

APPLICANT TRACKING SOFTWARE BUYER'S GUIDE

A guide to identifying, evaluating and selecting the right ATS software for your organization.



Recruiting has changed dramatically in recent years due to the integration of new technologies and the changing dynamic of the workforce.

It is no longer just a matter of hiring the best employee from those that come into the building and apply; it is now about attracting top talent and making sure that those employee candidates can apply quickly and easily. Companies that do not adapt to this new normal will be

left behind, while those that do will see competitive advantages.

Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) give companies a way to connect to the best employee candidates in the industry by putting job ads in places where these candidates organically congregate. When job ads are posted on the most applicable social sites and applying is as easy as a few well-placed taps and swipes, the application process is made painless for the candidate. When the system also automatically sorts these applications and singles out the most qualified applicants, recruiting is made painless for you.

This guide will discuss 10 steps that can help you select an ATS that perfectly fits your needs and budget.





1. Determine Whether Your Company Needs an ATS

Not every company needs an ATS, but many companies that could benefit from implementing one do not realize it. Companies in all industries can benefit from implementing an ATS into their hiring strategy and the benefits do not only extend to large enterprises.

If you can answer “yes” to most or all of the following questions, it may be time for you to start looking into purchasing an ATS:

- Does your company hire more than 20 people per year?
- Does your HR department spend hours every week sorting through applications?
- Do staffing gaps affect your company’s customer service, productivity, or bottom line?
- Does your company receive more applications than it can manage?
- Do you hire a large number of employees seasonally?
- Is your hiring process still largely done manually with paper applications and messy files?
- Is your HR department spending a lot of time manually posting job ads?
- Do candidates find it difficult or inconvenient to apply for a job?



2. Figure Out How an ATS Could Help Your Company

An ATS can help your company to fill positions quicker with more qualified candidates by expanding the candidate pool so that you are receiving applications from candidates with a broader range of skill sets and higher qualifications. Once you have begun receiving greater numbers of applications, the system can also help you to sort through the applications and select the top tier candidates. The system even assists with organization, storing the applications with any relevant documents or notes for easy retrieval and reporting.

While these are the basics, an ATS can also help your company keep up with current and changing trends. At this point, about nine out of every ten job applicants uses a mobile device to assist with their job search and application. An ATS can make it easy for your company to provide applicants with mobile accessibility, video interviewing, and other tools to make the application process ever more efficient.

If your company could benefit from integrating these technologies or from broadening the candidate pool, be sure to list these advantages.





3. Identify Your Needs and Goals

Once you have decided that your company could benefit from integrating an ATS into the hiring process, it is time to identify your specific needs and goals. This will help to narrow down the vendor selection and more clearly see the benefits of your implementation project once it has been completed. It is best to bring together a team that is representative of the departments that will be affected the most to list needs, desired features, and goals for the system.

Features that are often desired in an ATS include:

- Resume uploading capabilities
- Applicant profile creation
- Qualification sorting
- Interview scheduling, tracking, and note taking capabilities
- Jobs board website
- Pre-employment screenings
- Compliance management
- Application management
- Onboarding support
- Integration with other HR software
- Social recruiting tools





4. Calculate Budget and Estimate ROI

An ATS will generally save money on hiring and training costs and may save money when it comes to turnover, but these savings will take time to realize. It is important to calculate a realistic budget so that upfront costs do not dramatically affect the business. It is also helpful to calculate and record current recruiting costs, expenses associated with turnover, and other related costs so that improvements can be tracked and reported as ROI.



5. Perform Vendor Research

Without assistance, vendor research can be the toughest and most time consuming aspect of the ATS selection process. There are many vendors with a myriad of different products, so it can be tough to nail down which one is just right for your company. An online selection tool can help you cut down the amount of time that you need to spend on this step by matching your needs with a short list of qualified vendors and products.



6. Seek Out Vendor Reviews

To get an understanding of how other companies feel about a specific vendor and product, read reviews. While online reviews are often carefully monitored to portray the vendor in the best light, you may glean insights into certain aspects of the ATS functionality that may work for another company, but will not fit your company needs. You may also be able to connect with similar companies in your industry that can tell you more about their experiences with a particular product using message boards or other communications.



7. Begin Shortlist Creation

While conducting vendor research, you will begin to get a feel for the products and vendors that will best suit your needs. Writing down the top picks and listing specific advantages next to the products will give you a visual aid when you begin your shortlist. Comparing your goals and needs side by side with product offerings and vendor highlights can help you to more easily select a few top choices with which to move forward in the selection process.





8. Demo Your Top ATS Picks

After the shortlist has been created, it is time to see the actual products that you will be considering. Vendor demos can be fun, but it is important to make sure that your needs/features/goals list is close at hand so that your ATS selection team does not get sidetracked by fancy graphics or attractive but unnecessary features. There should only be three to five vendors doing demos, if there are more than that the shortlist needs to be narrowed down before scheduling demos.



9. Results Review

To narrow the ATS selection down to one solution, your company should review the notes taken during the demos, compare the needed features to the features offered by each vendor, review budget considerations, and work together as a unified team to agree on which solution is best. All ATS selection project team members should have a say at this point.

The results review should not be rushed, as this is the best point to identify any final concerns before committing to a specific selection. Vendor representatives should be interviewed once again so that concerns can be addressed and you can truly get a feel for how the relationship would work with one vendor versus another. If there are issues that have still not been resolved, it is not out of the question to request a second demo from select vendors so that you truly understand how the ATS will work.



10. Select Your ATS

After all points have been addressed, it will generally be clear which solution will work best for your company. You may wish to gather together your ATS selection team or even assemble a full meeting to notify stakeholders of your decision regarding the selected vendor and product. By notifying team members before moving forward with a selection, you are working to involve these team members in the process, which can be invaluable when it comes to user adoption and implementation success.





Conclusion

Integrating an ATS into your recruiting systems can be rewarding, but the selection process should be thoughtfully executed. By following this 10 step guide, you may work to involve key players within your organization into the selection process and ensure greater implementation and adoption success. You will also be more likely to identify a solution that meets or exceeds your needs and expectations, transforming your recruiting processes and bringing your hiring processes into the future.

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