



LinkedIn releases list of top overused profile buzzwords

With the new year approaching, LinkedIn has released their list of 2012's top ten overused profile buzzwords. And they have created a helpful infographic to spread the news. Although the professional network added over 50 million new members this year, "creative" once again topped the list of words most frequently seen in profile descriptions. LinkedIn breaks down profile statistics for the United States and worldwide, and the word creative was the most popular for both demographics.

Residents of some countries did favor other words. India's top profile buzzword was "effective", while users in Egypt and Indonesia tended to describe themselves as "multinational." And people in Brazil preferred the term "experimental."

Aside from offering some interesting insight into the values that are prevalent in different cultures, LinkedIn's profile buzzword infographic provides useful information for professionals who wish to set themselves apart from their peers. For two years in a row, the words "creative", "organizational" and "effective" have come in at numbers one, two and three in terms of most used descriptive words. However, this year two new words, "responsible" and "analytical", made it to the list for the first time at numbers eight and nine.

Words can be used so often that they begin to lose their meaning. Terms like "innovative" and "unique", for example, are so common in marketing copy that they regularly make it on to lists of top ten overused industry buzzwords. This means they are seen so frequently by consumers that they begin to be passed over as little more than filler content. If everyone is innovative and everyone is creative, these things are no longer distinguishing features. When you use those words to describe yourself or your firm, you instantly sound just like everyone else.

Researching what others are saying about themselves or their firms can help give you ideas of what to do and what not to do. If every firm in your area has "extensive experience" (2010's top profile buzzword), then prospects have no way of knowing why you are the better choice. Instead, try to identify what clients – or other professionals in the case of LinkedIn – are looking for when they choose an attorney. If you are using LinkedIn primarily for b2b referrals, think of what other firms might want when looking for someone to trust with new cases.

Placing yourself in the position of those who are interested in hiring you will help give you a perspective that pulls you away from overused buzzwords and allows you to describe your firm in a way that is meaningful to other people. Ask yourself what you can deliver for the people who need your help. What benefits can you offer? How do things like your "creativity" or "experience" affect your performance? You can even do informal surveys of clients or colleagues by simply asking them what they were looking for when they found your firm.

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Finding answers to questions like this will help you use descriptive terms in your marketing materials and on your social profiles that actually connect with others instead of depositing you in the same box as everyone else.

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