audience as someone who is out of touch.

Requirements* - what knowledge, skills, abilities, expertise, and credentials are employers seeking in their ideal candidates?

When listing out the job postings side-by-side, are there patterns in what they're seeking? For example, if you're a Project Manager, is your research showing that the majority of postings require a PMP certification?

** As a word of caution, you might see language that reflects characteristics or traits, such as team player, organized, etc. Although they're important, they're not relevant in this exercise.*

In what sequence are the primary requirements ordered? Sequence matters. The requirements that are consistently listed at the top of postings generally represent those that are most in-demand. This is your reality-check as you compare yourself to the actual needs of the marketplace.

Analyzing In-Demand Skills			
	Ideal Posting #1	Ideal Posting #2	Ideal Posting #3
1) Title			
2) List Knowledge			
3) Skills / Expertise			
4) Requirements			
5) Credentials			

Another option for tracking this data is to build a simple spreadsheet.

List the top 10 to 12 In-Demand Skills you have identified below:

Now that you've identified the In-Demand Skills, **which do you possess?**