Optimizing Your Resume with Keywords

There are simple ways to figure out what keywords should go on your resume.

1. Review the Job Posting

The job posting typically tells you the title or position, specific experiences, skills and education desired or required of a candidate. Highlight all these keywords and work them into your resume in context.

2. Job Description

Conduct searches on career or job board websites for job descriptions of the position you are applying for. You will notice common keywords coming from each of the job descriptions that you can also use in context for your resume.

3. Company/Organization Website

Review its website. You will notice there are field or industry specific terms that are commonly used that should also be applied to your resume in context.

If you are applying for a job as an experienced professional in the same field, your resume may very likely already contain a few of the appropriate keywords. Your relevant experience and the professional lingo you have come to know has helped you apply it to your resume when describing your previous work experiences, but make sure you take the opportunity to optimize every section of your resume with keywords. Consider the following:

Positions/Titles

Employers are searching resumes that contain a matching title for the open position or a level below the position to secure candidates with the relevant experience and skills. Whether you are applying for an "Administrative Assistant," "Marketing Manager," or "Software Engineer" position, detail your previous experience with relevant titles you have held. If you happen to have a title that is unique or a less commonly known term, change it to reflect the common term employers will understand and that is the functional equivalent to the position you held.

Previous Experiences And Technical Skills

While detailing specific achievements and accomplishment with each of your previous positions, include keywords that relate to skills or programs that the employer desires. Employers want to know that you are familiar with certain methods, approaches, and programs that are critical to the success of the position.

Education/Training

Certain employers seek candidates that come from specific institutions, earned a specific degree or studied in a particular field. Utilize the "Education" section of your resume to plug in the appropriate keywords. It's also helpful to include specific certifications you have received from training.

Summary Of Qualifications

This is a category typically found at the top of resumes to indicate to employers what you have to offer and how you have the experience and skills to qualify for the position. Others may prefer to use "Areas of Expertise" or "Professional Profile." Whatever you choose, it is a section on your resume that provides the opportunity to include important keywords within context.

Play with words to include different variations or terms, such as "sales," "business development," "strategic alliances," "channel development," "regional expansion," and "market development." Also use common acronyms as well as the full description, for instance "PR" for "public relations" or "M&A" for "mergers and acquisition."

The more often keywords in your resume match with the requirements of the scanning technology, the greater the chance your resume will be reviewed and considered. Keywords may also be ranked. So even if you have a lot of matches, it does not replace the value placed against higher-ranked keywords. Make sure you give this the focus that is needed to get to the top of the stack. Thoroughly review the keywords that need to be included in your resume before applying for the job.

Also, keep in mind that after the resume is scanned and selected with technology, it goes through a review by the human eye. You don't want to pack your resume with keywords to the point your sentences do not make sense or effectively demonstrate your qualification for the job. Keep the use of keywords in context. Good writing and overall presentation still counts in making a solid first impression.

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