



ClearCo

BUYER'S GUIDE

# Smart Hiring Starts Here: Your Guide To Finding the Best ATS

# Take Talent Acquisition To the Next Level With an ATS

You're probably reading this guide for one of two reasons:

1. You want to step up your recruiting game with an **Applicant Tracking System (ATS)** and need help finding the right fit for your company's hiring needs.
2. You're using an ATS, but you've outgrown it or want a solution equipped with more modern features, like artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced analytics.

Either way, **you're ready to start using applicant tracking software that simplifies recruitment and hiring at every stage.** Today's ATS solutions are much more robust than the candidate databases of years past, and there are many software providers to sift through.

So how do you navigate the purchasing process, find the right ATS for your company, and implement your new software successfully?

There are several steps to complete before your new ATS is up and running:

- Get buy-in and budget from leadership
- Choose a handful of potential software providers
- Demo and vet your options
- Make a purchasing decision
- Implement the software
- Train your HR team
- Use the new software company-wide

The ClearCo ATS Buyer's Guide is here to help with that. If you're looking for the right ATS solution, start here for insight and advice on critical features, questions to ask about your talent acquisition needs, how to assess vendors, and more.



**94% of recruiters** say their ATS has had a positive impact on hiring.



# Why Is an Applicant Tracking System Important?

## Efficiency and Precision in the Hiring Processes

Quality applicant tracking software pairs best practices with automation to streamline the hiring process and increase communication between talent acquisition teams. 94% of recruiters using an ATS say it's positively impacted their hiring process. An ATS also provides the engaging, memorable candidate experience that job seekers deserve — and that helps you snag top talent. **77% of employees** say their positive candidate experience was part of why they accepted their roles.

Although the average time-to-hire has improved in recent years, **it's still 41 days** — more than enough time for candidates to lose interest (that only takes a couple of weeks). Combined with an increase in the number of interviews companies are conducting (candidates report eight, nine, and in one case, **29 interviews!**), it's clear there's a need for faster hiring processes.

But how can busy HR and talent acquisition teams hire faster than they already are? Your team creates and executes all recruitment and hiring processes, from sourcing candidates and fostering reliable talent pipelines to screening candidates and performing background checks.

You're part of the decision-making process, evaluating Interview Scorecards, writing offer letters, and notifying candidates who didn't make the cut. Your team also takes charge of aligning talent acquisition goals to business objectives and analyzing people data to gain insight and refine your strategies. Needless to say, there's a lot on your plate.

You can streamline hiring and manage the administrative and strategic aspects of talent acquisition with an ATS.

**With the right ATS, you'll have access to all the features your HR team needs to hire faster and:**

- Automate the most time-consuming manual tasks
- Grow and diversify your talent pool
- Design the ideal candidate experience
- Develop seamless hiring processes for HR and an excellent candidate experience
- Get a clear and definitive view of your candidate pipeline
- Keep in contact with candidates effortlessly
- Leverage AI to gain in-depth talent acquisition insights from your people data

Use our ATS Buyer's Guide to help organize your unique recruiting needs, research potential solutions, and make an informed decision for your talent acquisition team.



See how ClearCo helped **Rugby Architectural Building Products** hire a record number of employees — without increasing their talent acquisition staff.

# What Problems Does an Applicant Tracking System Solve?

## Tackling Hiring Hassles and Enhancing Candidate Experience

Recruiting and hiring are about much more than just filling vacant positions. You need to find candidates whose skills and qualifications match what you're looking for and who are likely to stick around — and hire them as fast as possible. You also need an engaging candidate experience to help them see what's possible as an employee and drive offer acceptance and retention.

