



# The One Sentence Every Leader Needs to Know

By Jan Day Gravel & Joelle K. Jay, PhD

If you were wildly successful this year, what would you be able to claim as your most impressive result?

Whether you're a CEO; an executive, leader, or manager; an entrepreneur; a successful professional; or just someone who wants to excel in your personal and professional life, knowing the answer to that question may be the best thing you can do for your career right now.



Unfortunately, many people can't answer that question. (Or they simply haven't.) But you can easily learn to produce a short, compelling sentence that gets the attention of the people around you and aligns them to your most important goals.

Why would that be important? Because if you can briefly and brilliantly share your intended results:

- You will enroll others in your vision so they can support it, too.
- You will garner resources and endorsement of your ideas.
- You will feel clear and confident about what you're achieving.
- For all those reasons and more, in the end, you'll get the best outcome of all:
- You'll actually achieve your one most impressive result – the one that matters most to you.

## Capturing Your Commitment: What is Your Concrete, Measurable Result?

Your Concrete, Measurable Result (“CMR”) is a one-sentence description of a specific business outcome you want to be able to say you have achieved.

- Your Goal is a statement of what *you want* to achieve.
- Your CMR is a statement of what *you will have* achieved.

The difference is subtle but significant. The nuances of the CMR are what make it more powerful as a tool to both achieving and communicating your results with impact.



Here are some examples, drawn from the CMRs of a variety of our clients at the Leadership Research Institute.

***CMR on Growing the Business, from a Partner in a Consulting Firm***

Goal: Our goal is to grow our business 30% by December 31st of this year.

CMR: “As a result of my efforts to lead the growth of our firm, we tripled the number and size of our client accounts, resulting in a growth in revenue from \$4 million to \$26 million – our biggest jump ever.”

***CMR on Improving Sales, from an Executive Vice President leading an international sales force:***

Goal: We’re focused on the retention of key customers in a volatile and increasingly competitive market.

CMR: “As a result of building a high performing global leadership team, investing in head count, and developing talent in multiple strategies, my organization drove the 14% year-over-year growth to help reach a record revenue of \$4.39 billion in 2021.”

***CMR on Attracting Talent, from a Chief HR Officer***

Goal: We want to attract the best talent in a competitive time.

CMR: “As a result of my efforts to position our company to attract, engage and retain better talent, I focused on improving client engagement scores by 25%, implemented a more compelling benefits package, and communicated the value of our firm publicly through a strategic PR campaign. We have gone from bleeding talent each year to becoming one of Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work For.”

***CMR on System Transformation, from a COO***

Goal: Our business systems need an overhaul.

CMR: “As a result of finding focus and being more strategic with my time, I reviewed and scaled operational processes, resulting in a 4% retention rate increase and \$750,000 in cost efficiency savings to the business. Where we used to be known as a frustratingly slow business center, now we are simplified and streamlined.”

***Exercise: 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.** 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 and what you did to make it happen. Your attention will be focused 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?

**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; a comparison of where things were and the improvement of where they are now. This is where your results become concrete and measurable. When you communicate your concrete, measurable result, you can expect a very different reaction than if you just share your goals. 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.

An even simpler way to describe a CMR is the “X by Y by Z” formula credited to former Google executive Laszlo Bock: [I have] "accomplished [X] as measured by [Y], by doing [Z]." In other words, “you want to focus on accomplishments -- quantitative results and the impact that you had as a result.”<sup>1</sup>

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

1. Does it have all of the components of the CMR framework?
2. Is it realistic, but with enough stretch to be motivating?
3. Does it include your efforts to make it happen as well as the impact?
4. Is the impact captured in quantifiable, measurable terms? Do we need to give examples of metrics – statistic, percentage of savings, dollar figure, compare and contrast, efficiency, hours save, industry standard? If not, how could it be?
5. 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, while at the same time demonstrating your track record of success.



CMRs develop and evolve in three ways:

*A Good CMR* meets the CMR framework/format. Simply having all of the requisite parts of a CMR creates a compelling way communicate.

