

White Paper

Exponentially Increasing Your Resume Response Rate

▶ **How to Get 3 Times as Many Interviews By Customizing Your Resume**

Resume Keywords and Phrases: How to write a resume that stands out to recruiters

It shouldn't shock anybody that the days of submitting a one-size-fits-all resume are long over. However, it's clear that the message has yet to reach the job seeking public. More than ninety percent of candidates apply using their standard resume without any customization. This drastically increases the odds that their resumes will be instantly rejected. That's because resumes are overwhelmingly screened by Applicant Tracking Systems, software that unforgivingly weeds out any candidates it fails to deem a proper match.

Over ninety percent of large companies, and almost all Fortune 500 companies employ these systems. The reason behind the mass adoption of ATS is that larger companies are inundated by job applications, receiving upward of 50,000 resumes per month. So how do job applicants craft a resume that stands out to recruiters? The first step is carefully building a resume that makes it past today's sophisticated online recruitment software.



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Part I: The Importance of Keywords On Your Resume: Making It Past ATS Systems (Applicant Tracking Systems)

If qualified applicants want to make it past ATS systems, it's critical to understand the role of keywords on your resume. The very first step at most corporations is a computerized scan of your resume seeking out keywords matching the job description. Subsequently, these systems use the data to rank and score potential candidates. Ultimately, half of all resumes submitted for any given position are discarded. Only a select few will receive a call to set up an interview.

Applicants who want to clear the ATS system must focus on the exact language used in the job description. If you need help identifying which keywords are important, try the websites [Wordle](#) or [TagCrowd](#). Paste in the relevant job description, and the most frequently used words will be highlighted by the software. When you're done, place ten to twenty of these keywords and phrases in the top half of your resume.

In addition to directly lifting language from a job description, there are eleven other keyword “types” that should be incorporated into your resume. Make sure you include job titles, degrees and certifications, university and college names, company names, professional organizations, service types, product names, technical terms, industry jargon, software/hardware packages, and job-specific buzzwords.

Finally, there are specific, action oriented keywords that can help your resume clear an ATS System as well. See the chart below:

9 Keywords ATS Systems & Recruiters “Like”

- ▶ **Reduced**
- ▶ **Improved**
- ▶ **Developed**
- ▶ **Researched**
- ▶ **Created**
- ▶ **Increased**
- ▶ **Accomplished**
- ▶ **Won**
- ▶ **Under budget**

*Source: Beyond.com

 **A format that is not scannable can cut your resume's odds of being seen by 60%.**

Five Most Popular Hourly Jobs: Suggested Keywords for Each

- ▶ **Customer Service:** Customer(s), service, experience, employee, management, team, products, skills, ability
- ▶ **Data Entry:** Ability, systems, work, entry, job knowledge, data, systems
- ▶ **Receptionist:** Office, organized, services, phone, receptionist, work, experience
- ▶ **Waiter/Waitress:** Experience, waiter, waitress, restaurant, food, service, dining, ability, skills, customer
- ▶ **Retail:** customers, store, experience, sales, service, store, retail, merchandise

Let us caution you that it's important not to cram in keywords excessively. Online recruitment software identifies this practice as keyword stuffing, and it will likely result in the instant rejection of your resume. If your resume does somehow survive the ATS screening in spite of keyword stuffing, then you should be aware that this practice is also frowned upon by human recruiters.

Part II: Resume Formats That Validate In An Application Tracking System

Published studies of ATS systems indicate that a format that is not scannable can cut your resume's odds of being seen by sixty percent. If you want to ensure that your resume correctly validates in an ATS, the file should be saved and sent as a Word Document or Text File. Steer clear of Adobe PDF files which are notorious for being unreadable by ATS systems. It's also important to avoid scripts, designer fonts, logos, background images and photos.

Many might be surprised that ATS systems also have trouble parsing paragraphs of simple text. You should opt to format your work history and accomplishments as clean, bulleted lists. It also behooves you to include plenty of whitespace and distinguishing line breaks so ATS systems can parse key sections.

ATS Resume Formatting

DO:

- ▶ Stick to a single column format. No tables, multiple columns, or text boxes.
- ▶ Opt for simply formatted text of a reasonable size (11 point font or above)
- ▶ Include months when listing dates (e.g., 06/2010 – 08/2012). Dates should be on the right.
- ▶ Stick to standard fonts, i.e. Arial, Georgia, Tahoma, Calibri, and Verdana.
- ▶ Employ proper capitalization, spelling and punctuation.

DON'T:

- ▶ Upload as a PDF file. ATS systems cannot scan or read any part of it's content
- ▶ Include any special characters or accented words.
- ▶ Punctuate your name with symbols, i.e. () , / -
- ▶ Abbreviate or use acronyms.
- ▶ Use complex formatting, i.e. condensed or expanded text; extra spaces between letters.

Part III: Impact of Keyword and Phrase Customization When Submitting Your Resume Online

When submitting resumes online, the role that keywords and phrases play assumes an even greater importance due to the sheer volume of resumes submitted to major job websites. There are 427,000 resumes posted on Monster.com alone each and every week. Every time you submit a resume online, you are competing with over one hundred other job applicants. Roughly, seventy five of those one hundred resumes will be discarded by an ATS system or the recruiter based on keywords and phrases. Take the time to customize if you want to make it past the filters, and onto a recruiter's desk.

