

WORKSHEET:

A Problem-Action-Result (PAR) Story

PAR **STORIES** are especially effective in resumes, cover letters, and proposals. This two-page, four-question worksheet will help you write two PAR stories in a clear, chronological format that showcases your problem-solving skills. Print this handout to write your answers onto, or type your answers into a word processor.

First, what kinds of **PROBLEMS** come up most often in the work you do? Spell out these problems so that a reader could understand them easily. (E.g., “Some customers feel dissatisfied about wait times” or “My manager needs someone to prepare weekly updates on the firm’s projects in language that all our employees can understand.”)

Next, what’s **ONE IMPORTANT WAY YOUR OWN WORK HAS HELPED OTHER PEOPLE** — either one time, or more often? These “other people” could be a colleague, a customer, or a client — whoever benefits most from the work you do. Answer three questions for your PAR story:

1. **PROBLEM.** What kinds of problems or needs do these people have?
2. **ACTION.** What steps do you take to help them out?
3. **RESULTS.** And how are things better for them when you’re successful?

What kinds of **ACTIONS** do you take most often in your work? Write out the main actions as a list.

Now apply the questions from the last page to larger teams that you work with, and take some notes for a group PAR story. (If you don't work with others, consider writing out a second PAR story now about your solo work.)

1. **PROBLEM.** First, name some customers or clients that your team, your department, or your organization works with or works for. What kinds of professional difficulties or needs do these people have?
2. **ACTION.** What steps does your team take to help them out?
3. **RESULTS.** And how are things better for them when you're successful?

Being able to articulate professional problems, actions, and results can help you communicate successfully in a variety of documents:

- **A RESUME AND COVER LETTER** to explain how you're ready to contribute to a hiring organization's success
- **A PROPOSAL** to bring in new projects by spelling out the benefits that other see when they engage you
- **THE ABOUT US SECTION OF A WEBSITE**, to help the public understand the value of your work