



## ATS TO WORK WITH YOUR BACKGROUND SCREENING FIRM

By Attorney Lester S. Rosen, Founder and CEO of [Employment Screening Resources® \(ESR\)](#)

An **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** is a software application that automates and streamlines the recruitment and hiring process. The vast majority of companies that recruit and retain top candidates either currently use, or plan to use, an ATS solution. The importance of hiring qualified and properly vetted employees is critical and integrating an organization's background screening program to create a seamless process is essential. With literally hundreds of ATS options to choose from, all offering a bewildering array of features and benefits, the big question is "Which ATS should I choose?" This article is intended to review 15 critical areas employers should review when choosing an ATS:

1. **Candidate Experience.** If candidates have a poor experience using an ATS because of a lengthy process and slow performance, they will leave. Since the candidate experience is so important and is an integral part of an employer's branding, have the ATS provider give a first-hand experience of the application process for a candidate. Millennials, in particular, want software that is logical and intuitive as well as mobile device friendly.
2. **Customer Support and Implementation.** Learn exactly how the ATS implements the solution, including specifics in terms of training, support, and timelines. Since downtime and performance issues can be problematic with an ATS, find out what customer support is available and when. The best case scenario is the ATS vendor offers 24/7 customer support but learn what hours and days the customer support team is available and the response time if issues emerge.
3. **Ease of Use.** The ATS system should be able to be used easily with minimum training to save time and money. While some ATS vendors may offer a number of confusing "bells and whistles," the most important factor is whether the ATS is easy to set up, intuitive, and easily maintained.
4. **Financial Viability & Scalability.** Since new ATS vendors are popping up almost daily, collect data on an ATS vendor's revenue, financial viability, and years in business in order to avoid frustration over the lost money and lost time used to implement a new ATS. If an employer grows and needs additional services or capacity, can the ATS provider keep up?
5. **Integrations.** Larger employers utilize multiple service providers including background screening firms and onboarding solutions. Hiring can be enhanced if various hiring related processes can all be integrated. Employers should learn what resources the ATS vendor will provide for integration. Since some ATS vendors may be overextended, make sure there are dedicated resources available when ready to integrate. ***Be careful about accepting a screening or onboarding provider only because they are already integrated. It is important to fully vet these providers. The fact that they are integrated is not a testament to quality.*** An employer should not allow themselves to be steered to a pre-existing partner just because of the pre-integration.
6. **Job Posting & Social Networking.** An ATS should have robust job posting and social networking capabilities in order to gain better candidate visibility. Make sure the ATS has access to job sites and social networking sites and have the vendor explain the posting process.
7. **Legal Compliance.** U.S. companies, whether doing business with the federal government or not, should make sure the ATS has tracking tools for legal compliance issues involving race, sex, and other factors in order to avoid exposure to lawsuits and fines.

8. **Ownership of Data.** Since employers will need your data if deciding to change ATS vendors or your business, ask the ATS vendor if candidate resumes and records can be downloaded and find out exactly what will be received, in what format, and if there is a charge for these services.
9. **Performance.** Learn about the up-time percentage record and speed of the ATS since slow performance and downtime can lead to lost candidates and opportunities. Find out the ATS vendor's record regarding system outages and where their data centers and servers are located.
10. **Portals.** Ensure the ATS has an attractive and intuitive Internal Candidate Portal for employees to access to view positions as well as an Employee Referral Portal for employees to refer their friends. Evaluate these ATS portals for the user experience for both employees and candidates.
11. **References and Demonstration.** Ask the ATS vendor for five references and prepare a list of questions based on the factors listed in this article. An employer should ensure the references are from users similar enough to make them meaningful. At a bare minimum, have an internal recruiter, an IT professional, and a hiring manager included in the selection of an ATS. Review in detail each and every step along the way, and avoid making assumptions about workflow. Once committed to an ATS, if a "must have" feature is discovered missing, it may be very difficult or expensive to get the system modified.
12. **Reporting.** At a minimum, make sure the ATS vendor has a reporting tool that reports information such as time-to-fill, diversity, and source of hire. Check what ATS reports are standard, if customized reports can be run, and how long these reports take to be delivered.
13. **Search.** The search functionality of a quality ATS should be quick and accurate with logical results. It should allow employers to pre-screen based upon job criteria and filter for particular needs. Have the ATS vendor perform multiple tests of actual searches on a live system and learn what type of search engine they use.
14. **The Cloud vs. IT.** Unless employers have dedicated IT resources, they should want their ATS vendor to maintain and update the system (software as a service - SAAS) so they can hold the ATS vendor accountable and not have to deal with over extended internal IT resources.
15. **Tools and Workflow.** Ensure that the ATS can provide the basic tools that are needed such as sorting, maintaining resume databases, and arranging interviews? By documenting the hiring process, employers can double check that all necessary workflows can be accommodated by the ATS. Advanced tools may include job application management, HR compliance management, resume downloading and parsing, applicant profiles, online job center for applicants, background verification and screening, HRIS Integration, offer letter generation, automated interviews, intelligent candidate matching, and mobile accessibility.

[Employment Screening Resources®](#) (ESR) is integrated with the most popular Applicant Tracking Solutions and can assist your organization in selecting the right ATS partner and has over 20 years of experience in working closely with ATS providers. Given the importance of the right decision, consulting with an independent third party background screening expert like ESR, employers can eliminate the hype, gain insights, ensure compliance and focus on quality providers that offer the right ATS solution to meet their hiring and screening needs.

#### About the Author



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