Writing a CV for the Digital Age

Believe it or not the software that many recruitment businesses use, including Aaron Wallis, is able to read your CV and populate the recruitment database with your details and skills with 96% accuracy (that's 4% greater than average human accuracy!) The software then applies keyword matching and artificial intelligence to match candidates to vacancies.

Many job boards and direct employers are also now adopting this software so it has never been more imperative to re-write your CV for the digital age ensuring that it is loaded with keywords and skills to enable you to be found!
The most simplistic way to explain this is let's say, for instance that a company is looking to hire a web developer with 'Dreamweaver' and 'PHP Programming' experience. They will simply place these terms into a search and 'voila' up comes candidates with both the requirements.

Some of the most up to date 'CV parsing and searching' software like we use here at Aaron Wallis uses an algorithm to determine how relevant your skills are to a job. Believe it or not it scans your experience, skills and length of time in each role and then predicts the likelihood of you succeeding in the role that we are searching to fill! It is not so simple for sales professionals unfortunately (or luckily for us as a specialist sales recruiter!). Firstly look at the term sales – some call it 'selling', others 'business development', others 'prospecting and closing', etc. Then look at sales job titles. To one Sales Manager a 'guy out on the road' is a 'Sales Representative' to another a 'Field Sales Executive' to another a 'Business Development Manager' and to another an 'Area Manager', etc. So therefore you have to hedge your bets' and include various keywords within your CV to be 'found' by recruiters and employers.

We therefore provide you with some simple hints and tips to get your CV 'zinging' for the digital age!

One of the predicaments that you uniquely have to face as a sales professional is that your sales approach, personality, Presence, rapport skills, solution providing ability, drive, passion, enthusiasm, creativity, determination, etc. can't be assessed by a recruitment software or job matching tool so you need to still use these kind of expressions to ensure the reader gets a flavour of the real you. However you can have the most powerful CV imaginable, full of powerful words and amazing adjectives but unless it contains the right keywords you simply won't be found.

It may sound strange but you need to look at your CV from the other side of the interview table. i.e. if you are in publishing or advertising sales the most common string that someone will use to find you will be 'media sales'. You should therefore include the word media, and ideally the exact string 'media sales', somewhere within your CV.

Some software determines the result based upon the keyword density (or amount of keywords) contained within a CV. Therefore subtly, and in context, drop appropriate keywords into your CV. For instance if you are in 'technical sales' place the words 'technical', 'sales' and 'technical sales' throughout your CV. However, remember it must be subtle and in context so that it isn't cluttered and preposterous – many employers still place a very high value on the correct use of grammar!

CV parsing software, used by many of the leading recruiters, extracts your personal details and address from your CV automatically and populates their recruitment database. Therefore to give it the best chance of success (and ultimately your best chance of success) place your name, address, Date of Birth, telephone numbers, etc at the top of your CV. Your postcode is imperative as the software determines the best placed candidates using 'postcode lookup' processes. A neat little cheat would be to use the postcode of your employers, university and references to trick less sophisticated software into bringing your CV up as a result.

Use a standard TrueType font. Firstly, it looks better as as it is a regularly used font and secondly all TrueType fonts will be picked up by OCR (optical recognition) software. Never send a 'hard copy' of your CV in a font that is not TrueType (most are nowadays in standard Office products and can be identified by a TT next to the font). NB, you can't go wrong with Times New Roman, Arial, Franklin and Tahoma (and courier/century schoolbook but they're looking somewhat dated now)

You must use common job titles as these are what recruiters/hirers commonly use to find you. You may have been 'Area Support & Development Manager' in your last role but more commonly that would be a 'Regional Manager'; a 'Business Enabling Consultant' would be a 'Sales Executive', etc.

Use synonyms of your job title within your CV, i.e. if you were a National Account Manager try and use the term NAM somewhere within your role description and responsibilities.

It is common for an IT programmer or Web Developer to commence their CV with a table of skills (they've known of the importance of keywords within CVs for a long time!) Do the same as it gives you 'carte blanche' to list a whole set of keywords in context. For Instance:

Core Skills include:

Business Planning and Research	Pre-Sales
New Business Development	Technical Selling and Solution sales
Sales Training	Account Management
Sales Presentations	Managing Key Accounts
Client Presentations	Public Speaking
Event Management	Bids and Tenders
Relationship Management	Writing winning proposals
Sales and Marketing Management	Communication and Public Relations

This also allows you to use the words 'manager', 'management' 'managing' and has high keyword density for core skills such as 'sales', 'marketing' account management', etc.

Making a list of all of the sales training that you have received is another good way to get the keywords legitimately loaded into your CV (in context) and could also utilise key industry terminology

If you are familiar in the art of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) then this approach will not be alien to you. For the rest of us it is a skill we need to acquire to ensure that our CV hits the 'top of the pile'.

Good luck with your sales interviews!

Tomorrow: A Guide to Searching for Jobs Online