



Voicing Your Value:

How to Improve Your Impact by Communicating Your Results

By Joelle K. Jay, PhD. & Jan Day Gravel

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Recently I sat across from two of my executive coaching clients – both high-achieving leaders with aspirations to be promoted soon – as they waited for their boss to join us and talk about how to develop their careers.

As we waited for their boss to arrive, I asked them, “What do you do to add value to your company?”

One of them said, “Well, I have an Ivy League education and a very prestigious client list. I have great client relationships, and I’ve gotten feedback that I’m seen as a leader in the organization.”

The other one said, “I just landed a \$3 million client.”

Which one do you think was better positioned for promotion?

These leaders’ answers to the question (“What do you do to add value to your company?”) were both accurate and admirable. But one of them had more impact than the other.

You need to be able to say, clearly and succinctly, what you do to add value to your company, and do so in a way that has immediate impact.

A Skill That’s Rarely Taught

Communicating your impact is a skill you may have never learned. It’s one of those unstated, even unconscious habits that some people naturally develop and others unfortunately miss. The risk is that even if you get great results, if you don’t communicate that impact effectively your contributions can be overlooked or ignored. It’s not up to others to notice your value. You have to be the one to voice it.

This has become even more important now that companies are moving away from traditional performance reviews. It used to be that at least once a year, your boss would sit down with a checklist of competencies, think about your skill set, consider your contributions and hopefully recognize them. Now, many companies have moved to a model of ongoing check-ins between managers and their employees, which puts the ownership for leading the conversation squarely on your shoulders. You have the opportunity to communicate your impact in these meetings, look for new opportunities, or ask for help, mentoring and sponsorship – all great benefits if you’re willing to take the initiative.

But many people don't. One executive I work with sat back, exasperated, after one of these conversations with a leader in her organization. "I asked her what she saw as her next career move and what opportunities she wanted," said the executive. "You know what she said? 'I don't really know. What do you think?' If she wants to move up in her career, she's going to have to do a better job showing how she adds value to this company."

That conversation – and the one I shared earlier with the two leaders who wanted to be promoted – were red flags for me, and I started paying attention to how the talented leaders I knew expressed their value. In too many cases, they didn't do it very well.

Luckily, it's a skill that can be learned.

The One Sentence You Need To Be Able To Tell Your Boss (And Yourself)

In this article, I am going to teach you the one sentence you need to be able to tell your boss (and yourself). It's called your *Concrete, Measurable Result*.

But first, why would it be important to practice this skill?

There are many reasons.

1. **Get clarity.** We live in a changing world, with priorities, deliverables and deadlines flying all around. In this environment, it's easy to lose sight of your goals. Defining your concrete, measurable result will orient you to one most important achievement, help you focus, and ensure you're aligned with your team and the leaders in your organization.
2. **Hold yourself accountable.** Sometimes the problem isn't that you've lost sight of your goals; it's just that you never seem to get to them. Identifying a clear result – and stating it out loud – sets an expectation and will prompt you to take action.
3. **Set your "internal GPS."** Experts in neurolinguistics programming will tell you how powerful your mental self-talk is in achieving results. When you single out the one result you want to deliver and state it clearly to yourself, you engage your subconscious as well as your conscious mind to get you where you want to go. As one of my clients put it, "The things you write down...they happen!"
4. **Communicate your impact.** All of these reasons for identifying your concrete, measurable result are related to achieving your goals, but ultimately you also need to communicate what you've accomplished – neatly, clearly, and with impact.

Remember the conversation I mentioned above in which an executive was exasperated with her direct report's vague answer about her intentions for her career? Imagine if instead of responding to her boss's questions about her career with a vague, "I don't know...", she would have responded with her concrete, measurable result. Like this:

"Well, in the last year I've increased sales in our department by 40%, including expanding into a new region where our company was never represented before. I'd like to be able to take on more of a regional role."

Or this:

“I’m pleased to see that my team has improved productivity by 25% this year, which I’ve calculated has saved the company over \$15,000. I’d like to take on more responsibility this year and grow my ability to lead a bigger team.”

Knowing your concrete measurable result isn’t the only thing you need to advance in your career, of course. You also need commitment, growth, and great results. Nor is advancement the only reason to identify your concrete, measurable result. The goal here is not to impress people or show off. It is simply be clear about what you want to be able to accomplish; accomplish it; and be able to communicate your contribution as a leader.

Defining Your Intentions

Your concrete, measurable result, or CMR, is a statement of one very specific business outcome you want to have achieved in a defined time frame such as six months or a year. You can think of it as a variation on a goal.

- Your *goals* are a statement of what you *want* to achieve.
- Your *concrete, measurable result* is a statement of *what you will have* achieved.

The difference between a goal and a CMR is not simply a matter of verb tense. It’s a way of framing your goal that helps you get more specific and committed to your intended results. In fact, when you achieve it, your CMR actually becomes your real result. Your outcome.

Here are a couple of examples to show you what I mean.

Goal: I really want to grow my business in 2015.

CMR: “As a technical consultant in government sales, I have achieved \$26 million in revenue, resulting in 22% growth for my company.”

