

A Buyer's Guide to Applicant Tracking Systems





Table of Contents

What is an ATS	4
How can an ATS help you	5
What to consider in buying an ATS	7
How to identify your ATS requirements	10
ATS Evaluation Checklist	12

Your company is unique. Your people, culture, and business needs are all one of a kind. And as a result, so is your recruiting process. That's why it's critical to find an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) that works for your company's individual needs.

Finding the right ATS can sometimes feel like tracking down that purple squirrel candidate. There are plenty of options, but the challenge is finding the right one for your company. We hope that this simple guide helps break down the ATS-buying process into digestible and actionable steps so that you are best set-up to find the perfect ATS for your team.



This guide will be particularly helpful for companies who may be experiencing the following:

- Rapid growth with multiple job openings
- Wasted time managing multiple applications and systems
- Difficulties with internal communication flow
- Shortage of high-quality applications and candidates
- Lack of visibility into the recruiting process, outcomes, and related insights

Whether you are looking to switch your ATS or you are looking to implement one for the first time, this guide is for you.

So let's get started!

What is an ATS?

(Already familiar with ATS software? Skip ahead to section 3)

An ATS is a hiring system of record that streamlines the entire recruiting process from receiving applications to hiring employees. They come in all shapes and sizes, offer a variety of features, and can be appropriate for any type of growing organization that values efficiency.

Many ATSs include some combination of features such as:

- Job posting/job board syndication
- Job application management
- Applicant profiles (search & filtering)
- Bulk communication
- Team collaboration
- Workflow and pipeline management
- Productivity tools
- Employee referral pipeline
- Interview scheduling
- Interview scorecards
- Offer management
- Background screening (or integration)
- Approvals
- User permissions
- Reporting and analytics
- Compliance management



A good ATS helps talent acquisition professionals and their partners across the organization move through the stages of hiring swiftly and seamlessly. Recruiters, sourcers, coordinators, hiring managers, interviewers and management alike should be able to collaborate with clarity and timeliness to maximize the value and effectiveness of the ATS.

How can an ATS help you?

An ATS helps talent professionals and the overall business in three key areas:



Improves Time to Hire

An ATS can reduce lead time significantly simply by:

- Automating repetitive and time-consuming tasks such as resume parsing, disqualifying non-qualified candidates, interview scheduling, candidate feedback
- Funneling all candidates through the system which enables organizations to build and nurture talent pools for future job openings, thereby providing a valuable starting point for future open reqs
- Allowing for greater collaboration company-wide during the hiring process
- Integrating with third-party tools such as job boards, background check provider and HRIS



Improves Quality of Hire

78.3% of recruiting professionals report that having an ATS improves the quality of candidates they hire*.

An ATS helps fill each roll with top candidates by:

- Allowing for internal collaboration and real-time input from team members for any given hire
- Creating a smoother hiring process so that candidate's don't get lost in a black hole and the top candidates can get locked in with an offer quicker



Decreases Cost per Hire

With average cost of hire ranging from \$4,400 to almost \$15,000 (executive-level)*, many look to an ATS to reduce costs on a number of fronts as:

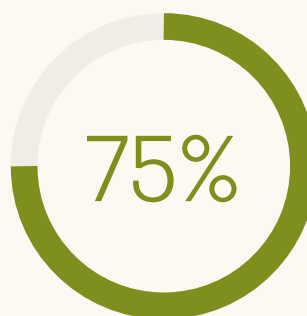
- Recruiting teams can run leaner using a system that helps eliminate redundancies
- Opening and filling job requisitions becomes faster and involves less investment as the system builds talent pool and hiring workflow efficiencies
- ATS reporting provides insights on which sourcing channels provide the best results in order to direct future investments accordingly

*source: SHRM

- Freeing up time on administrative and logistical tasks allowing more time to develop and nurture relationships with top candidates so they have a more personalized experience, are kept interested throughout the process, and can gain a better understanding of how they would fit within the company
- Improving the candidate experience, which benefits your employer brand and increases the attractiveness of your organization over competitors.

*source: GetApp

Even if you feel like you've been getting along just fine without an ATS, consider this...



of hiring professionals use an ATS

*source: Capterra

It's more competitive than ever to hire the best talent and develop winning teams. Looking for that one person that will make a big impact on the company often feels like you're looking for a needle in a haystack.

We've heard about the never-ending administrative work, the mounds of paperwork, manually shuffling of resumes, constant email back and forth to communicate with both candidates and internal stakeholders, toggling between multiple spreadsheets and folders and other disconnected systems just to try to keep things in order.

