***Identify Your Strengths Through Your Experiences***

**In a nutshell: What have you done, and what did it take? Log these experiences!  
Identifying the strengths you’ve demonstrated, in any context, helps you articulate them in context.**

Brainstorm quick notes into this format, to record your experiences, accomplishments, and the skills, qualities, and expertise you demonstrated. Use those in your resumes and cover letters, and as concise **P.A.R.**(T.)\* stories for behavioral interview questions. *(See examples on next page.)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **EXPERIENCES**  **Jobs/Projects/Initiatives/Volunteering**  What responsibilities have I had?  *Any work or life experience can be mined for strengths and competencies that are transferrable to specific jobs/careers.* | **Accomplishments/Key learnings**  What challenges did I meet?  What problems did I solve?  What did I create/improve? | **Skills/Expertise/Personal qualities**  What did it take? |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**\*P. A. R. (T):** Format recruiters expect in response to behavioral interview questions (e.g., “Tell me about a time when you dealt with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ challenge.”). P.A.R. (T.) = **Problem**, **Action**, **Result**, Takeaway (what you learned from the experience - optional). Answers should be concise, with focus on the Action and Result components.

***Identify Your Strengths Through Your Experiences: Examples*** *Notice that you may identify many strengths from a single experience*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **EXPERIENCES**  **Jobs/Projects/Initiatives/Volunteering**  What responsibilities have I had? | **Skills/Expertise/Personal qualities**  What did it take? | **Accomplishments/Key Learnings**  What challenges did I meet?  What problems did I solve?  What did I create/improve? |
| **Project Lead** | * Leadership * Organization * Initiative and resourcefulness to improve system * Data analysis * Successful project management | * Developed new system integrating all team data. * Coached team in consensus skills, resulting in improved solutions. * Completed project under budget. |
| **Server, restaurant** | * Leadership in face-paced environment * Ability to generate results beyond expectations * Customer focus * Problem solving * Resourceful, quick on my feet | * Promoted teamwork in a fast-paced restaurant while exceeding sales for ten consecutive weeks. * Maintained large customer base through excellent service. |
| [Next job/project] |  |  |
| [Next job/project] |  |  |
| **Major life/work challenges** | **Skills/Expertise/Personal qualities** | **Accomplishments** |
| **Caretaker** for disabled sibling while in school full time | * Steady commitment * Planning and organizational skills * Resourcefulness, Multitasking * Crisis management * Courage & Caring * Persistent/creative problem solving | * Successfully completed BS degree * Currently balancing school/life during graduate school. * Researched and coordinated care options from multiple agencies. * Managed healthcare crises with proactive planning and coordination. |
| [Next challenge] |  |  |
| [Next challenge] |  |  |

*The above examples indicate the wealth of valuable transferable skills you have demonstrated in a variety of experience: in your highly technical academic programs, your professional work, and your life experiences. It is all worth mining for skills and qualities, and expertise you have demonstrated, that can inform your CVs and resumes, cover letters, interviews, and negotiations.*