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Describe your greatest professional achievement and how you were able to add value to your organization. (400 words)

Being able to leave a mark is what makes it worthwhile to get up in the morning. Looking back, it's hard to pick just one thing that makes me most proud, as virtually every position provided a unique opportunity to make a difference.

For instance, I once took initiative to update the security guidelines and electronic document handling procedures for an entire Engineering department at Slant/Fin Corporation. This effort had perhaps the most immediate impact on an organization, drastically cutting down on data loss and significantly increasing everybody's productivity.

On another occasion, I compiled a database of over 5,000 relevant innovative small business research projects and made it available to managers throughout General Dynamics. This strategic initiative allowed many of them to discover promising new product ideas, and should continue to make an impact on our company's bottom line for years to come.

So, what I would like to present here is simply the latest example of how I was able to contribute to my employer's success.

Last February, I received a leadership role on a vendor selection effort for a crucial component of a Navy defense system. In a relatively short period of time, starting with 15 manufacturers and working our way through the bidding process, we were able to narrow the field down to just three serious candidates.

Ironically, following a formal bureaucratic procedure, a preliminary internal decision was made to stay with the original supplier, which once again provided the lowest bid. However, fully convinced that going back to the incumbent would be a grave mistake, I took initiative to write a formal "white paper" on the subject.

After a few sleepless nights and in just three pages of condensed analysis, I presented the numerous technical and financial risks of doing business with the current vendor. Among other concerns, I cited their prior history of cost and scheduling overruns as well as an unacceptably high rate of field failures that we've experienced in the past.

Although initially reluctant, our upper management had to reevaluate the situation. Upon serious consideration, they came to agree with my conclusions and decided to award the contract to a more reputable manufacturer, despite a higher initial cost.

In this case, I acted on principle and was able to reverse a decision that could have potentially cost our company millions of dollars in another recall, not to mention our reputation with the customer.