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5 Questions to Ask When Switching Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

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> *It's critical to select and implement a new ATS successfully*

According to a 2016 International Data Corporation (IDC) survey, 17% of employers reported a likelihood to change their applicant tracking system (ATS) suppliers in the next 12 to 18 months, with mid-sized employers being the most likely to desire the change.

If you are considering changing your ATS, or are thinking of switching from spreadsheets to manage your recruiting process, it's critical to select and implement a new ATS successfully. Otherwise, you won't be satisfied with your new ATS, either.

To help you in this all-important endeavor, we'll examine five questions that are important to ask when switching to a new ATS. The questions are:
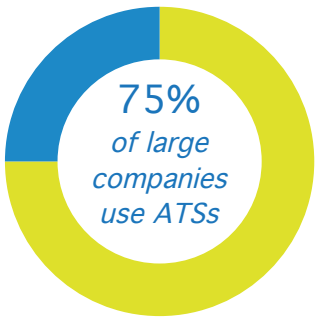
- Why use an ATS?
- Why do employers change their ATS?
- Why do employers *not* change their ATS?
- What are the advantages of a cloud ATS?
- How do I select and implement an ATS?

Why Use an ATS?

Applicant tracking systems make managing the recruiting and onboarding process much easier for employers. This includes automating much of the process.

75%
of large companies use ATSs

Companies that use an ATS were 40% more likely to be best-in-class

A sampling of the benefits includes:

- Ease of administration and organization, including reduced time.
- Improved sourcing.
- Improved internal communication in the recruiting process (thanks to notifications and auto-alerts).
- Faster time to hire and improved quality of hire.
- Improved experience for candidates. Process is more efficient, and communication from the employer is maintained throughout the process.
- Improved compliance. Among the ways an ATS helps: standardized, compliant job postings and interview questions, automated selection based on skills criteria virtually precludes discrimination, helpful compliance reporting.
- Facilitated onboarding.
- Analytics drive improvements in your recruiting process.

Surveys have found that 75% of large companies use ATSs, with more and more medium-sized employers adopting an ATS. Additionally, recruiters consistently report that they need an ATS to do their jobs effectively.

This reality is reflected in a 2013 finding by the Aberdeen Group that companies that use an ATS were 40% more likely to be best-in-class. Significant advancements have occurred among ATSs since, first and foremost the rise of cloud-based applicant tracking.

Why Do Employers Change Their ATS?	Why Do Employers *Not* Change Their ATS?
There are a variety of reasons why employers decide to change to different applicant tracking systems. Some of the most common include:	What we mean here is some employers aren't satisfied with their ATS, but still choose to continue with their existing system. The primary reasons are:
– Don't like the features and functionality – Want to switch from on-premise to cloud ATS – Poor vendor/customer service experience – ATS out of date – Cost – Need better analytics – Current system is implemented poorly	– They think switching ATSs will be too much work and too hard – Concern about lengthy data conversion process – Disruption to existing processes – Concern integration with other systems won't work

Quality ATS providers will assist you in ensuring quality implementation. As a result, critical to choosing the right ATS is evaluating both customer support and your level of comfort with the people with the ATS you'd work with. You'll also want to discuss data conversion with potential providers, as well as how well their ATSs integrate with other systems.

Spending on cloud-based HR software will be

50%
or more
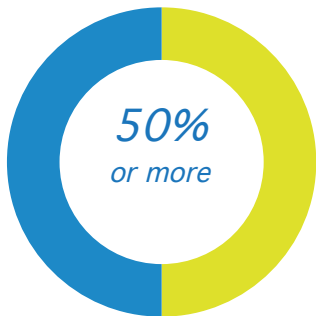
of total HR technology spending by 2017

What Are the Advantages of a Cloud ATS?

The rise of cloud-based systems has been one of the biggest developments in technology, with use of cloud-based systems increasing every year.

The following two statistics illustrate the demand for cloud-based software in HR:

- Spending on cloud-based HR software will be 50% or more of total HR technology spending by 2017, according to Gartner.
- Nearly half (48%) of HR and talent professionals want to replace their current HR software with a cloud-based system by 2018, according to Information Services Group.

For ATSs, in particular, the advantages of cloud-based systems include:

1. **Access anywhere and anytime.** On-premise systems require HR, recruiters and hiring managers to be on-site, but cloud-based systems allow them to retrieve data wherever they're working, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.
2. **Easier implementation.** Because there's no on-premise system to implement. This is important because it mitigates the primary concern for companies that choose not to move on from systems they're not satisfied with.
3. **Reduced IT, capital expenses.** There's no on-premise system to implement or maintain.
4. **Get upgrades quickly.** Upgrading an on-premise system can take time and be a significant technical concern, so much so that many companies forego updates. With cloud-based systems, the upgrades are handled by the provider, meaning you get access to useful new features.
5. **Integration with other software.** Cloud-based systems are becoming easier and easier to integrate with other software, facilitating integration with online job portals, career sites and other SaaS applications. This allows you to access more talent, and to connect your recruiting and HR processes without using an all-in-one system.
6. **Improved user experience.** Not only are quality cloud-based systems customizable for employers' specific needs, but also having the current version eases training and customer service.

