

What's so important about Applicant Tracking System integrations?

By Shane Long, CEO, deverus

Background screening has faced some significant changes in the last few years. Not easy for an industry so well established. The brunt of that change has been in technology, and specifically how the background process now must communicate with cross-company platforms. Best practices in background screening now have more in common with high-tech industries than other human resources disciplines.

To have any hope of staying ahead of the curve, maintaining services, and providing effective solutions, background screeners must be making constant investment in the hardware and software that underpins their operations. Just as in high-tech industries, background screeners must not only give customers what they now need, but what they will need tomorrow, before end-users ever realize they will need it.

One of the most meaningful investments background screeners can currently make is in integrating multiple applicant tracking system (ATS) with screening services and the Web properties that job-seekers use.

An ATS allows firms to monitor and compare candidates as they progress through the screening process, beginning at the recruitment stage. The ATS market has existed for well over a decade, but a proliferation of new tools and cloud services have brought automation to job posting and data collection to almost every small business under the sun.

An ATS provides one of the most immediate benefits to customer HR departments. Understanding what an ATS can offer your customers will help you begin to understand what your end-users might be asking for tomorrow.

Why Add an ATS?

Time is invaluable for every business and the biggest benefit your customers find in using an ATS is time savings.

Deploying an ATS allows a company to streamline processes around job postings, applicant comparisons, and applicant notifications. The ATS provides a steady flow of information throughout this chain, all in one location.

Integrating with an ATS allows you to quicken that flow of information and further ease the time burden of your customers by automating screenings once applicants reach a certain point in the recruitment process.

The benefit you provide is making the screening automatic and robust. The stronger your offering is here, the more efficiently your customers' operations can run.

Integration also eliminates duplicate data entry and the need to export information across systems while making the process more secure by keeping it all in a single process. This makes the backbone you provide more secure and improves the experience of end-users.

Picking qualified ATS partners also helps your clients reduce their liability by removing unqualified candidates, based on their background, earlier in the hiring process. Integration applies a uniform standard to all applicants, which can be helpful to avoid any possible FCRA compliance issues.

Unfortunately, a crowded market increases the potential for wasted time developing integration with an under-used ATS. Like most things in business, starting a dialog with connections and customers is the best first step when choosing which ATS paths to follow.

Go Where Your Customers Are Going

Applicant tracking systems are a significant time and financial investment for your end-users. They've done their homework, so you can ask for help on yours.

Talk to your clients about the ATS programs they already have in use or are considering. Tell them of the benefits you can bring after integrating with their partners, from time savings to improved risk detecting earlier in the recruitment period. Make the conversation about solving their problem and you'll quickly build out a list of the ATSS used by your clients.

Integrating with an ATS that your clients already use reduces their training expenses. Since HR departments run small and lean, any burden you can reduce is a significant benefit to your customers. Building on existing client partnerships makes the hiring process more efficient.

If the account liaison with your client is unable or willing to say which ATS they are looking at for the future, Google is your best weapon.

Searching for jobs posted by companies can often give clues as to which ATS is in use. Some services such as iCIMIS and Bullhorn – which is very popular for recruiters – brand postings located on various platforms. Branding may be hidden at the bottom of a “Careers” Web page or may be obvious with a logo as the thumbnail on a LinkedIn post sharing the open position.

You can also search for the size of your client and narrow down the field of available ATS for their number of employees and determine if they are looking at more features

than just applicant tracking. SuccessFactors and HRsmart are two examples of popular enterprise ATS platforms that provide a suite of applications that take over some Human Resources duties once a candidate becomes an employee: performance management, compensation planning, career development, and more.

If your clients tend to be of a certain size, make a list of the ATS providers that would fit their budget and their staffing needs. This is a great time to leverage your existing data on your clients. Use the historical data you already maintain to determine the amount of positions they hire over a six-month timeframe. If a client is looking to on-board 25 employees, then they likely need a service that supports more than five consecutive postings but don't need one that has a flat fee for the first 100 jobs.

If you are targeting larger companies that are in or near the Fortune 500 for your services, you should align with some of the larger ATS providers who also focus on this segment, particularly: Oracle Taleo Enterprise Edition, PeopleSoft, and Kenexa BrassRing.

Build a Better Network

After developing your target list of ATS integration partners, reach out to these companies and try to create a relationship with someone on their staff. You will need a champion within their organization, as there are a lot of background screening companies trying to get their attention. It's best to start off simply learning about the ATS provider, workflow and existing integration partners.

These initial discussions can help you gauge the time it will take to provide support and determine if your developers' abilities are up to onboarding the ATS partner.

The broader the partner base of an ATS the more likely they have solution that uses standards, such as being HR-XML compliant. Using standards-based platforms improves the backbone you're building out and improves operational efficiency of future work for you and your customers.

Discussions with an established ATS can also guide your expectations for the data and other information that you'll be collecting and processing. They can provide a clear understanding of the workflow, volume, and touch points to help you determine if your system is robust enough to integrate well.

Your background screening operation needs to facilitate the ATS; you don't want to sign on a new partner and give your developers additional modules to build right before they work on a large integration and onboarding project.

Taking a proactive approach to integration partners puts the keys needed to open new doors going forward in your hands.

The 'Need' Stage Is Too Late

The bottom line for all of this? If you wait until you're trying to win a new customer or keep an existing one by starting to create more integrations, you're too late.

The conversations you have with customers show you which integrations you're lacking, but the crux of your research is to determine which ATSs to add to the mix. Integrating with these partners must be a proactive step that you can present to customers as an additional benefit.

The true power of integrating with an ATS is to show that you're ahead of your customers and able to support them as they grow and adopt new technologies. It gives you a chance to improve customer HR activities even before your customers realize they need it.

Think of yourself as staring down a long hallway of locked doors. For the time being, you're not certain which ones are hiding opportunity, but you will be over time as potential and continuing customers knock. Proactively building new ATS integrations and relationships puts the door keys in your hands. Waiting to develop them will leave you running into walls as opportunity walks away, never able to catch up to the growth you could have had.

Be proactive. Focusing on both established and high-growth players in the ATS market builds a forward-thinking image in the minds of customers. It also allows you to develop a stronger platform for all of your future customers.

When companies know that you can support their growth tomorrow, they're more likely to become customers today.

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About deverus

Founded in 1998, deverus is the leading provider of mission-critical workflow solutions to the background check industry.

Companies run over one million background checks per month using online solutions from deverus. More information about deverus' efforts to increase system reliability and minimize downtime is available at www.deverus.com.