



ATS Buyer's Guide

How to choose the right enterprise applicant tracking system

Introduction

Enterprise hiring is complex. Whether you're scaling rapidly or managing regular turnover, it often involves multiple teams, business areas, brands, and markets. That's why modern, cloud-based applicant tracking systems (ATS) have emerged as the heart of the modern HR tech stack—to streamline processes, support collaboration, and enhance the candidate experience.

Legacy ATSs may cover basic tracking but often fall short in key areas like integrations, reporting, and user experience. The result? Recruiters stuck with clunky systems that slow down hiring, and candidates frustrated by complicated application processes that lead to drop-offs instead of hires.

Hiring the right talent is core to your business success, so your ATS needs to run like a well-oiled machine. It should integrate effortlessly into your HR tech stack and support your hiring strategy with the same level of sophistication that sales and marketing teams expect from a CRM.

While tech alone cannot solve all recruiting challenges, the right ATS can automate repetitive tasks and free up time for hiring teams to focus on strategic priorities.

But with so many options on the market, how do you choose the right ATS?

If your current ATS no longer supports your needs, this guide will help you navigate the key considerations, must-have features, and critical questions to ask vendors. By the end, you'll be ready to select the right ATS to power your recruitment.





ATS evaluation process



A hand is shown writing on a sticky note with a black marker. There are several other sticky notes on a light-colored surface, some with checkmarks and arrows. A blue logo is visible in the top right corner.

STEP 1

Understand your needs and why you want to switch

Before exploring ATS options, it's critical to understand your needs and answer the big questions: What are your hiring goals? What challenges do you want the system to help resolve?

Think about your long-term roadmap, including the volume and frequency of recruitment, the level of support your team needs, and whether your organization is ready to double down on the candidate experience.

Have conversations with relevant stakeholders to align on your organization's people growth trajectory and core business objectives.

Now, let's zoom in and get specific about what you need to get started:



Clarify your goals

Are you looking to reduce time-to-hire, improve candidate quality, or boost acceptance rates? Knowing what you're aiming for will help you choose the right ATS and inform which metrics you'll use to measure success.



Identify your challenges

Review your current recruitment processes and outcomes to identify problem areas and areas for improvement. Look into existing data to see where candidate drop-offs occur and which metrics are off track. Gather feedback from recruiters, hiring managers, and other daily users of your system to gain insights from multiple perspectives.



Bring in your stakeholders

Consider who will be part of the decision-making process: hiring managers, IT, legal, and others interacting with recruiting, onboarding and purchasing. What are their primary pain points, and what would they hope to gain from a new system?



Tip! Think about whose time the ATS will free up. Which roles could be more strategic if admin work was offloaded? Work backwards from there to help you get the most out of your ATS.



Review candidate feedback

If you aren't collecting candidate feedback, reach out to past candidates for insights into their experience. Are there common frustrations or points of friction? While an ATS isn't the only part of the candidate experience, it plays a significant role in how candidates interact with your company and brand once talent is in the pipeline.



Define your budget

Finally, get clear on your budget. Beyond yearly subscription fees, consider costs that some providers might tack on, like data migration, customization, user training, and ongoing customer support. Knowing your budget will help you focus on feasible systems and approach cost discussions with all the facts.

With an understanding of your needs, priorities, team, and budget, you're ready to start exploring ATS options. The more precise your criteria, the easier it will be to find an ATS that can help you reach your recruiting goals.



SIGNS IT MAY BE TIME TO RETIRE YOUR LEGACY SYSTEM

The software is slow or laggy

With a slow system, even simple tasks become frustratingly slow. This could be a result of insufficient hardware, outdated software, or an inefficient database structure. Whatever the reason, a sluggish system may be a sign it's time to upgrade.

Hiring takes longer than it should

Legacy ATSs often lack the features to quickly filter applications and surface top candidates, slowing down the entire hiring process. Implementing an efficient ATS can improve this and help reduce time-to-fill.



If any of these sound familiar, upgrading to a modern system could save time, improve security, and make hiring more efficient—and your candidates will thank you for it.

You're doing work that could be automated

Data entry and simple tasks that can be automated should be. Otherwise, valuable time and resources are spent on tedious tasks and away from higher-value, human touchpoints like interviewing candidates.