7. **Shorter-term commitment.** With on-premise systems, the work associated with setting up on-site hardware and software is a major enough task that you want any ATS you use to last for years.

How Do I Select and Implement an ATS?

To get the best results from your ATS—improved quality of hire, faster time to hire, improved productivity, etc.—you need to select the right ATS and to implement it effectively.

The following are steps, that when executed properly, will help you be happy with your ATS, now and in the future.

1. Understand your dissatisfaction with your current ATS, and what you want a new ATS to achieve.

It's important to understand why you're dissatisfied with your current ATS, because it will help you understand exactly what you need from your new ATS. Doing so will help frame and guide your purchasing decision.

To understand why you are dissatisfied with your current ATS:

- Think about the root issues, frustrations and innovations that are driving you to consider switching to a new ATS.
- Take your current processes and chart out the missing pieces, problems and bottlenecks, and focus on how you would like a new ATS to address those areas, while not taking away from the existing functionality you would like to retain.

Next, consider the impact the right new ATS would make in the problem areas you identified, and the potential return on investment. Examples of the ROI may include;

- Improved average time and cost to fill positions
- Faster, more accurate hiring—avoid losing top-tier candidates to competition, and lower turnover due to more accurate hires.
- Bottlenecks that were once a time drain are no more, allowing more time for higher valued tasks
- Improved candidate experience

Going through this process will go a long way to help you determine the best ATS to achieve your goals.

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> *It's important to understand why you're dissatisfied with your current ATS*

2. Determine if you want a cloud-based or on-premise system.

While cloud-based systems don't require hardware or software maintenance, some employers do prefer keeping their systems in-house.

3. Determine if you want a dedicated ATS, or if the ATS will be part of an end-to-end system.

The former is dedicated to best-in-class performance and experience, and integrates with other HR systems that manage post-hire needs, such as training and payroll. An end-to-end system (aka "a suite"), meanwhile, is when one vendor provides all of your HR technology needs, from recruiting software to training to payroll.

So which is better? In recent years, there has been much discussion and debate about this topic. The reality is which is better depends on your particular wants and needs. According to a 2016 Ernst & Young HR technology survey, the percentage of organizations that use best-in-class software is roughly the same as those that use an end-to-end system.

Integration has become much easier in recent years

Best-in-class software ADVANTAGES	End-to-end system ADVANTAGES
• Greater innovation and more dynamic—potentially creating a competitive advantage • Easier to specialize and customize • More rapid upgrades	• Simplicity • Only one vendor • Few, if any, integrations required

It's important to note, however, that integration has become much easier in recent years; in fact, more and more best-in-class software products are even offering a variety of plug-in integrations with other best-in-class software. Analyst Ward Christman told TrustRadius, "I'm seeing a huge shift towards partnering to meet customer and market needs. This path is becoming easier thanks to better standards and connectivity via APIs and data interchange hubs, with additional 'alliance building' resources coming soon to support this need for collaboration."

Another analyst, Bryan Wempen, added, "I don't feel like a shift from specialized to suites is happening, actually just the opposite. I see specialization as the trend with a focus on features for interpretation of data and analytics about everything talent."

4. Evaluate ATSs for functionality, analytics, ease of use, integration capabilities, customer service, how well they meet your future needs, etc.

Accomplish this through researching ATS providers to come up with a reasonable initial list. Then communicate with selected providers, asking them questions to determine a short list of top candidates. Lastly, schedule demos (you may need several with each provider) to get an up-close look at each ATS, and get questions answered to your satisfaction.

5. Check references for top vendors.

Negotiate and sign contract with ATS of choice.

6. Prepare for implementation, including deciding which data to bring over from old system.

Effective preparation will help the implementation as simple as possible. How much data you bring over can impact the length of the implementation process.

7. Test new system.

Ensure that it meets your specifications and expectations. This includes verifying it integrates properly with other software you use.

8. Get everyone trained on the ATS who will be using it.

This includes recruiters and hiring managers, but also others who will be using it.

9. Begin use.

Troubleshooting any remaining issues with the help of the provider.

Take Your Time—Selecting the Right ATS Is Critical

The process of transitioning to a new ATS may take a few months, or it may take much longer, but it's too important to rush. Go through the steps above, and ensure you're highly confident that the ATS you select is the right for you—both the technology and the people behind it.

After all, you have some mighty important goals on the line. Goals that could shape the future of your organization, and your people.

About Visibility Software

Founded in 1999. Visibility Software, a leading provider of applicant tracking and training management software, has helped thousands of organizations of all sizes solve talent acquisition and talent development problems. Our two primary flagship software solutions Cyber Recruiter Applicant Tracking (ATS) and Cyber Train Learning Management (LMS) provide a simplified, flexible approach to usability, agility and licensing to deliver fast, game-changing results.

With powerful out of the box integration capabilities to many leading ERP and HR applications, our solutions eliminate redundant inefficiencies in recruiting, onboarding, and training. For us it's all about placing high value on helping organizations build a strong foundation for their recruiting and training management strategies.

Click here for more information about Cyber Recruiter Applicant Tracking (ATS).

Contact:
www.visibilitysoftware.com • info@visibilitysoftware.com • 1-800-914-9594

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