### ATS software can solve many common recruiting and hiring problems for your HR team:

- Time-consuming manual processes
- Disorganized or inaccurate candidate information
- Lack of structure and standardization
- Unengaging candidate experience
- Uncertainty around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in hiring
- Lack of transparency around hiring processes
- Bottlenecks due to silos and miscommunication
- Lack of insight into the effectiveness of talent acquisition strategies

### An ATS is also beneficial for eliminating pervasive recruiting issues for candidates:

- Unclear or inaccurate job descriptions
- Lack of insight into company values and culture
- Infrequent communication from recruiters
- Confusion around application status
- Drawn-out, repetitive interviews with several employees
- Lack of feedback after interviewing
- Lack of communication after signing job offers
- Paper-based background checks or employment verification

#### BUYER TIP



You need leadership buy-in to invest in an ATS. Before you begin your purchasing journey, identify specific problems your team could solve with an ATS.

# Making the Case for Applicant Tracking Software

## Meet Modern Expectations and Elevate HR's Impact With Technology

In the past few years, we've seen rapid, significant changes in hiring. Candidate expectations and the demands on HR are different, and using technology is now a requirement. An ATS equipped with AI and talent analytics capabilities is a must have for HR teams that want to play a part in their company's strategic growth and win at hiring.

**There are many reasons to invest in a new applicant tracking system that can help you explain why it's a must-have tool for your team:**

- A need for modern solutions in a competitive hiring environment
- Demand for top-notch candidate experience
- Free up hours of valuable time for HR
- Eliminate mistakes due to human error
- Attract a more diverse range of applicants
- Communicate with candidates frequently and effortlessly
- Foster engagement during a critical stage of the employee lifecycle
- Increase transparency and collaboration among members of the hiring team
- Design fair interviews and rate candidates according to the same criteria
- Access in-depth insights from recruiting and hiring processes
- Anticipated continued hiring challenges due to the ongoing shortage of skilled workers



**43% of HR professionals** said upgrading their HR technology to streamline work is a top priority.

## Take these steps to get buy-in from leaders and stakeholders:

1. List each stakeholder's name, title, department, role in the decision-making process, and specific talent acquisition challenges.
2. Identify the issues each stakeholder needs the new system to solve.
3. Determine which ATS features are need-to-have vs. nice-to-have, and ensure everyone agrees to make the final decision easier.
4. Outline the business case for the new applicant tracking system. You'll need to clearly show the problems affecting talent acquisition currently and how an ATS would help solve them. Make sure to include metrics to illustrate your points.

## You can use HR metrics like these to support your case:

1. HR hours spent on manual recruiting and hiring tasks
2. Your current time-to-fill and time-to-hire
3. Analyst findings or reports on companies that use an ATS from firms like Gartner
4. Data showing the positive impact of an ATS from review sites such as G2 and Software Advice

## The Need for Speedier Hiring



Slow hiring processes and a lack of communication are **among the top reasons** candidates ghost potential employers.



**47% of candidates** have withdrawn their applications due to companies' poor communication.



Companies with the highest-rated candidate experiences move applicants to the next step — dispositioning or moving forward — **within three to five days.**



# Must-Have Features of an Applicant Tracking System

## Optimize Recruitment & Make Smarter Decisions With Essential Tools

Applicant tracking systems are packed with features, so how do you know which ones are most important? Understand ATS tools so you can choose the right provider for your business needs and avoid wasting time looking at software that won't work.

Today, candidates need a streamlined hiring process that eliminates confusion or uncertainty about where they stand. Talent acquisition teams need tools that take work off their hands and let them focus on candidates. An ATS needs to ease workloads, facilitate faster processes, and analyze recruiting data so you can continuously improve.

Here are some of the must-have features of an effective ATS.

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## Basic Functions

### What: Centralized Dashboard for Applicant Management

A singular place for all documents and communications that the appropriate teams can access is one of the most useful features to look for in an ATS. Most are cloud-based and can be accessed via desktop and mobile devices, from anywhere and at any time, by recruiters and hiring managers.

### Why: Cost and Accessibility Savings

Cloud-based HR technology means you can offer a single source of truth and visibility into the entire recruitment process. If you're using a complete talent management system, that accuracy and clarity extend to the entire employee lifecycle.

The more you can consolidate your HR software, the better. The average HR team is using **21 different modules** to perform tasks — an increase of more than 100% since 2019. Using a cloud-based ATS or talent management system cuts down on costs and increases transparency.

