

# Applicant Tracking Systems 2018

What do you know about applicant tracking systems?

If you think the first obstacle to getting a job interview is a recruiter's judgment, you're not seeing the whole picture. [98% of Fortune 500 companies](#) and a growing number of small and mid-sized businesses filter resumes through an applicant tracking system (ATS) before someone takes a look... if they ever do.

Learn how to get your resume to rank highly within ATS so that it will be seen by the human decision makers scheduling job interviews.

## 1. What are applicant tracking systems?

Applicant tracking system software provides recruiting and hiring tools for companies. Among other functions, these systems collect and sort thousands of resumes.

**Read full article:** [What is an applicant tracking system?](#)

When you apply for a job online, your resume isn't typically going directly to a recruiter or hiring manager. It's first being processed by an ATS. Whether that human recruiter ever sees your resume could depend on how well your resume is optimized for ATS algorithms.

## 2. Why employers use applicant tracking systems

Top employers hire for several jobs at a time and receive hundreds of resumes for any given opening. Because applying for a job online is easier than ever, many of these applicants are unqualified and figured "it was worth a try."

Applicant tracking systems keep all these resumes in one place, helping recruiters and hiring managers stay organized as well as [EEOC](#) compliant. In theory, these systems also save time by automatically surfacing and highlighting top candidates. In reality, ATS do help hiring professionals narrow their applicant pool, but top candidates slip through the cracks.

List Name	<b>PHP Developers in MN</b>	Last Updated	07-02-12 (1:37 pm)
Notes	Dynamic list of candidates in MN with the keyword "PHP" in their resume.	Created By	Tony S.

Name	Location	Updated	Rating	Recent Status - Extended
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Sathya Hariesh</a> (Java Developer)	minneapolis, MN	07-02-12	★★★★★	<a href="#">Submit for review</a> - Java Developer - ACME Enterpris
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Andrew Kandels</a>	Richfield, MN	07-02-12	★★★★★	No Contact - SCUBA Instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Matt Ingram</a>		07-02-12	★★★★★	No Contact - Website Applicant - Java Developer - A
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Richard Stevenson</a>	Minneapolis, MN	06-27-12	★★★★★	<a href="#">Contacted</a> - SCUBA Instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Janet Brooks</a>	Minneapolis, MN	06-27-12	★★★★★	<a href="#">Contacted</a> - Weight Exerciser
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Greg Batterfield</a>	Minneapolis, MN	06-27-12	★★★★★	No Contact - Weight Exerciser
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Bob Fullerson</a>	Minneapolis, MN	06-14-12	★★★★★	No Contact - Weight Exerciser
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Adam Carleton</a>	Minneapolis, MN	06-07-12	★★★★★	No Contact - SCUBA Instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Dorota Konarzewska</a>	Duluth, MN	04-24-12	★★★★★	No Contact - SCUBA Instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Rachel Donalds</a>	Minneapolis, MN	04-24-12	★★★★★	<a href="#">Contacted</a> - .NET Developer - ABC Siding
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">John Harper</a>	Minneapolis, MN	04-24-12	★★★★★	No Contact - SCUBA Instructor
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Paul Giggings</a>	Minneapolis, MN	04-20-12	★★★★★	No Contact - Weight Exerciser
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Paul Johnson</a>	Richfield, MN	09-19-11	★★★★★	<a href="#">Hired</a> - .NET Developer - ABC Siding
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Kevin Juniper</a>	Saint Paul, MN	07-26-11	★★★★★	<a href="#">Not In Consideration</a> - .NET Developer - ABC Siding
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Anonymous Candidate</a>	Minnetonka, MN	07-26-11	★★★★★	<a href="#">Hired</a> - .NET Developer - ABC Siding

CATSone ATS

applicants

### 3. Applicant tracking systems are everywhere

Most large corporations utilize applicant tracking systems. Jobscan research found that [98% of Fortune 500 companies use ATS](#) while a [Kelly OCG survey](#) estimated 66% of large companies and 35% of small organizations rely on recruitment software.

