



Best Practices in Choosing an Enterprise-Level Applicant Tracking/ Hiring Management System: Keeping the Candidate Experience in Mind

Finding the right Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a critical business mandate for small and large companies alike. The right ATS automates and streamlines hiring processes, increasing efficiency and contributing to enterprise productivity. When organizations select an ATS, one of their primary considerations is ease of use for the recruiter or hiring manager. That makes sense, since these are the people who will be using the system to manage their recruiting efforts.

But they aren't the only people who'll be using the system.


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Candidates, both active and passive, will often get their first impressions of employment with your company from the company career site and, if still interested, from the online application process.

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The assumption in acquiring an Applicant Tracking System is that there will be applicants to track, yet this key demographic is typically not considered by companies as they go out to bid. They tend to focus on the technical aspects of the ATS: the hardware requirements, resume search capabilities, data storage, compliance and compatibility. Of course all these factors need to be carefully considered because implementing an ATS is no light undertaking; companies select an ATS only once every 2-5 years. A good ATS can reduce the time spent with hourly candidates by 15-60%, dramatically reduce time-to-fill for all categories of employees and improve quality of hire. The hiring function becomes more efficient and effective, increasing overall productivity.

Ultimately, however, the Applicant Tracking System begins with the applicant. "If you want high application and offer acceptance rates," says Dr. John Sullivan, "HR needs to learn how to duplicate the level of customer service that is usually provided by the sales, customer support, and product service departments."¹ That means taking into account the needs, preferences and other demographic considerations of your targeted workforce – *before* you buy an ATS.



It's critical to have an ATS that begins with a well-developed, easy-to-navigate career site so candidates can apply online.

¹ Dr. John Sullivan, "An Applicant's Bill Of Rights Will Improve Your Acceptance Rates," 2003, ere.net



BEST PRACTICES IN ATS SELECTION

Though companies need a well-designed ATS no matter who they are hiring, it's important to consider just who will be using your career site. The majority of Americans are paid an hourly rate, in industries such as retail, manufacturing and foodservice. The hourly workforce is one of the nation's biggest growth segments. Most of these hourly workers are young, and reachable via the Internet. 83% of 18-29-year-olds are regular Internet users.² In the current competitive hiring climate, your site needs to attract and welcome these candidates from the very first impression. It's critical to have an ATS that begins with a well-developed, easy-to-navigate career site so candidates can apply online. A good online experience equals good branding – and the converse is true. Applicants should be treated like customers.

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Understand who your candidates are. As discussed above, most Americans regularly use the Internet – but do your prospects? For example, while 70% of all U.S. adults are online, only 56% of Hispanic adults are.³ Consider the age range, cultural background and educational level of your candidates when constructing your career site – and when creating access to it. Do you have on-site kiosks where walk-ins, or those without computer access, can apply?

What language(s) do they speak? In an increasingly multi-cultural society, English-only career sites are obsolete. Your ATS must contain multiple language functionality.

What language are you speaking? Candidates know immediately if they are being talked down to, or if the language is elevated beyond the job description. Store clerks and engineers require two different kinds of communication.

Do you hire at the corporate (exempt) and hourly (non-exempt) level? Do you have multiple locations across the country? In other countries? How are you addressing the needs of each subset of your target workforce? Can hiring managers easily share candidate information and evaluations across all locations? Ease of use for managers means a swifter response for applicants.

Are your employees hourly, salaried, contract, contingent, or a mix? Your ATS should be able to customize the application process for different categories of pay. First-time retail job seekers, for instance, won't have a resume to upload, so their process will necessarily be different from that of senior managers.

Make it easy to apply for positions, and to check the status once the application is complete. Do prospective employees have to hunt through your site to find job openings, or is there a prominent link on the home page? Do you expect applicants to spend an hour plowing through forms and questions, or have you streamlined the process in consideration of their time? Is there a logical flow to the process – that is, does the applicant understand why certain elements are required? Can they see the light at the end of the application tunnel? Can they save their work and complete the application later if needed? Every step of

² Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, December 2006

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the career site’s construction should be driven by what will create a convenient and enjoyable experience for the candidate.

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Strike a balance between the back end and front end of the technology.

Some career sites look nice but are hard to navigate or nominally functional, while others are so function-oriented as to seem cold and clinical. Because the applicant experience is so important, your site has to balance ease of use, “look and feel” and time invested with robust prescreening, qualifying, testing and data gathering (i.e. resume, application, online forms). Ideally, hourly candidates will have a self-selecting process that expedites hiring decisions, while exempt applicants will initially provide just enough information for recruiters to determine if they qualify for further screening. In this way, the site serves applicants and recruiters alike.