### What: Functionality for Different Roles

An ATS should offer permissions levels for your unique talent acquisition team members, with easy-to-use options for those outside of HR.

### Why: Because Candidates, Recruiters, and Hiring Managers Are All Users

Hiring teams consist of roles ranging from recruiters and HR professionals who spend much of their day using HR software to hiring managers who only need easy access to specific information about their candidates. User permissions let you grant limited access and protect sensitive candidate data.

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### What: Job Board Management

Most applicant tracking systems connect with major job boards, allowing your team to easily place ads, track applicants, and manage postings. An effective ATS can post to multiple job boards simultaneously and consolidate applicants for hiring teams to evaluate.

### Why: Job Boards Are a Crucial Part of the Candidate Experience

Candidates still frequent job boards while looking for their next career, and many are specific to industries or roles, helping you reach qualified candidates. Applicant tracking systems frequently offer the ability to post to multiple job boards to reach a wide range of candidates.

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### What: Mobile Apply Accessibility

Adopt mobile recruiting solutions and responsive applications to meet applicants where they're at and increase the number of applicants you receive.

### Why: Mobile Is Where Candidates Search

**More than 90% of job seekers** use their mobile devices to search for jobs. Don't miss out on those candidates — make it easy for them to apply with responsive applications.



With ClearCo, Rendezor Dialysis can text candidates — and they respond within 20 minutes.

## Unique Functions

### What: AI-Assisted Content Generation

Artificial intelligence (AI) in your ATS can help your team write high-quality job descriptions, emails, and offer letters in record time. AI tools enhance your writing and help you refine text quickly so you can focus on hiring the right people.

#### Why: To Save Time, Maintain Quality, and Stay Ahead

An ATS with AI helps you produce the same high-quality writing in a fraction of the time. In addition to the hours you'll save, your organization needs to harness the power of AI to keep up with the competition as it becomes ubiquitous in the workplace.

### What: Branded Career Sites

Not all ATSs offer branded career sites, but they can be a tremendous boost to your employer brand if your organization doesn't have the budget or ability to build and host one. The best applicant tracking systems offer customizable branding to match your corporate site.

#### Why: Employer Branding Continues To Rise in Importance

Investments in employer branding affect hiring more than you might think — **77% of job seekers** say they evaluate your branding and reputation before applying.

### What: AI-Powered Career Site Chatbot

AI-powered chatbots are a familiar sight online, and now they're a handy tool for busy recruiters and HR teams. An AI chatbot assistant on your career site helps convert visitors into candidates by pointing them toward job openings they might be interested in and helping them complete and submit applications. For some roles, the chatbot can even walk applicants through an initial round of screening and schedule their first interview.

## Why: Speedier Hiring and Time Savings for Recruiters

With a career site chatbot, you can bring in more candidates and facilitate more completed job applications. Ensure a steady flow of candidates and interview scheduling even on nights and weekends when recruiters are off-duty. Give candidates a seamless, engaging experience right from the get-go and give valuable time back to recruiters.

### What: AI-Powered Candidate Sourcing

Stop sifting through endless candidate profiles and start sourcing instantly when you leverage an ATS with AI. As soon as you post an open role, AI begins surfacing top talent from a global database of millions of qualified professionals. It can also source from past applicants, renewing their interest in your organization.

#### Why: Good Candidates Are Hard To Find

Finding great candidates, let alone hiring them, is a top challenge for recruiters today. There's a lot of competition for skilled workers, and companies are hiring them seven days faster than last year. AI can help your company do the same, creating a top-notch talent pool while saving tons of time.



## What: AI-Assisted Talent Matching

AI talent matching is a feature recruiters can use to prioritize their candidate outreach. AI quickly assesses your candidates' aptitude for an open role. It goes beyond basic keyword filtering, ranking candidates based on how well-suited they are for the job.

### Why: Fast, Fair Hiring

Using AI to rank talent allows recruiters to identify their top candidates quickly and reach out to them first. It enables fair, consistent evaluations, helping to minimize unconscious bias. AI talent matching allows recruiters to focus on engaging the best talent faster than the competition.

