

## What's in a Word? You!

*By Accountemps*

People who say words are meaningless clearly aren't worried about marketing themselves or developing a personal brand in the business world. Words are the power tools – the key ingredients in the secret sauce – that make you stand out, and help others see clearly why they should invest in you.

Not being selective and strategic about the words you place in everything from your resume to your LinkedIn profile puts you at risk of being overlooked or dismissed by potential employers, important business contacts, or even your peers. So pull your thesaurus off the shelf and consider this advice for using words more effectively to elevate your personal brand, and make the “professional you” shine:

**Tip #1: Use high-power verbs that impress.** Authorized. Improved. Led. Outperformed. Increased. Transformed. These are sit-up-and-take-notice verbs. They show that you have earned responsibility. They express positive achievement. They indicate leadership abilities. If these and other words like them apply to your professional experience, you should use them to your advantage. (For more “power words,” [check out this list](#) on About.com.)

**Tip #2: Throw down the nouns.** Without question, verbs are essential for driving home the details of your experience and underscoring your accomplishments, especially when you're job hunting. But nouns have a special strength all their own. For example, when hiring managers – and more importantly, the software applications they may use – scan resumes, they're honing in on words that represent skills, educational degrees and certifications, not terms like “managed” or “contributed.”

With creating an online profile for professional networking, you'll want to take the same approach by giving nouns a lot of real estate: After all, it's more likely that potential contacts will want to make a connection with you if you attended the same school, worked for the same employer or share a similar talent – and not because they read that you “resolved” or “demonstrated” something.

**Tip #3: Hold back on adjectives and adverbs.** First, avoid the use of adverbs that end with “ly.” While you may think “ly” is a descriptor-strengthener, that little additive can give the wrong impression. If you say you're “Skilled at handling payroll for a small business,” for example, you come across as an experienced professional making a statement of fact. Saying you performed “skillfully” in that environment sounds less confident, like you're trying to convince others that this was indeed the case.

As for adjectives: If they're nothing more than a garnish, don't put them on the plate. Words like “very” and “extremely” do little more than take up space. Focus more on offering hard facts. For instance, why tell a potential employer that you're a “highly experienced” payroll professional when you could point out that your career in the field spans 10 years?

A final tip: Avoid unnecessary jargon – like saying you “socialized” information to key stakeholders when you really just shared it with others so everyone could discuss it. Or, that you like to “think outside of the box,” when you could say you strive “to bring creative solutions to challenging problems.”

Whenever you compose something about the professional you, clarity should be your end goal and words should never get in the way.

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