STORYTELLING CHEAT SHEET

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When you're telling a story in an interview there are key things to keep in mind. Key points you want to hit with your story that will make it interesting, memorable and relevant to the person you're telling the story to.

This cheat sheet is designed for when you practice your storytelling you're sure that you've added all the necessary ingredients for a successful story.

INGREDIENT 1:

The Basics:

Situation (Setting the stage of the story so people understand what's going on)

Example of setting the stage: I was just asked to take over a troubled project from another employee who had left the company.

Action: (Talking about the action YOU took next)

Example of actions you took: The first thing I did was gather all the relevant information and set a clear outcome for defining the project's success.

Example of another action: (You can mention up to 3 actions but you don't want to make the story too long so keep that in mind)

The next thing I did was talk to each person involved in the project to see 1) What they were working on and 2) Where they were at with it, and I also made sure they felt supported and had what they needed to succeed, as well as confirmed that they were clear on the outcome we were all working towards and clear on the expectations I had of them to contribute to that end goal.

Result: (This is where you talk about the positive result of the story)

This is where you shine, and you get to talk about how you succeeded at something. You always want to tell stories in your interviews that make you shine in the best possible form.

Example of explaining a result: The project was completed successfully and at the end I was recognized by the project team members as being one of the most supportive and organized project managers they'd had the pleasure of working with.

Interesting Features:

This is where you talk about one of the following things:

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This is where you talk about one of the following things:

1. Anything you learned and can apply in future:

   I.E. You learned that not just talking with but really connecting with project team members, is the key to a successful project manager.

2. Things that you applied or used from previous experience:

   I.E. I used the premise of 'Servant Leadership' which I strongly believe in. This philosophy states that you serve the people working for you so that they can do their best work. I consider that my job as a leader.

3. The part you enjoyed most about taking on this challenge:

   I.E. The part that I found I excelled most at was connecting with the team members and really understanding what they needed. OR: The part I really enjoyed was organizing a large amount of moving pieces and seeing how they all came together in the end. (This should be something consistent with your personality) If you're OCD about checklists and details then talk about how you love that part. If you love to coordinate people and support them, then talk about that. Either is a skill that helped you

4. A funny anecdote that was cute, or will make them laugh:

   I.E. The first book I read on the topic, the first thing it said was: "Most office relocations are done by an employee who doesn't know how to do an office move and after the relocation is complete they normally end up in a less responsible position or out of a job". (This is a funny thing because it's the first thing I read in the first book I opened when learning about how to relocate an office, that was coincidence plus fits in well with the rest of my story because it shows how it fueled me to be more prepared) Read the whole story below.

INGREDIENT 2:

Warmth.

From talking to many employers, I've learned that a lot of employers don't hire someone because they are 'too professional' they lack the warmth required to make a connection.

To give your stories a little touch of warmth you can share small personal quirks or details about yourself. Things that are unique to you, that are perhaps a little different but that might make someone laugh or make someone remember or relate to you as a human (not just another drone like applicant).

Little details or quirks I.E.

- For our weekly team meeting I brought in cookies to keep the team motivated
- I actually enjoy ironing my clothes I'm weird like that
- I geek out on reading articles about negotiation better event venue pricing on the weekends
- My brother and I programed an automatic beer dispenser using Java script
- I bought each one of my team members a thoughtful gift (themed action figures) that detailed their strengths after the project was completed
- I think team building is important so we all went out for a celebratory dinner (I think it's really important to make a point of celebrating our successes)

It can be anything positive, thoughtful, pleasant, geeky, nerdy, interesting and unique to how you behaved rather than someone else, the goal is to set yourself apart from the other drones and zombies who they will interview.

INGREDIENT 3:

Keeping the story short and as brief as possible.

There is a fine line here. One of the most common mistakes I see is over explaining, providing too many irrelevant details and not wording the accomplishments strongly enough. Even little accomplishments, and little important things can get easily lost in the story if you're over-explaining of every single irrelevant detail.

Here is an example of my move story. I've used this story several times throughout my career to answer questions like:

- What's your biggest career accomplishment?
- What's something that was challenging that you pulled off?
- Tell me about a time when you part of a failing team?
- Tell me about a time you showed leadership skills?

This one story can be framed to answer many questions highlighting different things in the story for each question.

This example shows a story that is too long with too many unnecessary details.

Pay attention to the highlighted part which is the only part you really need to tell.

MY FIRST OFFICE RELOCATION PROJECT

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE BOLDED PARTS OF THIS STORY. THE REST IS JUST FLUFF AND DOESN'T NEED TO BE INCLUDED WHEN TELLING THIS STORY IN AN INTERVIEW.

My supervisor called me into her office and said that **I was assigned to move the office and I had no experience doing anything like this before,** I was nervous and wasn't sure how to start and how to do a good job, I remember speaking to a few people and they thought it would be easy to do, I listened to a bunch of advice from people and still felt lost, **I proceeded to read a bunch of books myself and consolidate a bunch of checklists from a bunch of different books on office relocation. The first book I read the first thing it said was: "Most office relocations are done by an employee who doesn't know how to do an office move and after the relocation is complete they will normally end up in a less responsible position or out of a job". This book fuelled me to really do my homework to ensure this wouldn't happen to me. I collected about 20+ checklists from the internet and from the relocation books and put them all together into a master checklist.** *(This is the Situation/set the stage part of the story and it also includes an interesting feature right at the beginning)*

With all the moving parts and people involved, I assembled a 'relocation TEAM' which consisted of one person from each department. I scheduled a meeting once/week up until the big day. The relocation team went through the checklist and each department representative took tasks on that made the most sense for them. *(This is the Action part of the story where I talk about what was done)*

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Then moving day happened and there were a few hiccups in the process. The flooring in the new spaces it turns out it wasn't ready yet, so people couldn't actually move anything into the large kitchen area so we had to manage that by informing movers to move items somewhere else instead (and the boxes labelled) Kitchen were re-directed to main conference room. Also people weren't allowed to step on the unfinished wood flooring as it wasn't ready yet, so we had to get those shoe covers and make sure people wore them i IF they were going into the kitchen area.

Other than that, **the move went off very well. No major unforeseen issues! (Thanks to those checklist and all that prep the team had put in).** *(This is the Results part of the story)* I bought some pizza for the movers as a gift because they were being so helpful. One of the movers and I had to exchange phone numbers because we needed to coordinate key exchanges. Then later on in the evening he sent me a text message asking me if I wanted to go for a drink. I said that I think he got the wrong number, and he said no, you're the girl from that we helped move offices today. I didn't know what to do. I thought he was cute but I was married so I couldn't go out with him anyway. I told him thanks but no thanks.

The next day everyone came in and we were also having a company golfing event that Friday after the move so everyone was going to that right after they settled in to find their desks. **When everything was done, I was mentioned by the CEO & was given a beautiful bouquet of flowers for having 'Pulled off a flawless office move'.** *(This is the Results part of the story)*