Goal: I need to grow my team to increase sales.

CMR: “As a result of my efforts, I have grown my staff from 18 to 34 people resulting in a growth in revenue from \$4 million to \$26 million at the end of 2016.

Goal: I want to develop a new sales strategy.

CMR: “As a result of my efforts, I have developed a new sales model resulting in 45% growth in average deal size, which has resulted in \$20 million in new revenue and more strategic relationships with key customers.”

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Goal: I want to develop more business.

CMR: “As result of building long term strategic relationships with my clients, I have achieved 149% of quota resulting in \$10 million in revenue in 2015.”

It’s important to have goals, but as you can see, goals merely state your plans – what you want to do. Your CMR is a stronger commitment – the outcome you intend to create.

A CMR is more than a communication tool. Developing your CMR is a core leadership competency. As a highly accomplished leader who wants to do well in your career, you always want to have your finger on the pulse of what value you bring to the company and how you’re communicating that with others. It’s important to be able to talk in terms of results and not merely intentions.

With your CMR in place, you can:

- Align to your manager, your team and your direct reports to coordinate efforts
- Develop an action plan to achieve it
- Get support in overcoming the obstacles
- Gain resources to help you get the results
- Stay focused on adding value – not just being busy and getting a lot of things done.

If you want to be viewed as valuable and a contributing member of your organization, you have to have the words to articulate your value. If you can’t explain that value to others, how can you expect them to identify it themselves? Your CMR puts you in control and helps you quantify what you bring to the table.

The process of developing your CMR will help you put your finger on exactly what you want that impact to be.

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Developing a Clear CMR

For a clear CMR, we recommend the following template:

As a result of my efforts,

I have _____

as evidenced by _____

resulting in _____ for my company.

As you can see, there are three parts to a complete CMR.

1. **Describe your efforts.** As you know, your outcomes don't come from wishing and hoping they will happen. They come from your efforts. Put your finger on how you have accomplished your results. That will again focus your attention on the role you play in making them happen – an important part of understanding your value.
2. **Describe the result.** Say, "As a result of my efforts, I have accomplished this." What is it, specifically, you want to achieve?
3. **Quantify your result.** If you really want to drive home your value, for the company and for yourself, try putting some hard numbers to the result. Use metrics: dollars, numbers; figures; percentages. This is where your results become concrete and measurable.

When you communicate your concrete, measurable result, you can expect a very different reaction than I saw in that exasperated executive. Your CMR will land and make sense immediately to the person you are communicating with. You will feel the impact. And so will the others around you.

A Few Tips for Your CMR

Writing a strong CMR can be harder than it looks. Here are a few tips to get you going.

Look for Business Impact

Just as with your goals, you can generate CMRs for any area of your life, from your health and wellness to your work/life balance to your personal relationships. But in a business context, it's important to discipline yourself to see how your personal contributions benefit the company.

- Do you make the company money?

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- Save the company money?
- Make things more efficient or effective?
- Make them run more smoothly?
- Improve the company's standing or reputation?
- Impact other areas of the organization?

How do you add value to your company?

Avoid Jargon

Every company has its own language, and you will be tempted to phrase your CMR in your native business vernacular. But try to avoid it. Compare these identical versions of a CMR.

Before: As a result of my efforts to develop the FY16 OPM, I operationalized programming for SBA in JPAC and achieved 31% ARR growth YOY (124% of target).

After: I redesigned our sales processes, saving our company \$2.5 million.

Provide Context

In the leadership development programs we bring to organizations, we get to see a lot of CMRs, and sometimes it's hard to tell which ones merely capture a result from the ones that reflect an amazing result.

If I tell you, for instance, that as a result of my efforts to improve our sales processes I influenced a sale of \$10,000, are you impressed?

What if I tell you an average sale is \$3,000?

What if I tell you an average sale is \$3 million?

One of the advantages of having a CMR is it gives you the ability to compare your results against the standard, and even to exceed expectations.

Keep It Real

It's important to restate that CMRs are not meant to be a thinly veiled way of bragging. Through your CMR, you should avoid inflating your results, taking credit where it isn't due, or overshadowing others. Your CMR is merely a measure. Setting the bar too high can be discouraging; setting it too low is hardly worth the effort, but misconstruing your value can really backfire. Find the balance between optimistic and realistic expectations.

When it comes to your results, your CMR plays a small but significant part. A CMR can never substitute for dedication, hard work, smart and savvy strategy, a powerful team, and the

exciting experience of big wins at work. But your CMR gives you a way to capture all of it in a single sentence.

Stand in the Future

The trick to getting a powerful CMR is to stand in the future, not the present, and mentally look back at what you want to be able to say you have achieved.

- When you set a goal in January, you think about the year ahead and what you want to do.
- When you set a CMR in January, you put yourself mentally in December, look back over the year, and ask what you will be able to claim as your accomplishment.

It's a subtle yet powerful nuance, and one that can make a big difference in getting a CMR that packs a punch.

What do you want to be able to say you have accomplished? There's power in making that shift in perspective.

How Do You Use Your CMR?

To get the most out of your CMR, try crafting it with a simple process of personal strategic planning.