All of this busy work prevents you and your team from focusing on what's important - developing candidate relationships and making strategic talent decisions. Your job is far from easy. And not only does the absence of an ATS lead to inefficiencies and errors, hamper communication flow, complicate reporting capabilities, and result in loss of great candidates to competitors, even worse, it can lead to the wrong hires being made.

Let's breakdown the implications of not having an ATS:

Loss of productivity and data.

In addition to the hours lost per week from inefficient work systems, the absence of good trustworthy data can be detrimental to the business. In the data-driven world we now live in, manually managing the complexities of the recruiting process makes it impossible to know if you are working efficiently or effectively. And even if you tried going back to dig up the data, it would take inordinate amounts of time (plus still be lacking accuracy).

Loss of candidates and wrong hires.

The cost of acquiring talent is extraordinary these days. The cost of losing a good candidate is high enough, but it can be even worse to hire the wrong candidate. SHRM has reported figures of up to \$240K for the cost of a bad hire, inclusive of all the negative ripple effects these mistakes have on the business. These excessive costs need to be eliminated in order for high-growth companies such as yours to scale and succeed.

What to consider when buying an ATS

Every ATS offers a different combination of features to address its customers' needs, but the packaging of these features often vary across all products. Take a look at the list of popular features below and consider which features best address your company's specific needs.

Sourcing

The most effective ATS solution will not only aggregate your candidate/talent pool data for current and future use, but also integrate other quality talent pools to enable active sourcing. Sourcing comes in many forms, be it passive or active, and it is a vital springboard to recruiting activity so be sure the sourcing channels tied in with your ATS contain top quality candidates with the skills that suit your company's needs.

Advanced Candidate Search

Having first-class candidate search functionality within your existing database is paramount. An ATS should provide optimized ways to easily and effectively search for good candidates and help match them to open job requisitions.

Data and insights

An ATS should come equipped with robust analytics and reporting that highlights areas of success and areas of improvement within each candidate's process as well as on the overall hiring process as a whole. The best systems provide tailored insights and real-time visualizations embedded throughout your hiring process. These features may include automatic data capture, predictive intelligence, and custom dashboards.

Usability

An ATS should offer practical ways for recruiters, sourcers, coordinators, hiring managers, and any other key player to easily navigate the system to achieve his/her own needs and to fulfill his/her own responsibilities.

Flexibility

Needs are ever-changing so look for an ATS that can evolve as your company grows. Feature configurability and the ability to integrate with other key services in the recruiting ecosystem without incurring exorbitant fees is important. Think about the benefits of having a system that doesn't charge by feature so you are sure to have what you need now and are confident you will have what you need in the future.

Workflow management

Everything from resume submission, to sourcing and prospecting, to screening, to interviewing, to placement should be part of the system so you can maximize efficiency and accuracy.

Collaboration

With a variety of internal stakeholders involved in hiring, your ATS should naturally provide solutions to facilitating easy and seamless communication between team members, whether it be for scheduling, sending reminders, providing notes, reviewing notes or messaging to keep the process flowing.

Scheduling

Talent acquisition professionals spend a lot of their time on scheduling, and a good ATS will help make it much easier and faster. Look for an ATS that has best-in-class calendaring integrations with top products like G-suite or Outlook to maximize visibility and simplify scheduling for interviews.

Interview Scorecards

Interview scorecards allow the interview panel to record notes and feedback on candidates' fit for the role. Having these scorecards exist within the ATS allows for seamless information flow and record-keeping.

Integrations

To further streamline workflow and output, look for essential ATS integrations that are vital to your team's specific workflow.

Approval Processes

Your ATS should provide a simple way to track feedback and approvals at every relevant stage of the hiring process - from opening up a new job all the way through to final offer approval.

Security

Data security is a top priority. Your company's and your company's candidate data should be protected at all times, so it's important that your ATS provider has an exceptional reputation in security and demonstrates meticulous care in the way data is integrated and/or transferred.



Compliance

Considering the important trends in hiring and general enforceable policies, it is important that your company considers an ATS that has built-in EEOC, OFCCP and GDPR compliance tracking and reporting to help keep your company and its practices on track.

Support

Be sure to understand and be comfortable with the level of support that will be available to you with any given ATS product. Working with teams you know and trust, who you can reach at any time, will add value to your overall experience. You should also understand whether there are any incremental fees incurred when utilizing ATS support.

Implementation process and timing

Whether switching ATSs or buying an ATS for the first time, it is important to understand the implementation process and timing. There is no system implementation that can happen overnight but be sure to understand your own timing and needs. And again, you should inquire on any additional fees potentially required for implementation, data migration, support, etc.

Mobile access

Many ATSs are built out to have mobile access so candidates can apply on their mobile devices and all internal members of the hiring process can access a mobile-optimized site or app to manage workflow.

