The Secret to Resume Success

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160

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Did you ever apply for a job that you were *certain* you were perfect for...and then hear back nothing? The lack of response may have nothing to do with your experience, and everything to do with how you're presenting it on your resume.

These days, recruiters receive thousands of resumes for desirable positions. Because of these enormous numbers, 98% of job-seekers don't make it past the original resume screening, according to Robert Meier, President of Job Market Experts.

So what is the secret to getting your resume to be the needle in the haystack that gets discovered? It's all about *keywords*.

Here's how keywords work: To manage the vast troves of responses they receive, recruiting departments build databases of resumes using their Application Tracking Software. They navigate through their database by searching for specific terms that relate the job they're hiring for. These terms are known as keywords. Since [Fairygodboss](#) is committed to helping our community get ahead and land the jobs they're seeking, we reached out to two experts to get the inside scoop on keywords and help you understand how you should use them on resume.

"Keywords are an essential part of how we sift through the thousands of resumes we receive," said Jenna Mucha, Talent Community Manager for [Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center](#).

"Keywords bring up your 'relevancy score' in most HR/recruiting software programs," says Christy Childers, Global Employer Brand Manager for [Dropbox](#).

So how can you use resume keywords to your advantage to land the interview and the job? Here's some advice from Jenna and Christy:**1. Adapt your resume for each company you're applying to**"You should absolutely adapt your resume for each job you're applying to," said Jenna. "Review the job description and incorporate keywords directly from it."What kinds of keywords should you include? Well, of course you want to use ones that are essential to the role - such as "quantitative" or "customer service." Choose keywords directly from the job description, especially those mentioned more than once. "But also check out similar job postings from other companies," suggests Jenna. "That way you can anticipate or include terms that go beyond the posting. You should even check out the LinkedIn profiles of other people who are in similar roles."Here's a great tip from Christy: Don't overlook things that you think are obvious or implied in your background. "Some people think Microsoft Excel is a given in today's environment. However if the job description lists Excel one or more times (and you indeed have substantial experience with it), you need to include 'Microsoft Excel' on your resume. Also keep in mind that a computer doesn't know that 'Microsoft Office Suite' includes Word, Excel, Access, etc., so you must use these keywords exactly as you see them in the job description."

That said, you should *definitely not* incorporate keywords if they don't accurately describe you. Honesty and fair representation must come first.

2. Use keywords throughout your resume The box for keyword relevance is not checked when you simply add the keyword to a "skills" section on your resume. Your keywords should be thoughtfully woven into your background bullets, ideally in several places throughout your resume. "This provides credibility, but also increases the relevancy based on the way the software performs searches," according to Christy. Also, she told us, "remove company jargon….While staying true to your past experience, it's okay to change the specific job title to ensure you're using one that is used more widely."**3. Ditch the objectives statement**While a "summary statement" is key for your LinkedIn profile, both our experts agree there is no need for a summary on your resume. Jenna told us that the summary statement really isn't useful to recruiters. If you've built your resume coherently, it should be crystal clear to recruiters what skills and traits define you.**4. Substantiate**"Keywords are important," says Christy, "but quantifying your experience alongside those keywords to add credible context and to differentiate yourself is equally as important." This is not just an exercise in copy/paste. You'll need to substantiate why your background represents the skills that the keywords call for.

Some great advice from Christy on how to quantify your experience:

> Instead of listing 'excellent negotiation skills,' try adding some context to prove it such as 'demonstrated excellent negotiation skills which resulted in an 80% close rate and #1 Account Executive in the Western US Region.' Or for those who aren't in obvious data driven environments, use the results of a project to demonstrate your skills: in lieu of 'attention to detail,' you could instead include an example such as 'demonstrated attention to detail in launching the first-ever global leadership development program from start to finish improving internal promotions by 35% across 3 continents.'

5. Apply "beyond" the job Once your resume ends up in a company's database, Jenna tells us that it can

often surface for other open positions. That means you should incorporate keywords that come up in verbiage about the company itself. For example, some companies pride themselves on "innovation." For others, "team-player" or "collaborative," is important.

And there are some keywords that work well for almost any job or position.. "Results-oriented," "motivated," "launched," "team-player," etc. There are [some great online resources](#) for these types of keywords. Note: there are also [some keywords you should stay away from](#), such as "synergy" or "go-getter."

Of course, great resume keywords are not a substitute for a great work background. Ultimately, though, if we can all have a better understanding of how our resume is being evaluated, we have a much better chance of getting to present that background in an interview. Huge thanks to Christy and Jenna for helping give us the inside scoop.*Visit [Fairygodboss](#) for more career advice, job reviews and job listings.*