

Selecting Keywords For Your Attorney Resume

By Vanessa Vidal

In today's busy legal recruiting market, organizations are increasingly relying on databases, including resume-scanning software to assess attorney resumes, and identify candidates for their open positions. Therefore, it is crucial that your attorney resume contain keywords that are specific to the position you are applying to. If your attorney resume does not contain the right keywords, your resume may be overlooked. In this article, I'll show you how to select appropriate keywords and where to insert them in your attorney resume.

Finding Keywords in Job Descriptions

Where do you begin selecting the right keywords for your attorney resume? The easiest and most logical place is to start with the job description. Job descriptions will give you clues to the keywords that are most important to employers. Take a look at the words used to describe the responsibilities of the position, as well as the requirements of the position. Select those keywords that appear most relevant – and most specific to the job – and incorporate them into your attorney resume.

Job description example: *Seeking attorney with 1-3 years experience in commercial litigation (breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, consumer fraud and business torts). Candidates must have excellent writing skills, good oral advocacy skills, strong work ethic, be licensed in Texas, and have a good academic background.* The keywords you should select to appear on your attorney resume based on this job description are: commercial litigation, breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty, consumer fraud, business torts, excellent writing skills, good oral advocacy skills, strong work ethic, and licensed in Texas.

Once you have identified the keywords from the job description, you should go back to your attorney resume and determine whether the keywords you selected are highlighted in your resume. Chances are they will not all be incorporated in your resume. Therefore you will need to update your attorney resume, and insert those keywords and phrases in the appropriate areas.

Finding Keywords From Company Websites

While job descriptions are excellent sources of keywords with respect to specific positions, company websites can also provide you with keywords that relate to their overall values, goals, and culture. To be effective, your attorney resume needs to incorporate keywords relating to the position and the company to show that you are an ideal match to both.

The easiest and most logical place to start is in the career section of the company's website, if one is available. Many company websites will also have a section that

describes their core values, mission, or overall approach to their business. These sections will be filled with keywords such as “integrity,” “flexibility,” “leadership” and “teamwork,” qualities that are valued in most positions and by most organizations. Make sure your attorney resume provides examples that illustrate these various qualities.

Incorporating Keywords in Your Resume

Before you begin inserting keywords in your attorney resume, you need to make sure that all of the relevant information with respect to your work history and experience are included in the resume. This means focusing on the job description and making sure that every experience and skill related to this position is included in your attorney resume.

Next, take a look at your “summary” or “skill” section, and drop your keywords there. This is the best place to incorporate your keywords since those sections are typically at the top of the resume. This will allow your keywords to be picked up immediately by a busy recruiter giving your resume a 15 second cursory glance, or by a database scanning resumes and highlighting keywords.

Finally, be sure to include keywords in your work experience as well. Here you can add keywords and phrases to the bullet points you already have to make them stand out more effectively. Even if the recruiter does not read the entire bullet, the keywords will be easy to identify. You should consider using different, but similar keywords in these bullets to give your attorney resume variety and depth.

Conclusion

While keywords are an essential part of your attorney resume, your resume should not be so littered with buzzwords and jargon that it becomes repetitive and sound like a rattled-off list of resume fillers. Keep in mind that the person reviewing your resume will probably be the same person that drafted the position description. Therefore, try not to repeat the same keywords over and over again, and try not to use them in the same order that they were drafted in the job description. Consider using variety for more impact.

Finally, be careful about overusing keywords or engaging in “keyword stuffing.” Your attorney resume should be readable. While a computer will not notice that you crammed your resume with keywords, an employer reading your resume will. You need to use keywords sparingly so that it still looks and reads like a resume. You also need to use keywords that accurately reflect your professional experience and skills. Padding your resume with terms that have nothing to do with your actual skills and experience could cost you the opportunity to interview.