

# 10 useless résumé words -- and 10 eye-catching ones

By Beth Braccio Hering, Special to CareerBuilder



"Generic hyperbole belongs on cereal boxes, not on résumés," says Duncan Mathison, a [career consultant](#) and co-author of "Unlock the Hidden Job Market: 6 Steps to a Successful Job Search When Times Are Tough." "If it does not pass the 'So what, anybody can make that claim' test, leave it off."

Instead of being another candidate professing to be a "hard worker," revitalize your application with a little seek-and-replace exercise. Scan your résumé for empty, overused words such as the following:

1. **Outstanding**
2. **Effective**
3. **Strong**
4. **Exceptional**
5. **Good**
6. **Excellent**
7. **Driven**
8. **Motivated**
9. **Seasoned**
10. **Energetic**

"Watch out for words that are unsupported claims of greatness," Mathison says. Adds David Couper, a [career coach](#) and author of "Outsiders on the Inside: How to Create a Winning Career ... Even When You Don't Fit In," "If you call yourself an 'excellent [manager](#),' how do we know?"

The nouns following those subjective adjectives can be equally meaningless. Anyone who has ever had a co-worker can claim to be a "team player."

A better route to take is describing accomplishments and letting the hirer make his own judgment. Give specific, and preferably quantifiable, accounts of what you've done that makes you an "outstanding [salesperson](#)." Likewise, peruse your performance reviews for quotable material from supervisors that demonstrates why they consider you a "strong leader." Listing awards or other forms of recognition also can be used as support.

Some words should be avoided because they convey traits that employers consider standard for anybody who wants to be hired. "You're motivated? Hope so. A good worker? So happy to hear that; I didn't want to hire a bad worker," Couper says. Don't take up precious résumé space with unnecessary items.

Also on the "don't" side: words that seek to overcome what you might think are your shortcomings. "Using 'seasoned' for 'over 50' or 'energetic' for 'inexperienced' looks like spin and smells like spin," Mathison says. Keep the focus on what makes you right for the job.

On the flip side, certain words can make hiring managers do a double take. Light up their eyes with these 10 words and phrases:

- 1. Created**
- 2. Increased**
- 3. Reduced**
- 4. Improved**
- 5. Developed**
- 6. Researched**
- 7. Accomplished**
- 8. Won**
- 9. On time**
- 10. Under budget**

"We suggest that résumé writers include action words to describe their jobs," says Susan Ach, a career [counselor](#) at Marymount Manhattan College in [New York City](#). Verbs project the image of someone who has the background and initiative to get things done. Employers can clearly comprehend what you've accomplished and can use that as a basis for envisioning future success with their company. Think about it: If you were hiring, would you rather take on someone who calls himself a "productive manager" or somebody who states that at his last job he "increased company profit by 3 percent," "reduced employee turnover in his department to the best level in five years" and "improved brand awareness by implementing a new [social media](#) strategy"?

Lastly, it can be beneficial to use verbs and nouns that are common to your specific industry. This shows your familiarity with the language of your field and optimizes the chances of getting past an automatic scan for keywords. But remember, too, that all companies tend to speak a universal language: money.

"Terms such as 'on time' and 'under budget' are often good. Hiring managers want to know you can get things done with minimum fuss," Mathison says. Tell them what makes you the most profitable choice for the job and employers will tell you the best word of all: "hired."

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