Employee Referral

One of the most valuable sources to the recruiting arm of a company can be its own internal employees. Seeking out an ATS that facilitates employee referrals is beneficial for both sourcing great candidates but also for tracking activity to develop employee incentive programs to promote more referrals.

Career Site

Some ATSs also provide hosted career sites, which provide the company the ability to post jobs in the ATS and have it directly feed to their career site/jobs page. As a result, when candidates apply directly through the company's career site their application automatically flows into the ATS. This creates a seamless experience for the first action on both ends.

How to identify your ATS requirements



The process of buying a new ATS can feel like an enormous undertaking so breaking it down into smaller steps could make it feel less overwhelming. Here's one suggested approach:

1. Evaluate your current hiring process

Document or outline your entire hiring process. Who are the key players? Who does what at which stage? What activities are necessary from the moment a resource need is identified all the way to the point an offer is accepted? How long is each step taking? And what tools do you and your team need to get through those stages efficiently and effectively?

2. Identify what your current ATS challenges are

What/where are your biggest pain points in hiring? Where do your recruiters/sourcers/coordinators/generalists spend most of their time? What features (either in your current ATS or current workflow) are you missing that would provide the most value to you?

3. Scope out your ATS “must-haves”

What would an ideal ATS look like to you? What problems would it solve for? What features are must-haves? What features are nice-to-haves?

4. Make the business case for an ATS

If management still needs to buy-in to the need for an ATS, consider the right problems to highlight and questions to answer for them in order to garner support. What are the key focal areas for the company currently? What do you hear management constantly talking about? Is it cost-savings, rapid growth, or operational efficiencies? Whatever it may be, you can then frame the benefits of having an ATS to those company-wide priorities. For example, an ATS can organize and streamline recruitment, bring better candidates through the hiring funnel faster, facilitate communication among team members, improve candidate experiences and the employer brand, help with compliance, and so on...

5. Determine who needs access to the system

Who needs to access the ATS company-wide (executives, HR heads/generalists, recruiters, sourcers, coordinators, hiring managers, interviewers, all other employees)? How many people will need access, now and within 1 year? Within 2 years?

6. Assess your budget for the system

What is your budget for an ATS? Is this the annual budget? Is there room for growth in the coming years? Does this budget account for any incremental fees the provider may charge (set-up fees, ongoing usage fees, support fees, etc.)? Is the cost of your ATS system fixed (vs. pay per feature)?

7. Research and evaluate more than one solution

Seek out information and do your due-diligence to uncover the ATS solutions that best match your company's needs. You can use ATS review platforms, industry websites, and trusted colleagues to create a short-list of viable options. Consider how each ATS provider will scale with and support your long-term success. Then contact these companies and ask for a demo! Be sure to have those working in the ATS on the day-to-day involved at the start to optimize your evaluation process.

5 ATS Evaluation Checklist

After you've read through this guide and have done all the legwork in exploring and narrowing down the ATSs that could be a potential fit, take a moment to reflect and assess what the most important features are to you. This will reveal further clarity and hopefully help you zero in on the perfect ATS for your team and your company. A suggested framework is provided below.

LinkedIn Talent Hub is a great ATS solution for small to mid-market companies experiencing significant growth and are seeking a solution to drive recruiting efficiencies and effectiveness. It has been included as an example in the below.

	LinkedIn Talent Hub	SMB Level ATS	Enterprise Level ATS
Manage job postings	✓	✓	✓
Job board syndication	✓	✓	✓
Candidate sourcing	✓	✗	✗
Candidate search	✓	✓	✓
Candidate recommendations	✓	✗	✗
Resume collection	✓	✓	✓
Applicant auto-ranking	✓	✗	✓
Pipeline tracking	✓	✓	✓
Interview templates (questions/scorecards)	✓	✓	✓
Scheduling	✓	✗	✓
Synced inbox/messaging	✓	✗	✗
Interview feedback	✓	✓	✓
Internal collaboration tools	✓	✗	✓
Data/reporting dashboards	✓	✓	✓
System configurability	✓	✓	✓
Employee referrals	✓	✓	✓
Advanced user permissions	✓	✗	✓
Hiring manager features	✓	✗	✓
Offer management	✓	✗	✓
Data Security	✓	✓	✓
Key integrations	✓	✓	✓
EEO/OFCCP/GDPR compliance	✓	✓	✓
Careers site	✓	✓	✓
NO additional fees (implementation, customer support, integrations)	✓	✗	✗

Done with all of the above
and want to talk through this more?

We're here to help!

You can either reach out directly to your relationship manager or find out more about how to transform your approach to hiring here: lnkd.in/talenthub