

## Ace Your Annual Review

“Provide me input to your annual personnel review” ... These words make people cringe. Writing about yourself, especially a product that ostensibly requires you to brag, is a stressful chore many abhor.

Further exacerbating the situation, you must now conduct a year in review, wondering ... “What the heck did I accomplish.” And, you are probably compiling this under a strict due date – “Input by tomorrow, please.”

Adding to the angst – this product often directly affects your chance for promotion. The coups de grace to this distasteful situation – you are allocated a finite space (sometimes as little as 1,000 characters, including spaces) in which to make your case. Sound familiar?

With the tips below, extracted from my book, “Write to Influence!” ... you can capture powerful input that reflects your valued and noteworthy contributions.

**Record accomplishments as they occur.** This precludes the frantic, last minute retrospective. It also ensures you don’t overlook significant events. Many organizations have Weekly Activity Reports. Contribute regularly; retain your submissions.

**Examine contributions factually.** What did you do? How did you move the ball forward? Pretend you are writing about someone else.

**Capture the “so-what.”** As an Air Force lieutenant, I submitted this input, “Briefed a three-star general.” I viewed surviving that encounter as an accomplishment. My boss disagreed. “What resulted from the briefing?” “Ohhh,” I replied. “He approved our request for additional resources.” Lesson learned! Highlight the actual impact of your contribution.

**Scope the detail.** This lends texture, context, and depth to your case: how many, how soon, accomplished ahead of schedule (by how much), finished under budget (by how much), improved production by what percent. “Salesman of the Month” sounds good but ... even better ... “Salesman of the Month, selected over 95 peers.” Lack of such detail often results in lost opportunity.

**Preserve compliments.** These golden nuggets can be terrific bell ringers in an annual appraisal. Save accolades from bosses and customers and any other positive feedback commending your efforts. Include a quote, if punchy and not too lengthy. For record purposes, identify the source by official title, the date, and the direct quote.



**Maintain a list of awards and other formal recognition.** Time-off bonuses, coins (another type of recognition in many offices), certificates, etc., all count. Justifications submitted for such awards are also valuable. Get a copy!

**Establish an email file.** This is an easy way to capture accolades for future reference.

**Use terms that connote a culling process.** Verbs such as chosen, garnered, selected, and nominated for convey subtle but powerful messages.

**Stand out from the crowd.** Place accomplishments in context. Use differentiators such as one of XXX, chosen over XXX of peers, selected personally by the CEO (this contains two differentiators – personally and CEO).

**Don't inadvertently bury the golden nugget.** Prominently place important information. I once helped a young college graduate rewrite his first resume. The penultimate line, buried in miscellaneous thoughts – Captain of the soccer team for three years. I catapulted it to the opening of the resume and expounded thereupon. Why? This shouts leadership!

In conclusion, dear readers, I ask a favor ... Please share this article with young adults in your lives. Those new to the workforce will also benefit from these practices that served me well throughout my 30-year career in the Air Force. Thank you for helping me help others!

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