

Power Words to Use On Your Resume



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It has never been more important to match the wording of your resume to the requirements of the hiring employer.

Most recruiters look over resumes at speed, in less than 10 seconds, and [applicant tracking systems \(ATS\)](#) scan resumes for keywords and phrases.

One way to make your resume stand out for all the right reasons is to include **power words**.

Power words will distinguish your resume from the rest of the pile. They are used intentionally and in a way that is specific to the role you have applied for.

By comparison, outdated jargon and buzzwords have the opposite effect, revealing a lack of up-to-date understanding of the role and industry.

Find out more about the use of buzzwords in your resume by reading [Buzzwords: The Good and The Bad](#).

- **Skills:** These might be [general skills that employers value in all employees](#) or, more specifically, the skills needed for the job you are applying for. An easy way to discover these skills, and their exact wording, is to scour the job advert and/or description.
- **Action verbs:** Action verbs demonstrate how you have succeeded in your current and past roles and point to your likelihood of success and achievement in the future. Action verbs include 'accomplished', 'improved', 'consolidated', 'exceeded' and 'initiated'.
- **Company standards/values:** How does the company you are applying to talk about itself? What values does it express? What is its core message? For

example, the company might express an intention to innovate through disruption or have a culture of diverse inclusivity.

- **Industry/role-specific terms:** These are words that show you are familiar with the role you are applying for and the related industry and that you are at the right level of knowledge and experience for that role. For example, a senior IT developer is also likely to include action verbs that express their level of achievement and understanding, along with technical terminology specific to their role.

Including the right power words in your resume demonstrates that your skills and knowledge are relevant and current.

Discover more about the skills that employers are interested in by reading our article [Top 10 Skills to Show on Your Resume](#).

Why Are Power Words More Important Than Ever?

Including power words in your resume is nothing new. But why are they important for applicants in today's job market?

Content vs Formality

Resume content that expresses the personality of the applicant and demonstrates that a high level of thought has gone into its creation is increasing of more interest to employers than the same old 'education and job history' format.

The type of language an applicant uses, including the right power words, can express whether that individual:

- Will be a good fit for the role, for the company and for the team they will be part of.
- Has the right level of understanding of the role beyond having the required skills and experience
- Shares the values of the employer

A well-thought-out resume can also demonstrate that the applicant has excellent [communication](#) and [presentation skills](#).

Improve the presentation of your application by considering [The Best Resume Fonts](#) to use.

Increasing Competition

According to the job and employer review website, Glassdoor, US corporate job vacancies attract an average of 250 resumes per vacancy, with only four to six of those applicants being called to interview.

For many other roles, the average number of resumes per vacancy is even higher.

A carefully considered resume, written specifically for the role you are applying for and including relevant power words, is often the step-up you need to stand above the competition.

Use Of Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

Also known as applicant management systems, one key use of an ATS is to search for specific words and phrases that are pertinent to the vacancy.

For example:

- A qualification or professional certification
- The same job title as the vacancy advertised
- Relevant skills
- Industry keywords

Including the right power words in your resume can make the difference between being flagged up as a 'yes' or at least a 'next stage' by an ATS, or ending the journey on the immediate 'no' pile.

We can tell you more about how to handle this step of the application process in our article [Applicant Tracking Systems](#).

Top 12 Power Words to Use On Your Resume

The specific power words you include in your resume will depend on your career path, the vacancy you apply for and the industry you work within, but here are our top 12 power words to use:

1. 'Value'

When an employer, or their recruiter, reads your resume, not only do they want to check that you have the correct skills, experience and training to fulfill the position, but also they want to know that you will bring value to the company.

Including the power word **‘value’** in your resume is a good way to flag up that you have already added value in your current and previous jobs and are aware of the value you would bring to your new job.

For example:

*The **value** I brought to the team was my hands-on experience in the industry.*

2. 'Redesigned'

Problem-solving is an essential skill that employers are keen to find and develop in their workforce.

Using **‘redesigned’** in your resume demonstrates that you can re-think a process or find a new way to do something.

For example:

*I **redesigned** what had been an inherited order-processing system from my predecessor.*

3. 'Led'/'Leader'/'Leadership'

Employers are generally on the lookout for talented employees who can be developed into leadership roles.

Demonstrate that you already have leadership skills in your descriptions of your current and past roles.

For example:

*I **led** a team of call center operators.*

*I acted as the **leader** on several gap assessment projects.*

*I was happy to develop my **leadership** skills by acting as a supervisor during the existing supervisor’s maternity leave.*

Read about the Top 10 [Leadership Skills](#) that employers are looking for.



4. 'Achieved'

Showcase exactly what you have accomplished in your current and past roles by using the word 'achieved'.

