How Keywords on your CV make the difference

KEYWORDS ON YOUR CV: WHY YOU NEED THEM

The golden referral is unfortunately rare which means recruiters turn to their agency database and professional forums like LinkedIn and Viadeo to sift through potential candidates for their clients. Just as you might use keywords to find jobs in your area of expertise online, or to find a consumer product, recruiters use keywords to search for qualified candidates for a given job.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

- **The average CV is scanned for a total of 10 seconds.**
- **A CV can be stored in an agency database or internet job site database without ever being considered despite a candidate's qualifications.**
- **Recruiters and human resource personnel allocate 90% of their time in pursuit of the perfect candidate.**

The High-Tech Revolution Changed the Way We Search CVs

Sophisticated technology has changed the CV-reading process dramatically. Recruiters were desperate for a way to circumvent the time-consuming paper piles and stacks in order to find the right candidate. The advent of keyword-searchable databases that allow recruiters to manage a search with the touch of a keyboard not only revolutionized the search, but they changed the mechanics of CV writing.

How to Optimize Your CV For Keywords

A job ad might read:
An opportunity exists for a Mining Engineer for an open cast mine situated in a French speaking region of Africa.

A typical recruiter might search for the following keywords:
Mining Engineer AND Open Pit AND Africa AND French

This search will pull up all CVs containing the chosen keywords and phrases. If your CV states that you're a highly skilled mechanical engineer with open pit experience in Mauritania your CV will not come up in the first round of search results. Recruiters will run a search for the same position using variations of keywords – but do you want to risk missing out on a job opportunity by the candidate who showed up in the first set of search results because s/he had the right keywords on his/her CV?

Optimize the Title on your CV

Your **CV Title** should follow these key principles for both web and database search optimization:
- **Be under 70 characters (that means letters and spaces)**
- **The primary target keyword should appear first**
- **Each keyword phrase should be separated by pipes (|)**

Example:
Mining Engineer | Production Engineer | French Africa

Tip: The title has prominence on the page. Therefore, where possible, you can use the title of the job you want, not necessarily the job you have or had, assuming your CV supports it with your experience and career path. You can also use the introductory paragraph described in the next section to mention the title of the job you are seeking.

Optimize the Introductory Paragraph

Your introductory paragraph should follow these guidelines:
- Keep it between 100 and 150 characters long
- Include the primary target keyword (Mining Engineer) and at least one secondary keyword (Mine Engineer, Production Engineer, Mine Planning Engineer, Mine Planner, Backfill Engineer).
- Provide a valuable, compelling reason for why someone should hire you
- Include keywords in a conversational format; don't just cram in keywords for the sake of listing them

Optimizing the body of your resume:

Use **'signature'** keywords, i.e. technical words that are known to associate with your preferred role, throughout your CV

For example:

- "Surpac" and "Gemcom" relate to mine engineers with mine plan ning experience.
- "SAG mill" and "ball mill" relate to mineral/metallurgical processing engineers.
- "P.Eng." differntiates engineers belonging to a professional order.

Use both **parent company** and **names** to describe your past and present employers in your chronology of employment. For example, "Barrick Goldstrike" together can represent gold experience acquired while employed by a multinational mining company at its domestic US-based site, the largest gold mine in all of North America. Think of the names of the sites at which you have worked as target keywords used by recruiters and HR personnel trying to find **YOU**.

Tip: Use secondary key words as alternate titles for the same position.
Ex. Mine Manager might also be called Site Manager.

If you are applying to a specific job, you will want to mirror the job ad's wording. Read the advertisement carefully for keywords. Use those words and phrases prominently in your CV and covering letter.

Optimize Page Content

Use your primary target keyword a few times throughout the page's content. You can do this easily in the titles. Bold or underline the titles or headlines in which these keywords appear.

Example of titles placed throughout your CV might include:

Mining Engineer Experience includes:
Mining Engineer Qualifications are:

Mention the secondary keywords (alternate job titles for example) in the body or bullet points within each section of your resume. Don't overthink keyword density or placement; mention them naturally.

Tip: List keywords and phrases in a box at the end of your CV. That way you are sure to include them and the recruiter's search will pick them up. Recruiters will often receive way more applications than they can look at closely, so the first sift through will be done quickly. Key words listed at the end of the document will catch their eye and increase the impact of your application *(see CV Template)*

Consider Synonyms as Keywords

Using synonyms in the body of your CV, sporadically and naturally, can improve your CV's chance of being found in a search. While you can make an educated guess about the types of keywords a recruiter is looking for, you're not a mind reader. Therefore, in addition to following the rules laid out, be sure to include synonyms for secondary keywords to cover all your bases.

Tip: List the synonyms in the keywords list at the end of your CV. Keep the number of keywords in your list between 6-8. Do not list your primary keyword (job title) or secondary keywords, as they should have been mentioned enough times throughout your CV to be picked up on. Use this space for synonyms- words not used in the body of your CV.

How Many Secondary Keywords Are Enough?

When you begin the process of selecting keywords, you should aim for 20-25 keywords, including synonyms.

Once you get the hang of keywords, you will want to rethink your choice of keywords based on the job description of the position you are applying to.

It's wise to refresh your CV for each position you're applying to since different companies and different jobs may require a different list of keywords. Customize your CV whenever possible.

Should You Avoid Certain Keywords?

Avoiding keywords is not deceptive; it's simply a good marketing concept.
By selecting the proper keywords, you should be able to create a CV that truly sets you apart from your competitors, garnering the types of job interviews you're looking for.

A CV that has its fair share of winning keywords can usually pass the keyword-searching test, getting you one step closer to the position you are seeking.

For a detailed look at our keywords presentation scan the QR Code