You're missing analytics or reporting capabilities

Outdated systems tend to fall short in advanced functionalities such as analytics and reporting, leaving recruiters without the insights to visualize their hiring metrics or refine their processes.

It's hard to get ahold of customer support

Like any business-critical software, it's important to know who to contact not only when something goes wrong but also for everyday hiccups or guidance—and to trust that support will be fast and reliable.

It's not compliant with GDPR or other privacy regulations

Enterprise recruitment involves handling large volumes of personal data. If your ATS does not comply with GDPR regulations, or similar, your company could face hefty fines and, if the data is not secure, leave you vulnerable to cyber attacks.

Poor candidate experience

If candidates struggle to complete applications or you notice high drop-off rates, it may be time for an upgrade. Don't let outdated tech drive away great talent.



ATS BUYING FAQ

Why not just stick to the recruiting module of my HRIS?

HRIS or HCM tools, like Workday or SAP SuccessFactors, are excellent for many HR functions, but they often lack the specialized features of an ATS. Since they aren't built specifically for recruitment, it can feel like an afterthought—frustrating both recruiters and candidates.

Recruiters often find these systems clunky and difficult to navigate, while candidates get frustrated with having to reenter data from CVs and uploaded documents. A specialized ATS, on the other hand, is designed to address hiring challenges directly and scale alongside your business and the evolving recruitment landscape.

It should also be noted that some ATSs can integrate seamlessly with HRIS or HCM systems. If integration with your existing HR tech stack is a priority, be sure to highlight this when shortlisting ATS vendors.

STEP 2

Identify must-have features



With so many ATS options on the market, each with a long list of features, finding the right one can feel overwhelming. To simplify the shortlisting process, we've highlighted the most important features of a modern ATS for enterprise hiring, each critical for building effective, scalable recruitment processes and meeting the needs of key stakeholders.

1. USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE

An ATS is meant to streamline recruitment. As such, it should be easy to use with minimal training needed to navigate and access features.

While you should always factor in some time to learn new software, it shouldn't be so complicated that the time spent learning it outweighs the benefits.

Easy-to-use software should not be confused with a tool that is simple or lacks depth. The best tools should handle the complexities of modern hiring while remaining intuitive for both system users and candidates.



When evaluating user-friendly ATS options, look for reviews on sites like G2 that highlight ease of use and fast onboarding.

—

What to expect from a modern ATS:

A customizable dashboard, clear pipeline stages, visual status markers, seamless onboarding, drag-and-drop functionalities, email and SMS composer, template libraries, and embedded scheduling features.



2. INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES

Your ATS should integrate seamlessly with the apps and HR systems you rely on. If your team uses LinkedIn Recruiter for sourcing or Oneflow for e-signing, integrations ensure all systems work smoothly together.

To check if an ATS connects with your must-have tools, bring a list to demos or sales meetings.

But, remember, it's not just about integrating with your current setup—it's also about future flexibility. A strong integration ecosystem lets you adapt to new tools and build your ideal hiring tech stack, whether through pre-built integrations, an open API, or custom solutions.

Popular integrations to check for compatibility include:

- LinkedIn and LinkedIn Recruiter
- Workday
- Indeed
- CareerBuilder
- Candidate experience survey tools like Trustcruit by Jobylon
- Assessment providers like Alva Labs

What to expect from a modern

ATS: Integrations with HRIS, payroll, background checks, email, interview scheduling, candidate assessments, and calendar apps.

MUST HAVE INTEGRATIONS

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |



3. MOBILE ACCESSIBILITY

Mobile compatibility is important for both candidates and hiring teams. With around 58% of candidates searching for jobs on mobile devices—and some lacking access to a computer—your ATS must be mobile-friendly to reach more talent and accommodate a diverse talent pool. Candidates should be able to complete applications easily on mobile devices.

Likewise, hiring teams should be able to do time-sensitive tasks on the go. Quick access to features like responding to candidates, scheduling interviews, and leaving feedback helps keep the hiring process moving without waiting to be at a desk.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

Mobile-responsive career pages and job ads, ability to apply to jobs from any device, and a system recruiters and hiring managers can access from anywhere.

