

Hiring Managers Rank Best and Worst Words to Use in a Resume in New CareerBuilder Survey

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CHICAGO, March 13, 2014 /PRNewswire/ -- One in six (17 percent) hiring managers spend 30 seconds or less, on average, reviewing resumes, according to a new CareerBuilder survey. A majority (68 percent) spend less than two minutes. With so little time to capture interest, even a candidate's word choice can make a difference. The nationwide sample of employers identified which commonly-used resume terms are overused or cliché and which are strong additions.

The national survey was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder from November 6 to December 2, 2013, and included a representative sample of 2,201 hiring managers and human resource professionals across industries and company sizes.

"Hiring managers prefer strong action words that define specific experience, skills and accomplishments," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. "Subjective terms and clichés are seen as negative because they don't convey real information. For instance, don't say you are 'results-driven'; show the employer your actual results."

The Worst Resume Terms

The following terms are resume turn-offs as selected by respondents:

1. Best of breed: 38 percent
2. Go-getter: 27 percent
3. Think outside of the box: 26 percent
4. Synergy: 22 percent
5. Go-to person: 22 percent
6. Thought leadership: 16 percent
7. Value add: 16 percent
8. Results-driven: 16 percent
9. Team player: 15 percent
10. Bottom-line: 14 percent
11. Hard worker: 13 percent
12. Strategic thinker: 12 percent
13. Dynamic: 12 percent
14. Self-motivated: 12 percent
15. Detail-oriented: 11 percent
16. Proactively: 11 percent
17. Track record: 10 percent

The Best Resume Terms

There are, however, several strong verbs and terms candidates can use to help describe their experience. The following are terms employers would like to see on a resume:

1. Achieved: 52 percent
2. Improved: 48 percent
3. Trained/Mentored: 47 percent
4. Managed: 44 percent
5. Created: 43 percent
6. Resolved: 40 percent
7. Volunteered: 35 percent
8. Influenced: 29 percent
9. Increased/Decreased: 28 percent
10. Ideas: 27 percent
11. Negotiated: 25 percent
12. Launched: 24 percent
13. Revenue/Profits: 23 percent
14. Under budget: 16 percent
15. Won: 13 percent

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder among 2,201 hiring managers and human resource professionals between November 6 and December 2, 2013 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 2,201, one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 2.09 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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Media Contact

Ryan Hunt

773-527-6923

Ryan.Hunt@careerbuilder.com

<http://www.twitter.com/CareerBuilderPR>

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