## What: Compensation Benchmarking

Choose an ATS with compensation benchmarking tools to set the stage for offer acceptance with a fact-based, market-driven approach to new-hire salary ranges. If you're hiring in certain states, you might be required by law to include salary ranges in your job descriptions.

### Why: Offer Acceptance and Pay Transparency

It's no secret that salary is a significant factor in a candidate's decision to accept a job offer. An ATS with compensation benchmarking tools helps you offer competitive rates and stay compliant.



**61% of organizations** have a compensation strategy, and **56%** now practice pay transparency in their job ads, whether or not it's required by law.

## What: Email Drip Campaigns

Create automatic, personalized drip campaigns to share open roles with your talent pool effortlessly.

### Why: Engage Candidates and Increase Applications

Engage your passive candidates and get more applications without putting an extra burden on your recruiters.

## What: AI-Powered Interview Notetaker

Taking notes during interviews is essential, but it can be distracting for both candidates and interviewers, and you might miss something important. That's why the best ATSs now offer an AI-powered notetaker. This tool automatically captures and summarizes interviews to ensure every key detail is documented accurately and efficiently — and empowers your hiring team to give candidates their full attention.

### Why: Improve Focus and Decision-Making

With an AI-powered interview notetaker, your talent acquisition team can stay fully engaged during interviews without the distraction of jotting down notes. The automated summaries provide actionable insights and ensure no critical information is missed. You'll make candidates feel valued while also getting the information you need to make faster, smarter hiring decisions.

## What: Built-In Background Checks

Running background checks is necessary for many roles, but it can be complicated and time-consuming — unless they're built into your ATS.

### Why: To Ensure Compliance

Look for an ATS provider with integrated background checks to save time and stay compliant.

## What: Multilingual Options

Consider the scope of your talent search and how that affects your application and hiring process. Does your ATS support employees who prefer another language?

### Why: Global Accessibility

If you're hiring internationally or want to attract a larger, more diverse candidate pool, an ATS with multilingual options is the way to go.

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## What: Video Interview Responses

ATS solutions offering video interview capabilities allow the talent acquisition team to "meet" an applicant before investing in future interviews.

### Why: Meet the Demand for Fast Hiring

The competition for top talent is fierce, and video interview questions enable recruiters to screen candidates quickly. They also give candidates the opportunity to stand out from other applicants and answer questions in a low-pressure environment.

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## What: Employee Referral Management

Referrals from candidates, employees, and company networks are an excellent resource for finding the best person for the job. Employee referral programs encourage your employees to become ambassadors for your company, boosting your reputation and company culture.

### Why: Better Talent Pipeline

An ATS solution that allows users to easily share openings and track where referrals are coming from can strengthen your recruiting pipeline. Referred candidates are more likely to be hired, stay on longer, and have a positive impression of your company, even if they're not hired.



Companies report a **50% higher response rate** when they text candidates vs. email.

## What: Multi-Interview Scheduling

Matching the availability of an entire hiring team to a candidate can be overwhelming. Many ATS solutions allow the hiring team to set their availability within the system. When it's time for candidates to schedule their interview, they can easily choose from a list of times that work for the entire hiring team.

### Why: Recruiters and Hiring Managers Benefit, Too

The best applicant tracking systems can automate interview scheduling without much back-and-forth, with serious time savings for your recruiters and hiring managers.

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## What: Internal Interview Guides and Scorecards

Consistency among assessments and interviews is pivotal to employer branding and making quality hires, so look for an ATS provider that let you set guidelines and customize scorecards for each role within the organization. The hiring team can then use those resources when assessing talent.

### Why: Process Management and Compliance

Standardize your hiring process to mitigate bias, including interviews and interview ratings. The best applicant tracking systems will enable your best-practice documents and SOPs to serve a single source of truth for recruiters and hiring managers.

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## What: Candidate Texting

An ATS with candidate texting helps recruiters get faster responses from candidates, rather than waiting for an email reply or returned phone call.

### Why: Communication Builds Relationships

Easy communication helps recruiters form relationships quickly and engage candidates, enabling faster time-to-hire.