There are dozens of different ATS, each with their own features, strengths, weaknesses, and quirks. Here are just a few of the [top ATS](#):

**Taleo**

**Workday**

**SuccessFactors**

**Greenhou**

**Brassring**

**iCIMS**

**Jobvite**

**Lever**

**SmartRecruiters**

**JazzHR**

**CATS**

**Bambooh**

If you're applying to a large organization, chances are you'll face an ATS. If you're applying through any online form, you're applying through an ATS. Even job sites like Indeed and LinkedIn have their own built in ATS.

### 4. How applicant tracking systems work

Applicant tracking systems collect and store resumes in a database for hiring professionals to access. Resumes may also be stored long after the original job you applied for is

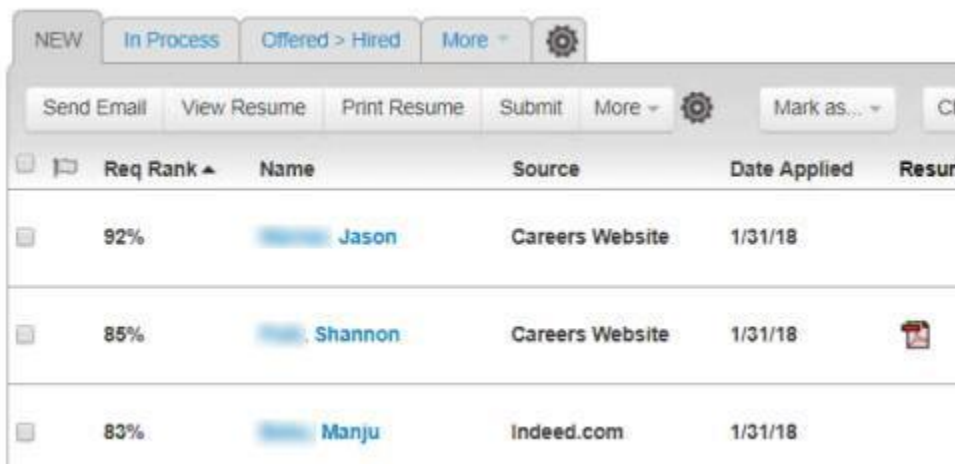
filled. [Corporate recruiters](#) or hiring managers can then search and sort through the resumes in a number of ways, depending on the system they're using.

## Viewing Applications


Some recruiters still choose to glance at every job application that comes through their applicant tracking system. In this case, most take a quick glance at the applicant's past highlights, job titles, and companies. They can make a determination about whether they want to learn more [in about 6 seconds](#). It's important to make sure your top skills and qualifications are easily identifiable.

## Automatic Rankings

Some applicant tracking systems can automatically compare your resume to the job description. For example, [Taleo calls this feature "Req Rank."](#) which ranks each applicant based on how well their resume scores based on the job description.



The screenshot shows a user interface for an applicant tracking system. At the top, there are tabs for 'NEW', 'In Process', 'Offered > Hired', and 'More'. Below the tabs is a toolbar with buttons for 'Send Email', 'View Resume', 'Print Resume', 'Submit', 'More', 'Mark as...', and 'Close'. The main area is a table with columns for 'Req Rank', 'Name', 'Source', 'Date Applied', and 'Resume'. Three candidates are listed:

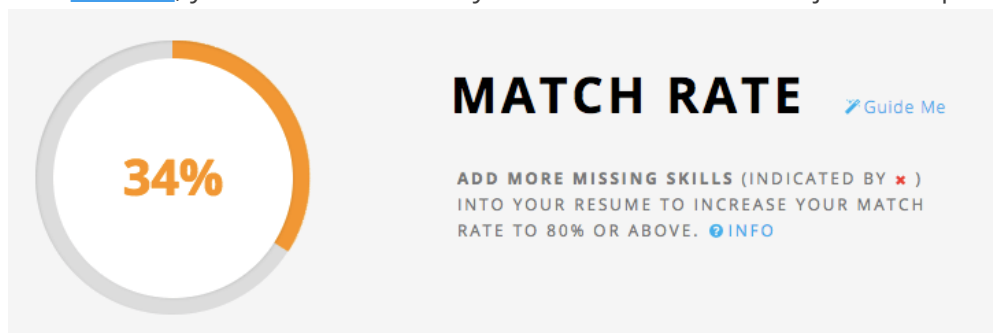
Req Rank	Name	Source	Date Applied	Resume
92%	Jason	Careers Website	1/31/18	
85%	Shannon	Careers Website	1/31/18	
83%	Manju	Indeed.com	1/31/18	

Candidates ranked

based on job requisition match in Taleo.