THE RIGHT SOLUTION – NOW

Ann Morgan, Director of Field HR and Training for AutoZone, recently went out to bid for an ATS. The company has over 4,000 stores in the U.S., Mexico and Puerto Rico. She found that many solutions would work for them at the corporate level, but their hiring process at the store level needed to change as well.

“AutoZone always puts customers first,” says Morgan, “And in this case, our customers are the applicants, so it was important that we make the online process as user friendly as possible.”

Ann looked for one vendor that could provide two solutions, plus the customization to meet their specific hiring process needs. nowHIRE was that one vendor.

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nowHIRE met the challenge with a fully integrated, web-based, multiple-track application process for corporate, hourly, internal and contingent workers and distribution centers in multiple languages – residing on a single platform.
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For example, candidates for corporate positions are directed to a shorter “two-tiered” initial application process where at a minimum they can upload a resume and initially pre-screen themselves with weighted question types. Hourly “store” candidates are put through a more robust “applicant self-selection” process that extracts pertinent candidate information to facilitate a quicker, more consistent hire. The hourly solution includes at a minimum: prescreening, qualifying, testing, scoring, data gathering, online forms (such as FCRA and WOTC), assessments, status checking, applicant support, eSignature and automated “personal touch” correspondence.

To enhance the experience, the candidates have access to the application around the clock, and they can stop and start at will. Walk-ins can apply from an in-store computer. Once the application process is complete, candidates can

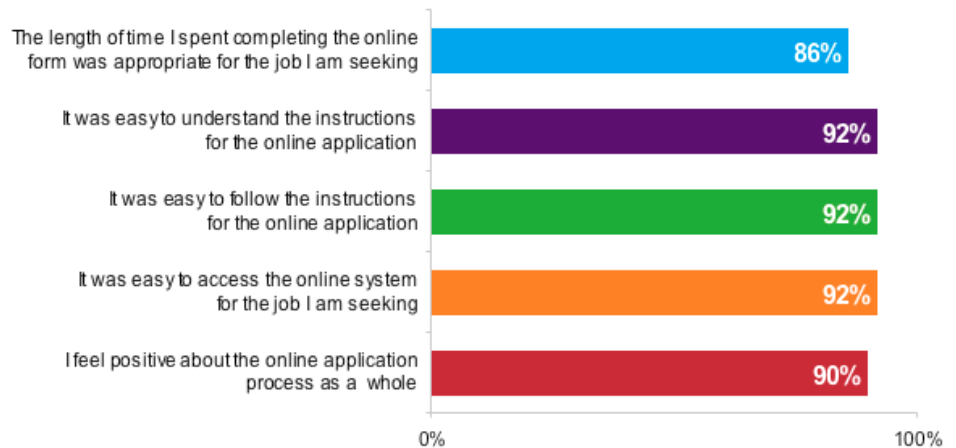




AutoZone's hard cost savings in paper, mailing and faxing was significant...

easily check their status online. To address the individual needs of both stores and candidates, English and Spanish versions are available. Additionally, all and any candidate data can be quantified within seconds by using nowHIRE's completely ad-hoc reporting tool.

As AutoZone had used a primarily manual system before and has evolved to an almost completely paperless process, the hard cost savings in paper, mailing and faxing was significant. The softer savings, though not as easily quantifiable, include managers' and recruiters' time, as well as the direct costs related to turnover—most notably, new employee training and the reduction in productivity experienced until a new employee gets experience on the job. The company has seen a dramatic increase in the number of hourly candidates, and a 20 percent reduction in time-to-fill for corporate jobs. And not only AutoZone managers are pleased with the system; a recent survey of 60,000+ AutoZone candidates showed a high satisfaction rate with the application process.



“Not only is the application process itself a winner, but so is the customer support,” Ann says. “nowHIRE handles all the frontline technical support for our candidates. They get their questions answered quickly, by experts – yet another way candidates feel valued and respected during the application process.”

nowHIRE: A COMPLETE ATS APPROACH

Since 1998, nowHIRE has been a premier provider of applicant tracking systems for companies of every size and in every vertical imaginable. Their industry-defining solutions feature fully integrated, web-based recruiting and applicant tracking software modules that allows companies to customize the software to their specific recruiting needs – whether it be for hourly, salaried, internal, contingent, recruitment-based or any combination thereof. nowHire's solutions provide an easier, faster, better way to approach talent acquisition to give companies what they call “Zoom” – the competitive edge.