## What: Smart Search

When your ATS has smart search, it's much easier to search your candidate database and find past applicants and even current employees who might be a fit for open roles. Use smart search to surface employees by skills, location, and more.

### Why: Tap Into Your Talent Pool

The perfect candidate might already be in your system, but there's no way to know without smart search. Leverage the candidate pool you've spent so much time building with smart search.

## What: Candidate Status Management

An ATS should help the talent acquisition team understand each candidate's status regarding the hiring process so no one is left wondering, "What happened with that candidate?"

### Why: Worry-Free Candidate Experience

With the best ATS software, you can automate updates to internal members and candidates so no one is out of the loop. Send rejection emails automatically when candidates are taken out of consideration, and welcome new hires with another automatic email when their status changes to "employee."

## What: AI-Driven Talent Analytics

An AI-driven talent analytics suite is a true game-changer for HR and talent acquisition. It transforms raw talent data into clear, actionable insights through advanced reporting and visualizations. You can use these insights to make informed decisions on hiring trends, candidate quality, and recruitment effectiveness.

### Why: Smarter, Data-Informed Decision-Making

A talent analytics suite with AI in your ATS is like a built-in sidekick for HR. It quickly highlights what's working and what isn't, so you can fine-tune your hiring strategy, act on real-time trends, and attract top talent faster and more efficiently. If you're using a comprehensive talent management system, your recruiting data can also inform other HR strategies, from performance and engagement to learning and development (L&D).

## Additional ATS Key Features

### Security

ATSs house sensitive information for both your company and the candidate. Be sure your recruiting solution can speak to its security measures.

### Superior Customer Support

A top-notch customer support team can be the deciding factor in the search for an ATS. Look for a recruiting software provider that takes customer service to the next level by providing users with personal account managers, expert advice, and free recruiting and hiring resources.

### Easy Implementation

Your ATS should be easy to set up for your hiring teams to start using. A user-friendly ATS that can be up and running fast makes it easier for your team to incorporate into their daily workflow. Ask your provider about the training they provide during implementation and when extensive updates are released.

### Collaborative Relationships With Clients

ATS providers consistently update their products with new features and tools, often at clients' request. Look for an ATS provider that sees client relationships as partnerships that can drive product development.



What's the key to a successful ATS implementation?

[Learn more](#)

# Key Considerations Before You Buy

## 41 Questions To Help You Find the Best ATS

There are lots of factors to consider before investing in a new ATS. Ask the right questions so you can focus on what's important and find the best applicant tracking system for your organization.

We've compiled a list of 41 questions to ask throughout the process to help you choose the right solution.

### Recruiting and Hiring Database

Your ATS will handle essential recruiting and hiring data, including sensitive candidate information. You need to know where the data is hosted and how to access it.

#### Ask the following questions during your demo:

1. What is the system hosted on, and is the data file fast, reliable, and scalable?
2. How is data exported?
3. Can it integrate with other systems?
4. What security measures does the system provide to protect candidate data?
5. Can role-based access be provided?

### Software Flexibility

Every talent acquisition process is different, so how do you know if a vendor can accommodate all of your company's unique needs? Before the demo, share the challenges your team is facing and ask vendors to personalize their walkthrough to your needs.

#### Ask the following questions during your demo:

6. How are applications created?
7. How do I manage my job board posts?
8. Can you walk me through candidate communication, including texting?
9. What do hiring teams see in the software?
10. Do you offer interview guides and scorecards?
11. What kinds of communications can I automate?

### Integration

You'll need to share candidate data with hiring teams and managers, as well other internal software for those who become employees. Look for an ATS that seamlessly integrates and makes it easy to share information.

#### Answer these questions before your demo so you can ensure the ATS can meet your needs:

12. What information needs to be shared with our other systems?
13. Who needs access to talent acquisition data?
14. Will any third parties need to have access to talent acquisition data?



## User Experience

The applicant tracking system you invest in should have an easy-to-use interface and intuitive user experience. Make sure to consider both your most and least tech-savvy employees.