In the same way that you might include a skills section, you may also wish to have an achievements section, but using the active verb 'achieved' in the content of your job history may save space.

For example:

*I consistently **achieved** and frequently exceeded all targets set in my yearly appraisal.*

Learn [How to List Your Key Achievements in your Resume](#).

5. 'Mentored'

This again flags up your [leadership](#) potential.

The fact that you have mentored others, whether in a work environment or perhaps as a volunteer, shows that you have the personality and skills to be of more value to the company than simply the role you have applied to.

For example:

*In my spare time, I **mentored** young adults participating in literacy and numeracy catch-up courses.*

6. 'Created'

As with 'redesigned', using the word 'created' in your resume points to your problem-solving skills and ability to produce brand-new ideas.

For example:

*Having worked with the current order to delivery process for six months, I become aware of high levels of customer dissatisfaction with the system; therefore, I **created** a fresh, more transparent system that resulted in increased efficiency and an improved customer experience.*

7. 'Won'

Everyone loves a winner. Moreover, employers want a workforce who can show that they have already succeeded before they are hired.

Using 'won' in your resume, just like 'achieved', points to your successes and accomplishments.

For example:

*Despite being the youngest investment banker with [company name], I consistently **won** lucrative client deals that...*

8. 'Established'

The power word 'established' brings together both leadership skills and the ability to create something new.

For example:

*I **established** a cross-department team of secretaries to centralize company administrative systems.*

9. 'Implemented'

Using the word 'implemented' is not simply a way of saying that you did something. Instead, it demonstrates that you applied a solution.

Much of the way we learn in our job is through testing solutions to see if they work, followed by measurement of the results and reflection.

For example:

*Following a gap analysis on the profitability of our lead product, I **implemented** a new approach...*

10. 'Resolved'

Employers want employees who can solve company problems. More than that, they are keen to employ a workforce who can recognize that there is a problem in the first place.

Using the word 'resolved' in your resume shows that you have this problem finding and solving skills and can also see a project or task through to its conclusion.

For example:

*I **resolved** a historical disagreement between two departments over who was responsible for the maintenance of a shared area by...*

11. 'Upheld'

This power word is all about support. Employers want to know that their workforce is loyal and shares the values of the company.

When you use 'upheld' in your resume, you demonstrate loyalty and trustworthiness.

For example:

*In my role as HR Manager, I consistently **upheld** the company values of inclusiveness by...*

12. 'Initiated'

Using the word 'initiated' suggests that you not only started a process but that it was your idea in the first place.

This points to [leadership](#) and problem-identification skills.

For example:

*I **initiated** an investigation into whether delays in the processing of orders were caused by administrative errors, accounting bottlenecks or warehousing inefficiency.*

Top Tips

There is no doubt that powerful words can improve the readability and effectiveness of your resume, but here are our top tips on how best to use those powerful words:

Do Your Research and Reflect

Do your research before you apply for a vacancy by examining:

- The job advert
- The job description
- Any accompanying letter or information
- The company website and social media

Find out the exact requirements for the job, the type of words that the company expresses itself in and the company's values.

Now reflect on how you can choose the best word for your resume to match both the job and the company.

Be Specific

Each time you apply for a new job, your resume should be altered to express your suitability for that role.

It might be that you place the focus on different skills and experiences or change the tone of voice to appeal to the culture of a specific employer.

Alter your resume, including the power words you use, with that one role in mind.

Do Not Stuff Your Resume With Power Words

Now that you know about power words, the temptation might be to use as many as possible within your one or two pages, resulting in a busy and possibly unreadable mess.

The page limit of a resume demands that you write concisely and give consideration to what you include. Power words are more powerful when used effectively and with constraint.

Words to Avoid

The antithesis of a power word, in this context, is an over-used, cliched word or phrase.

Using terms such as 'self-motivated' or 'hard worker' in a resume may be an honest claim, but they also point to a candidate who is unwilling to put any real thought into their application.

Other words and phrases to avoid include:

- Go-getter
- Think outside the box
- Synergy
- Results driven
- Driven

Or any buzzword term that sounds as if it has been stripped from a business book.

Read It Aloud

Yes, the recruiter may well use an ATS to scan your resume or skim-read it at a glance, but inevitably it will end up on the desk of the employer.

Once you feel that your resume is complete, read it aloud. If there are any phrases or sentences that you stumble over, re-word them.

Make your resume easy to read for anyone, whether it is a recruiter, an ATS or a prospective employer.

Final Thoughts

In today's competitive job market, every aspect of your application must be optimized to demonstrate that you are the best candidate for whatever vacancy you apply for.

Your resume is the jewel in your application crown. Use the right power words in the best way possible to make that jewel shine.