- What's your vision?
- What are your goals?
- What will be the concrete, measurable result?

Share your answers with your manager, your peers and colleagues, and your team. Get their input. Ask for their support. Tell them your plans.

Listen to how these three leaders expressed their CMRs...

...To Their Team

"This year, I'm very focused on cost efficiency. As a result of our efforts to reduce redundancy in our processes, I want us to be able to offer a product to our customers at the end of the year that's 30% cheaper than anyone else on the market, which will instantly give us greater market share and put our company at number one."

...To Their Managers

"This year, as a result of my efforts to improve in the area of business development, I want to double the size of our existing contracts and add three new contracts. When I can do that, it will have an impact of over \$1 million to the company's bottom line."

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...To Their Peers

“This year, as a result of my efforts to develop as a leader, I want to get clearer on my personal brand and what I bring to our firm. I believe that will help me improve my efforts to be of service to you as my business partners and to our clients, and to contribute to the efforts where I can add the most value.”

Exercise: Q&A for CMRs

Take a shot at developing your CMR. Think about your vision and goals for a moment, then try answering these questions.

1. Who is someone you would like to know about your progress and achievements? Or, who is someone you see as an advocate or sponsor and can help you achieve your career aspirations?
2. Imagine you are meeting with this person one year from now. What do you want to be able to say to them that you have achieved?
3. What would you like to be able to claim, ideally, that would make them proud of your efforts?
4. What would make *you* proud?
5. Imagine yourself describing the efforts you've made to get to that result – the milestones you've crossed, and the changes you've made to make it happen.

Layering in the realities of the future time frame, a real person to communicate with, and the kinds of results that will show your capabilities will help you get to the CMR you want.

When you've drafted your CMR, whether in your mind or in writing, test it:

- Does it have all of the components of the CMR framework?
- Is it realistic, but with enough stretch to be motivating?
- Does it include your efforts as well as the impact?
- Is the impact captured in quantifiable, measurable terms? If not, how could it be?
- Is the CMR jargon-free and easy to understand?

With specificity and brevity, your CMR is the communication tool you need to keep everyone focused – and in the end, to celebrate and communicate what you've achieved.

About the Authors

Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D.

Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker and Author



Joelle K. Jay, Ph. D. is a Principal at the Leadership Research Institute (LRI) specializing in leadership development for senior executives in Fortune 500 companies. She is an executive coach, speaker, and author. She strategizes with business leaders to enhance their performance and maximize business results.

Joelle partners with her clients to retain top talent and cultivate engaged, effective leaders who achieve top performance and business results. She is especially known for her success in the advancement of executive women. She measures her results in terms of productivity, profitability and performance balanced with the wellbeing of individual leaders and a commitment to business with heart.

Joelle's warm and engaging presence has contributed to her popularity as a keynote speaker for leading corporations, professional associations and academic institutions. Her book, *The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of Personal Leadership*, has been endorsed by such luminaries as Marshall Goldsmith, Jim Kouzes, and Stephen Covey. Her award-winning research is featured in university courses on business management around the world.

Joelle earned her Ph.D. with an emphasis on learning and leadership from the University of Washington. In addition, she has a Master's degree from Boston University and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada. She holds a Masters Coach Certification by the International Coach Federation.

Joelle is the chairman of the board for the Nevada Women's Fund as well as an avid skier, enthusiastic traveler, and a perpetual beginner at golf! Joelle and her husband, Tim, live in Nevada with their sons, Jackson and Morgan.

316 California Ave., #334; Reno, NV 89509

775-324-5377

Joelle.Jay@LRI.com

www.LRI.com | www.JoelleJay.com

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Jan Day Gravel

Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker, and Author



Jan Day Gravel is an executive coach and an associate consultant of Leadership Research Institute (LRI). Her passion is to support individuals, organizations, and communities create a path to their desired future and achieve the success they desire. Working with Fortune 500 corporations, not-for-profit organizations as well as local governments and federal agencies such as the FBI, Jan has coached individuals and teams to address management issues and progress towards organizational and leadership excellence.

Jan has over twenty-five years of experience in coaching people to develop their capacity to be better leaders both personally and professionally. Her work in Emergenetics®, how one is born genetically wired with a tendency to think and behave in certain ways, has enabled thousands of individuals to “lead with their brain in mind” and increase not only their capacities but those of their team and organizations to get the results they desire.

Jan earned her Masters of Arts in Conflict Resolution with an emphasis on building effective coalitions from Antioch University. In addition, she has a Leadership Coaching certificate from Georgetown University. Jan holds a Professional Coach Certification from the International Coach Federation.

Jan is a lifetime member of Leadership Arlington (VA) and the National Speakers Association. Passionate about supporting the leadership development of others, she writes a monthly column, the Leading Edge, for the 800 members of the Leadership Arlington community. Jan has also served as a guide on leadership pilgrimages to Egypt and New Mexico. Her last “bucket list” trips were to Machu Pichu and Lake Titicaca between Peru, Bolivia and Havana.

1512 Hampton Hill Circle
McLean, VA 22101
703-827-8727
jan.gravel@lri.com