

KEY WORDS

KeyWord: The “hot” words associated with a specific industry, profession, or job function . . . generally a noun, short phrase, abbreviation, or acronym. When used effectively, a KeyWord or KeyWord phrase can communicate an entire message with just a simple word or two.

FIVE YEARS AGO no one had ever heard of KeyWords, let alone KeyWord scanning. The concept of Key Words and the technology to support their use had just begun to penetrate the employment and job search market. At its onset, KeyWord scanning really only impacted those individuals in the technology and related industries.

KeyWords Are Everywhere

Today, however, KeyWords are everywhere – in every industry and every profession – and must be a vital component of each and every job seeker’s campaign. Consider these frequent observations:

- You talk to a resume writer, recruiter, career coach, career counselor, outplacement consultant, or human resources professional, and each of them stresses the importance of keywords in today’s competitive job search market.
- You read an article on the latest employment trends, and the focus of the article is on the Internet and KeyWord Scanning.
- You attend a job search training seminar, and the facilitator stresses how critical KeyWords are when writing a great resume and “nailing” your interviews.
- You listen to a CNN news broadcast about the latest employment trends, and the reported highlights the importance of KeyWords in today’s electronic job search market.
- You purchase a book on resume writing, cover letter writing, job searching or interviewing, and the focus of each book is on Key Words and how vital they are to your successful job search campaign.
- You search the Internet for job leads and postings, and virtually every ad instructs you to include the appropriate KeyWords in your resume, cover letter, and other job search communications.

Answers to KeyWords Questions

Ask yourself these questions as you prepare your resume and letters and prep for the job interview:

- What are KeyWords and where did they come from?
- Where do I put KeyWords in my resume?
- Where do I put KeyWords in my cover letter?
- How do I use KeyWords in my job search interviews?
- What is all the talk about KeyWords and resume scanning?
- Which keywords are right for me, my profession, and my industry?

Best KeyWords for resumes, Cover Letters, and Interviews provides answers to these and many more questions about KeyWords in today's job market. It is the first comprehensive guide on the subject of KeyWords and their use throughout the entire job search process. Designed for all types of job seekers, regardless of age, occupation, or experience level, this book will teach you how to use KeyWords to create a focused, repetitive, and employer-centered communication process throughout your entire job search campaign.

Using KeyWords in Your Resume

Your choices for how and where to include KeyWords in your resume are virtually unlimited. You can integrate them into the summary section at the top of your resume, incorporate them into your job descriptions, use them to highlight your accomplishments, or include them in a separate section titled Professional Skills and Qualifications. My recommendation is to use them in all the different sections of your resume, working to fit your KeyWords comfortably into your resume so that they become a part thereof and not just an after thought.

The following brief resume excerpts demonstrate how best to integrate KeyWords into your resume. Note that all the KeyWords below are highlighted in bold so that you can quickly spot them. It is NOT necessary to do so on your resume, although some job seekers do to draw visual attention to them. I generally prefer NPT to highlight them in a resume, fearing that if I put too much information in bold type, it will be unattractive and nothing in particular will stand out.

Integrate KeyWords into:

- Career Summary
- Job Descriptions
- Highlight Your Achievements

Using KeyWords in your Cover Letter

KeyWords also are remarkably effective tools for use in developing your cover letters, broadcast letters (letters sent without a resume; generally longer than the more typical cover letter), and other job search correspondence. They strengthen the presentation of your skills, qualifications, and experience, as well as demonstrating your competencies, achievements, and success. What's more, you can, and should, customize your cover letters to use the KeyWords that relate directly to the position for which you are applying. If an advertisement asks for a candidate with experience in supply chain management, be sure to include those specific words in your cover letter, along with purchasing, logistics, materials management, storeroom management, and any other related skills you offer.

As with your resume, KeyWords can be used in various cover letter sections, styles, and formats. Following are brief cover letter excerpts to demonstrate how best to integrate KeyWords into your letters.

Integrate KeyWords into:

- Cover Letter Text
- Separate Skills Section
- Career Highlights

Using KeyWords in Your Job Interviews

KeyWords are an essential component of any successful job interview. Whether used in a written document or spoken during conversation, KeyWords can communicate volumes of information by just using a few words and phrases specific to your industry and/or your profession.

Consider the difference in interview responses to the question, "*Are you PC proficient?*" when KeyWords are used versus when they're not.

When KeyWords are NOT used:

"Yes, I have a great deal of PC experience from both of my last jobs and can learn to use new software very quickly."

When KeyWords are used:

"Yes, I'm proficient with **Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, and Lotus**. In addition, I have some hands-on experience working with **PhotoShop, QuarkXpress, and WordPerfect**. Most recently, I've been appointed to the **PC Training Team** at my current company where I'm responsible for one-on-one and group training on new PC Software."

It's quite obvious the tremendous difference in impact that the use of KeyWords will make in all of your job search interviews. Be sure that you take the time to read as much as you can about a company prior to your interview so that you can determine that KeyWords you should use during the interview ... KeyWords that you know are important to them and their operations.

KeyWords and Resume Scanning

KeyWords are the standard by which tens of thousands of companies and recruiters screen applicants' resumes to identify core skills and qualifications. Using advanced KeyWord scanning technology, resumes are electronically reviewed to identify the KeyWords that match the specific hiring criteria. As such, it is critical that you include those KeyWords in your resume, cover letters, and all other job search communications. Whether this strategy and electronic mechanism for evaluating a candidate's qualifications is an appropriate tool or not, the fact remains that keywords scanning has become an increasingly dominant tool in today's hiring market.

It is important to note that KeyWords do NOT have to be in any particular section, or even in a separate section, on your resume or cover letter to get noticed. Scanning technology is evolving as quickly as other technologies and can easily identify a KeyWord no matter where it is positioned in a document.

Do not allow yourself to be passed over because you do not have the "right" words in your resume. Integrate the KeyWords from this book into your resume as they accurately reflect your experience. Not only will you meet the technological requirements for KeyWord scanning, you will also create powerful career marketing tools. And, we all know that the winners in job search are those that can "sell" their qualifications, highlight their achievements, and distinguish themselves from the competition. Let the KeyWords in this book help you do just that.

Choosing the Right KeyWords

As you review the KeyWords in this book that are specific to your career, you'll see that many represent the functions you perform on a daily basis. Others may be new words to you, but I'm sure you're familiar with their underlying concepts. In fact, I'm sure most of these KeyWords reflect the skills and experience you've gained throughout career.

As you explore the various chapters of this book, examine the KeyWords and use them to:

- Create powerful resumes, cover letter, thank-you letters, career profiles, and other job search communications. Let a prospective employer know that you've got the "right" skills and qualifications to meet their needs.
- Communicate your skills, qualifications, and achievements during all of your job interviews. Demonstrate that you have the "right" skills and you'll be well on your way to great job offers and wonderful new opportunities.

Add Your Own KeyWords

No KeyWord list is comprehensive. Words, language and communication are fluid and dynamic processes that cannot be boiled down into something that is finite and limited. With that said, know that this book was written to provide you with a vast selection of KeyWords that you can use in your job search. However, just as important, you'll want to add other KeyWords that reflect additional skills and qualifications you offer.

Adapted from Best Key Words for Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviews by Wendy S. Enelow.