SAR Statements Made Easy

Some people are feeling a bit confused about SAR statements. What are they for? How do I write one? Is there some standard format I should know about? Should they be long? Short?

This document is meant to address some of the basic questions about them, and to guide you in producing meaningful SAR statement for future performance evaluations.

What is a SAR Statement?

A SAR (Situation – Action – Response) Statement is a simple tool designed to give you, the employee, more input into the evaluation process. The SAR Statement is an opportunity for you to present your supervisor with clear, documented evidence of superior job performance. Since no one knows as well as you do the challenges that you face, and obstacles that you overcome, in your day-to-day work, it makes sense that you are the one best qualified to present the facts about your performance to your supervisor.

What does a SAR Statement consist of?

A properly-written SAR statement consists of **three components**, all sharing **one important quality**.

The three components of a SAR Statement are:

Situation: A description of the situation or circumstances you are faced with at work. This could be a problem you confronted, a challenge you were given, a standard to which you are held, or a goal which you needed to achieve. <u>This is what needed to be dealt with.</u>

Action: A description of the actions you undertook in order to solve the problem, rise to the challenge, meet the standard, or achieve the goal. <u>This is how you dealt with it.</u>

Result: A description of the results of your efforts. Here you state how you solved the problem, met or exceeded the standard, or achieved the goal. <u>This is the result you achieved through your actions.</u>

The one quality that all components of a SAR Statement must share is:

> **Detail:** This means you must include pertinent dates, times, names, places, quantities or qualities that demonstrate the factuality of what is being stated. <u>This is where we are precise about who, what, where, when, why, or how the events being described occurred.</u>

Is there some special format I should use?

Not really. You might choose to write your statement as a single paragraph for each event you're describing (*See example 1*). Or you can choose to use a tabular format, with separate columns for the Situation, the Action, and the Response (*See example 2*). We have attached a sample table at the end of this document for those who choose to use this format. But the format is of less importance than the content, which needs to match the instructions listed above.

This all seems fine for people with many diverse job functions. But in my position, I perform repetitive tasks each day, with little variation. How am I supposed to make that fit into a SAR Statement?

Regardless of the work you do, with a little creativity you can illustrate your successes in a SAR format. The key is to learn to be specific, and to "quantify" your routine in meaningful ways. By "quantify", we simply mean "measure in some concrete fashion."

Consider the following possibilities:

- What standards are you held to in your work? Is there an error rate which you must exceed? A unit measurement of your production each day? A timeline in which certain tasks must be completed by set deadlines?

- Are there unique areas with which you deal? Are you called upon to handle irate customers? Are you asked to volunteer to cover for other employees during their absence? Is there a specific area in which you are considered expert, and in which you are sought out for guidance from other staff?

- Did any unusual circumstances occur during the year in which you were involved? Special tasks or assignment? Rushed deadlines? Training of other staff? Changes in procedure that you had to implement?

The reality is that with a little creativity, you can always find some elements appropriate for your SAR Statement.

Examples

Example One: Here are two sample SAR statements that might apply to courtroom clerks, formatted in a paragraph style. The Situation is highlighted in RED, the Action in BLUE, and the Result in GREEN, so you can easily identify the components.

The Durango Facility required assistance with the training of new courtroom clerks. I volunteered to train a new clerk in delinquency proceedings and associated processes. The training began January 24, 2011, and is expected to continue through April 24, 2011. The new clerk will be able to cover delinquency proceedings independent of a trainer upon her return to the Durango Facility.

When a clerk who is scheduled to cover a court calendar calls in ill, other clerks are asked to volunteer to cover the assignment. I volunteered to cover 15 times out of 25 requests. I was able to assume this additional workload without a negative impact on the timeliness of my work.

Example Two: Here are two further examples, but in a tabular format.

Date	Situation	Action	Result
11/11/2010 and throughout the year	Juvenile Court conducts a detained advisory calendar on weekends and holidays which requires the presence of a courtroom clerk. Volunteers are requested to cover this calendar when the weekend clerk has scheduled time off or there is a holiday.	I volunteered to cover the court calendar on Veteran's Day, 11/11/2010. Additionally, I scheduled myself to be the on-call back up clerk for 8 weekend days throughout the year.	This insured that the detained calendar on a weekend or holiday had courtroom clerk coverage.
Jan-Dec 2011	There is an expectation for our unit to meet a quality standard of less than 4 variances per month in regards to issues such as Prepping, Box Audits, and the like.	I exceeded this goal, with no more than 2 variances per month, during each month of the year.	Through this work, I assisted my unit in exceeding our quality standard goals for 2011.

Which format you decide to use is up to you and your supervisor, but if you find the concept confusing the tabular format might help you clearly sort out the different components for each statement.

Please notice the detail evident in the examples. In each of them, we see numbers, percentages, dates, or other measurable criteria being used to specify the ways in which performance standards were met. This is correct. Please <u>avoid</u> using the kind of vague or generalized language you often see on resumes, such as:

- I'm a hard worker
- I always get things done on time
- I have good communication skills
- I have positive relationship with my co-workers

These statements may be true about you. If so, use factual data to demonstrate your hard work, timeliness, communication skills, and positive relationships. Give concrete examples, including measurable data, to support your contention.

How am I supposed to remember all these dates and facts at evaluation time?

You're not! That's why it's vital that you begin keeping records of your accomplishments throughout the year! Neither you nor your supervisor is likely to remember all of your successes come evaluation time. So create a file (the attached table at the end of this document might help) and begin keeping track of your successes. Whenever something of note occurs, or when you meet some standard or performance goal, NOTE IT DOWN! Just write a quick SAR then and there. That way, when evaluation time rolls around, you can simply hand in the document to your supervisor with no further effort required on your part.

Not sure if something should go into a SAR? Err on the side of caution. If it's a success, an achievement, a goal met, or an expectation exceeded, write it down. If your supervisor finds an entry to be unneeded or inappropriate, they can always explain their reasoning to you at evaluation time.

Remember: if you don't take responsibility for your own success, it's unlikely anyone else is going to do it for you.

I still have questions!

Don't sweat it! Just speak to your supervisor, who can offer you guidance. For further assistance, feel free to contact anyone at Training and Staff Development. We're here to help.

Situation – Action – Result Tracking Table			
Date	Situation	Action	Result