



Most Human Resources (HR) departments use a hiring technology known as an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to screen candidates. The ATS helps HR identify candidates to interview based on specified parameters. According to Glassdoor, the average job posting receives approximately 250 applicants. Of these 250 applicants, 4 to 6 will be called in to interview, and one candidate will be offered the job. Jobscan indicates that more than 98.2% of Fortune 500 organizations use ATS. Understanding the basics of how an ATS functions may be helpful in optimizing your chances of being interviewed for a certain role; however, being intentional about networking may provide the most help for your job search compared to constant resume revising. Often, even if your resume is first screened by an ATS, a human recruiter or hiring manager will make the final determination about whom to interview.

ATS Basics:

- An ATS is a company's centralized database for candidates, job openings, interview tools, placements, and analytics. It may at times be referred to as hiring software, human capital management, talent lifecycle management, or recruiting software.
- ATS systems parse information from application materials based on criteria determined by the employer.
- Some companies (Amazon, LinkedIn, Google) use their own internal ATS.
- ATS may rely on different techniques to screen candidates. Some may use "knockout questions" such as "Do you have a valid Commercial Driver's License?" whereas others may rely on frequency of included keywords to screen candidates.

How to Optimize Your Resume for the ATS:

- Identify industry-specific key words from the company and the job description to incorporate into your resume while also providing context about your achievements. It's also wise to conduct additional research on key skills typical of the functional role.
- Be specific and avoid overused buzz words such as "results-driven" and "dynamic".
- Keep formatting simple and easy to read (avoid fancy graphics, charts, and text boxes).
- Do not use a ready-made template, as the content may not be screened correctly. If you're in need of a resume sample, please refer to the existing examples available in this Guide and in the Resources section of Handshake.
- **Develop and submit your resume in a Word document, since this format is generally scanned correctly by an ATS. Consider saving your resume in a PDF if emailing to a recruiter or networking contact.**
- Avoid placing information such as your contact information into the header or footer on the first page of your resume, as some ATS may not be able to read the content. If your resume is longer than one page, you can include a header with your name and page number on subsequent pages.
- The bottom line is that it's important to be aware of the constantly changing technological landscape of HR. Creating a resume that stands out for content and not for design will be advantageous in complying with most ATS. Please visit the Career Center for additional help in updating your resume and conducting a targeted job search.