



## Responsibilities vs. Accomplishments on Your Resume



Regardless of how many times it's been said, I'm not 100% certain everyone understands the true difference between an accomplishment and a responsibility. I think it's safe to say that most people understand they want to showcase their unique contributions, but when it comes down to it, identifying them is a challenge.

So I thought it would be helpful to isolate some differences between responsibilities and accomplishments, while also highlighting steps to take to turn your duties into winning statements that impress your readers.

**==> What's the difference between a responsibility and an accomplishment? Does it matter?**

Think of a responsibility as the bare minimum requirement when it comes to a job description.

A responsibility at a job is not a strength. It describes the position first and foremost, not who you are or whether you are able to perform well.

\* An accomplishment describes how well you execute a skill/function.

Accomplishments vary from person to person in the same role. Responsibilities generally do not.

If you are trying to cut through a tough job market, including the same list of responsibilities that everyone in similar positions have in their own resume does you no good. Highlighting accomplishments in place of responsibilities matters because you are communicating the quality of work you do, not merely the bare minimum requirements for the role.

**==> Do readers of my resume want to know what I did for my previous employers?**

Yes and no.

Keep in mind, when recruiters and hiring managers read your former titles and company names, they have a strong idea of what you did for each of these employers by that context alone. Repeating your job descriptions verbatim is redundant and a waste of resume space.

What **recruiters and hiring managers want to know is something new. How did you take the basic duties of the job and turn them into valued accomplishments for an organization?** \*

2 people can have the exact same responsibilities. 1 person may be a top performer, the other on the verge of termination. If a resume is focused on responsibilities, there will be very little difference between these 2 people. Their duties are the same.

What is NOT the same is the way they perform their work and this is at the heart of what we want to communicate on a resume.

==> **How can I turn my responsibilities into impressive accomplishments on a resume?**

Perform a true self-assessment of your work by asking yourself hard-hitting questions. Take each aspect of your job and analyze it. Ask yourself:

- 1) **What problem did I solve here?**
- 2) **How did I make this process more efficient?** More accurate?
- 3) **Where did I increase productivity?**
- 4) **What challenges did my team face and how did I help?**
- 5) **Where did I take on more work than originally planned?**

Getting answers to these questions for each of your separate duties is the start of showing how your efforts are different from your colleagues. Think about it, **no one's answers are going to be exactly the same as yours.** Suddenly you are at the start of a completely unique resume that can't be honestly duplicated. After you have the above responses, take it 1 extra step:

\* **DEFINE the benefit/value for your employer/manager/client/customer.**

Where possible, in every situation, **quantify the outcome achieved or the impact on the organization.**

**Numbers always impress and clarify** the extent of which you contributed value. This is the best way of turning a mundane statement about a job duty into a valuable piece of information, giving your reader context and measured importance of your actions. With these steps, you can shift the perception of your capabilities and change the trajectory of your job search. Designing a one-of-a-kind document, you stand out, you're unique, and you've begun to establish your own personal brand.

*Kimberly Sernel is a CPA, CPRW, and the Lead Writer & Director of Operations at Horizon Career Solutions. She brings unique insight to resume and LinkedIn profile writing, with almost 10 years in corporate finance, audit, and accounting and roles as a hiring manager. With a collaborative style, she creates confidence-building/results-generating documents that help job seekers achieve their career objectives.*