Instead of reviewing each and every application, the recruiter can focus squarely on candidates the ATS has identified as a great match.

With [Jobscan](#), you can see how well your resume matches the job description.



## Keyword Searches

A common way recruiters filter resumes in an applicant tracking system is by searching for key skills and titles.





For example, if a recruiter is hiring for an Administrative Assistant position out of 400 resumes, their first step will probably be a search for “Administrative Assistant.” This will isolate candidates that have done the exact job before. Anyone that doesn’t have that exact term in their resume is out of luck.

A search can contain multiple terms. For example, they might perform a complex search that contains a combination of titles and skills important for the job:

*Administrative Assistant AND data entry AND payroll ...*

Candidates who can predict the correct [resume keywords](#) will have the greatest chance of being included in recruiter search results. The best way figure out which skills and keywords to include is by analyzing the job description.

[Jobscan](#) automates this process by analyzing your resume against the job description to show the top skills and keywords missing from your resume.

SKILL	VARIATIONS 	RESUME	JOB DES
Manufacturing 			5
Field Service		3	3
Troubleshooting		1	3
Engineering			3

Hard skills comparison in Jobscan. Click to see full example.

## 5. Resume formatting matters in applicant tracking systems

When you upload your resume into an applicant tracking system, the recruiter won’t necessarily view the file. Some ATS parse the document into a digital profile to make things uniform and searchable.

This causes big problems for job seekers.

Many ATS parsing algorithms are outdated and unintelligent, causing your resume information to get distorted or lost. This means vital keywords or details might not be imported. Imagine your most important qualification slipping through the cracks!

Modern ATS are starting to get away from this practice, but some popular systems like iCIMS (used by Amazon, General Mills, Comcast) still do it. In order to create an [ATS-friendly resume](#) that is parsable by these outdated systems, be sure to keep section headings simple, use consistent formatting for your work history and dates, avoid tables, and use a .docx or .pdf file format.

## 6. How to “beat” applicant tracking systems

There is no universal trick to beating applicant tracking systems. Surviving an ATS and getting invited for a job interview requires well-written resume that is mindful of ATS algorithms as well as the people pushing the buttons.

This includes:

- Carefully [tailoring your resume](#) for each and every job you apply to
- Directly addressing qualifications found in the job description
- Increasing searchability by adding [resume keywords](#) based on the job description
- Focusing on the most impactful information in your [work experience section](#)
- Keeping your resume formatting simple so that an ATS can accurately parse it

## 7. Don't cheat or over-optimize for applicant tracking systems

Optimizing your keywords and formatting for applicant tracking systems is *not* the same as cheating the system.

In theory, you can trick ATS algorithms by *stuffing* your resume with keywords. Some do this by secretly adding additional keywords to their resumes using “invisible” white text or by unnaturally overusing keywords.

**Full article:** [Are You Guilty of Resume Keyword Stuffing?](#)

These tricks might help you get a better initial score in the ATS, but they're unlikely to fool recruiters. Instead of getting yourself blacklisted from the company, focus on crafting the best resume possible based on your actual skillset.

## 8. Applicant tracking systems are here to stay

During the Great Recession, employers were flooded with applications and wanted features that discouraged and filtered out unqualified candidates. This resulted in many of the bloated application processes and indiscriminate filters found in ATS today. Unfortunately, improving unemployment rates won't mark the end of ATS.

While outdated systems are still in use at some large companies, we are seeing new ATS being developed for the modern age. As employers fight for the best talent, candidate experience is becoming more of a priority. Automation and ranking systems aren't going away; they're just becoming more technical as [recruiting software begins leveraging AI](#).

An ATS-optimized resume is the first step to getting past the bots and face to face with an actual person. [Jobscan](#) tests and researches common ATS to help job seekers avoid the traps of these systems, from the outdated to the cutting edge.