Those who remain unconvinced should take note of a test conducted internally here at [MyJobHelper](#). Two resumes were submitted for the same set of twenty, randomly selected customer service positions. The first resume incorporated keyword and phrase customization while the second resume did not. Our first “candidate” received six separate requests for interviews while the second received only two.

	Candidate A With Keywords	Candidate B Without Keywords
Number of Resumes Submitted	20	20
Number of Interview Requests	6	2
Success Rate	30%	10%
Increase in Success Rate:	200%	

Candidate A Resume With Keywords

Name, Address, Phone, Email Address

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP / 10 YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN CALL CENTER SETTINGS

Polished, professional customer service rep offering:

- 10 years of experience providing customer support in busy call center environments for public utility and insurance industry employers.
- Employee with unwavering commitment to customer service, with the ability to build productive relationships, resolve complex issues and win customer loyalty.
- Strategic-relationship/partnership-building skills -- listen attentively, solve problems creatively, and use tact and diplomacy to find common ground and achieve win-win outcomes.

EXPERIENCE

Customer Service Representative

5/2005-Present, Con Edison, New York, NY

Handle customer inquiries, complaints, billing questions and payment extension/service requests. Calm angry callers, repair trust, locate resources for problem resolution and design best-option solutions. Interface daily with internal partners in accounting, field services, new business, operations and consumer affairs divisions.

Key Accomplishments:

- Managed a high-volume workload within a deadline-driven environment. Resolved an average of 550 inquiries in any given week and consistently met performance benchmarks in all areas (speed, accuracy, volume).
- Became the lead "go-to" person for new reps and particularly challenging calls as one of the company's primary mentors/trainers of both new and established employees.
- Helped company attain the highest customer service ratings (as determined by external auditors) -- earned 100% marks in all categories including communication skills, listening skills, problem resolution and politeness.
- Officially commended for initiative, enthusiasm, tenacity, persuasiveness, intense customer focus and dependability in performance evaluations.
- Completed voluntary customer service training to learn ways to enhance customer satisfaction and improve productivity.

Customer Service Agent

2/2001-5/2005, New York Life Insurance Company, New York, NY

Handled incoming calls from policyholders, responding to inquiries, resolving problems and correcting policy errors. Provided quotes and executed online policy changes for auto, home and excess liability. Used consultative selling techniques to provide leads for telesales personnel.

SKILLS Customer Service, Call Center Service Operations, Complaint Handling/Dispute Resolution, Sales Lead Generation, Data Entry/Records Management, Multiline Phone Use, MS Word, Excel and Access

Candidate B Resume Without Keywords

Name, Address, Phone, Email Address

CUSTOMER SERVICE/CALL REPRESENTATIVE

Polished, professional representative offering:

- 10 years of experience in busy call centers.
- Employee with unwavering work ethic and ability to resolve complex issues quickly.
- Listen attentively, solve problems creatively, and use tact and diplomacy to find common ground and achieve win-win outcomes.

EXPERIENCE

Customer Service Representative **5/2005-Present, Con Edison, New York, NY**

Handle incoming inquiries, complaints, billing questions and payment extension/service requests. Calm angry callers, repair trust, locate resources for problem resolution and design best-option solutions. Interface daily with internal partners in accounting, field services, new business, operations and consumer affairs divisions.

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Handled incoming calls from policyholders, responding to inquiries, resolving problems and correcting policy errors. Provided quotes and executed online policy changes for auto, home and excess liability. Used consultative selling techniques to provide leads for telesales personnel.

SKILL SET Customer Service, Call Center Service Operations, Complaint Handling/Dispute Resolution, Sales Lead Generation, Data Entry/Records Management, Multiline Phone Use, MS Word, Excel and Access

Conclusion: “Beating” Application Tracking Systems

It's important for qualified job applicants to be educated on the pitfalls of ATS systems so they're not unfairly discarded as part of an automated process. However, there simply are no guaranteed ways to “beat” an application tracking system. Recruitment software is rapidly becoming more sophisticated with the ability to filter job applicants on a highly customized basis per the needs of ATS clients. Candidates can be flagged or organized according to any number of qualifiers including (but not limited to) skills, employment history, and education.

In addition, it's equally important to note that ATS is only one of an arsenal of tools available to employers to weed out candidates. Organizations can now include pre-screening questions, background checks, drug screenings, paperless on-boarding technology, career planning, learning management, performance management, succession planning and more in their talent management suite.

There is no question that a job search in this brave, new world can feel discouraging. However, job seekers who invest the time and energy in resume customization certainly have a competitive edge above the masses who choose to ignore the reality of this automated landscape.

Sources: Cabrillo.edu, Harvard, Dummies.com, The Ladders, ERE.net, The Wall Street Journal, Career Cast, UIC.edu, CAES Career Advancement Employment Services Inc., Forbes, [Beyond.com](#), BeHiring, Talent Function Group LLC, [The Muse](#)

How MyJobHelper.com Can Help

MyJobHelper.com is one of the fastest growing job sites in the world. Launched in 2013, MyJobHelper.com has attracted over 12,000,000 job seekers and tens of thousands of employers have been featured on our site.

Our mission is simple. To help job seekers find jobs faster and more easily than any other site, and to help employers reach qualified, serious job seekers.

Using these resume customization tips and MyJobHelper.com's easy-to-use site, finding a job has never been made easier.

Begin your search today at MyJobHelper.com, and be sure to visit our blog at <http://blog.myjobhelper.com> for more job seeker tips and advice.

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