### Ask the following questions:

15. Who will use the system, and how much time will they spend using it?
16. What is the technology experience level of the average user?
17. How does this system accommodate those who aren't as tech-savvy?
18. How much time can the business allocate for onboarding and training on the new system?
19. How long does it usually take for users to become proficient at using the ATS?

## Training & Support

Up-front training for the ATS is necessary, but you should also consider ongoing training for new hires and after new features are released. Can your teams manage training internally, or does the software provider offer training sessions as needed?

### Ask the following questions:

20. Do you have the budget, bandwidth, and resources to manage training internally, or do you need the system to provide ongoing training?
21. What level of training is required for the various roles within your organization?
22. Does the system provide the required level of granularity?



## Future-Readiness

The system you choose must incorporate your need-to-have functions and should also have the ability to grow to meet the needs of your future workforce. You should also look for an ATS that keeps up with rapid software evolution, offering cutting-edge technology like AI.

### Ask the following questions:

23. Does the ATS offer AI, automation, and analytics capabilities?
24. Which features do we need in the system today?
25. Which nice-to-have features will be need-to-have in the future?
26. Will this system be able to provide for those needs?



## Implementation

Deployment of the new ATS shouldn't disrupt your current system, whether you're moving from a manual process or another vendor. Ensure your new system can retain existing candidate and recruiting data so you don't lose valuable information.

### Ask the following questions:

27. How can data be transferred and organized into the new system?
28. What do we need from the IT department to get the new software up and running and maintain it?

## Cost

The typical pricing models for applicant tracking systems are pay-per-user, pay-per-employee, and pay-per-appraisal. Costs may also include implementation or setup fees.

### Ask the following questions:

29. Which pricing model best fits our budget and needs?
  30. Which features are included in the monthly or annual price?
  31. Which features incur extra costs?
  32. What are typical payment terms?
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## Vendor

Don't be dazzled by a sleek ATS and a shiny user interface. You'll also want to evaluate the provider itself.

### Ask the following questions:

33. How long has the vendor been in business, and how many clients use their software?
34. What industries does the vendor typically serve?
35. What size are most of the businesses the vendor serves?
36. Are customer suggestions for software development often accepted or implemented?
37. What does a typical customer review say?
38. How does the vendor act on negative reviews?
39. Has the vendor received any awards?
40. How are their technical and customer support functions rated?
41. What does their customer support program look like?



# Gearing up for ATS Demos

Now, you're ready to determine which software solutions your team will explore. On top of online research, get recommendations from your extended network, and ask your talent acquisition team what they think of your current solutions. Read ATS reviews on sites like G2, Capterra, and SoftwareAdvice.

Gather a list of potential ATS solutions and match each to your list of needs using their feature list or pricing page. Then, schedule demos to see the tool in action. A live, personalized demo (vs. a video recording) will always give you a better idea of whether the ATS suits your team.

Before your demo, create a checklist of desired features and functionalities so you can keep track of the software's pros and cons and save time.

## 11 Rules for a Successful ATS Demo

1. Invite the final decision maker and at least one potential user to attend.
2. Have your list of feature expectations handy.
3. Take notes (preferably alongside your must-have list).
4. Provide a clear overview of your company's needs and challenges for a relevant, personalized demo.
5. Be honest about any concerns you have about the ATS.
6. Ask questions or repeat a step if you missed it.
7. Verify integrations with your other business-critical systems.
8. Ask detailed questions about support options and implementation.
9. Understand if there are any implementation fees.
10. If you don't hear a necessary feature mentioned, ask about it.
11. Get concrete costs and pricing information.

**Above all, understand that this demo is yours to lead. The vendor knows the product, but you are the expert on your company's needs and expectations.**

# Start Your Search for the Right Applicant Tracking System With ClearCo

Be sure to include ClearCo on your list of ATS vendors to consider in your search. We'd love to see if our award-winning, AI-enhanced ATS fits your organization's talent needs.

“Absolutely **the best ATS** and onboarding system ever.”

Janette R.S.

Senior Human Resources Business Partner

[Book your personalized demo](#)



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