*A Better CMR* highlights one specific outcome that “nails it” in terms of getting others to see the value of what you’ve accomplished.

*The Best CMRs* have a “WOW” factor. You get this by identifying the result that makes the biggest difference to the person(s) you are communicating to and highlights the value of your contribution in a powerful and meaningful way. You’ll know you’re there when, after you share your CMR with someone of significance to you, they raise their eyebrows and say, “Wow!

That’s amazing! Tell me more!”

Here are two more example to show you what we mean.

***From a Published Author and International Speaker***

Goal: I want to finish writing a book and grow my speaking presence. CMR: As a result of developing and delivering my first Ted talk:

*Good:* I was selected to join a prestigious speaker’s bureau.

*Better:* I attracted 200,000 Instagram followers and reached a million people in 2022. *Best:* I’m now actually their featured speaker on the Home page of the bureau’s website. (Wow!)

***From an International Non-Profit Organization***

Goal: We are providing clean, lasting water every man, women, and child in Central Africa.

CMR: As a result of implementing our strategic approach to building sustainable water services:

*Good:* We created and maintained 1,800 water points and drilled over 1,000 handpumps.

*Better:* In five years, our impact has grown by 67% with 855,500 people now receiving safe drinking water from community systems.



*Best:* Best of all, the technology improvements we made to achieve will keep people and their community systems self-sustaining for years to come. (Wow!)

### **The One Sentence You Need to be Able to Say**

Now that you're familiar with the concept of CMRs (and are hopefully starting to get ideas of your own), let's revisit the benefits of crafting this essential message.

1. **Get clarity.** We live in a changing world, with constantly shifting priorities, deliverables, and deadlines. In this environment, it's easy to lose sight of your goals. Defining your concrete, measurable result will orient you to the one most important achievement you want to achieve, 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; you just 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 tell us you how powerful our 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 our 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. Once you know the framework you have more tools in your leadership toolkit and you can adapt your results depending upon what is most important to each stakeholder.

Knowing your concrete measurable result isn't the only thing you need to advance your goals, of course. You also need commitment, growth, and great results. The goal here is not to impress people or show off. It is simply to be clear about what you want to accomplish; accomplish it; and be able to communicate your contribution as a leader.

### **When Your CMR is Ready: What Can You Expect?**

After sharing the CMR framework in coaching thousands of leaders, we have seen dramatic improvement in their ability to communicate their value and impact. The results from taking this vital step range from a boost in confidence to promotions and elevated status in their careers.



Joelle K. Jay  
EXECUTIVE COACH, SPEAKER AND AUTHOR

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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.

At the Leadership Research Institute, we are committed helping leaders transform their businesses and their lives. If we can help you or your organization identify CMRs that will lead to success this year, [reach out to us](#). If you'd like more inspiration and encouragement from Joelle, request her free daily series, "[Words To Live By](#)".



**Jan Day Gravel** is a Principal with the Leadership Research Institute (LRI) and a MCC executive coach and leadership development consultant. She has developed leadership programs for Fortune 500 companies and coached thousands of leaders to communicate their results and impact effectively.



[Joelle K. Jay, Ph. D.](#), is a Director with the [Leadership Research Institute](#) and an executive coach specializing in leadership development. She strategizes with business leaders to enhance their performance and maximize business results. Her clients include presidents, vice presidents, and C-level executives in Fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Adobe. She is the author of [The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of Personal Leadership](#) and [The New Advantage: How Women in Leadership can Create Win/Wins for Their Companies and Themselves](#). To connect with Joelle, go to [www.JoelleKJay.com](http://www.JoelleKJay.com) or email [Info@JoelleKJay.com](mailto:Info@JoelleKJay.com).

1 Murphey, Bill. (2019). *Google Recruiters Say Using the X-Y-Z Formula on Your Resume Will Improve Your Odds of Getting Hired at Google* [online]. Inc. Available from: <https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/google-recruiters-say-these-5-resume-tips-including-x-y-z-formula-will-improve-your-odds-of-getting-hired-at-google.html>

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