4. CUSTOMIZATION AND SCALABILITY

Enterprise hiring often requires tailoring recruitment processes for different regions, business units, and roles. As such, your ATS should be flexible enough to support custom workflows, adapt to differing compliance requirements, and accommodate multiple brands.

A modern ATS should also be responsive to feedback. By gathering insights from candidates, recruiters, and hiring managers, you can refine processes, optimize workflows, and [continuously improve the hiring experience](#). To make this possible, your ATS must be built for flexibility and scalability.

Ultimately, customization allows an ATS to fit your organization—not the other way around.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

Customizable workflows, automated triggers, custom job templates, fully branded career pages, and configurable reporting dashboards.





5. AI AND AUTOMATION FEATURES

In today's hiring landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) is impossible to ignore. As AI evolves, it adds a powerful new dimension to evaluating ATS options. One of the many advantages of AI-powered hiring is that it automates tasks to help recruiters work more efficiently, reducing the time spent on repetitive tasks and more time focusing on candidates. That's why automation is a must-have in any modern ATS.

Equally important is the responsible use of AI. With [evolving regulations](#), it's necessary to understand how these systems work, the data they rely on, and the specific role AI plays in your hiring process.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

AI-assisted job ads, suggested screening questions, candidate matching, and automated interview scheduling.



Questions to ask vendors

1. How do you approach responsible AI development?
2. What steps do you take to mitigate bias and discrimination in your AI models?
3. How do your AI features comply with regulations, like the EU AI Act?
4. Is customer or candidate data used to train your AI models?

6. ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

To succeed in hiring, you need a clear understanding of your process—what's working and what can be improved. Armed with the right data, you can continuously refine and optimize your hiring strategy.

Advanced reporting and analytics can provide the insights you need. A modern ATS should offer enterprise-grade analytics that track key metrics in real-time and over time. You should also be able to see your most effective sourcing channels, helping you focus on what drives the best results.

What to expect from a modern ATS: Time-to-hire metrics, easy data export and sharing, source tracking, funnel insights, integration with your BI platform, and recruiter performance dashboards.



7. GDPR AND DATA SECURITY

When handling large volumes of sensitive candidate information, it's critical that the data is secure and processed in compliance with local and regional laws, such as GDPR. For enterprises operating across multiple countries with unique privacy regulations, this can be particularly complicated.

That's why it's important to choose a vendor that prioritizes data security and can accommodate custom data handling and compliance processes. An ATS of choice should offer robust data protection features and clearly communicate how it ensures candidate information is securely stored, processed, and shared.

This also applies to data imports. When migrating from one system to another, vendors should be able to clearly explain how they ensure a secure, accurate, and compliant transfer.

Beyond mitigating risk, prioritizing strong data security also helps build trust with candidates as they see your commitment to protecting their data and privacy.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

GDPR compliance, data encryption, single sign-on (SSO), two-factor authentication (2FA), ISO certification, and secure candidate communication.



Questions to ask vendors

1. How is candidate data stored?
2. Do you have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) that guarantees uptime and system availability?
3. Is there a publicly accessible page to check past incidents of system downtime?
4. Are you ISO 27001 certified?

.....

Check out [Jobylon's GDPR Compliance Guide](#) for more tips on data security in recruitment.



I think the most important thing to look into — especially if you're an enterprise — is how the ATS ensures compliance with GDPR and other data protection laws, as well as what security certifications the company holds.

Ahmed Patel

Operations Specialist, Amby



8. CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

An ATS won't solve every candidate experience challenge, but it can be a key part of the solution. A user-friendly, intuitive platform makes it easy to apply—helping you attract more candidates. But if the process is clunky or full of unnecessary steps, it can just as easily push them away.

Beyond efficiency, the right ATS also strengthens your employer brand. Branded career pages and job ads give candidates a visually engaging first impression and a glimpse into your culture.

It should also support automated feedback collection at every stage—whether during application, interviews, or after rejection. Automating

this process [improves consistency and response rates](#), giving you the insights you need to understand what's working and where to improve.

1 in 4

Rejected candidates would not apply to the company again



From our data of over 2 million unique candidate experiences, nearly 1 in 4 rejected applicants (24%) wouldn't apply again. Since rejected candidates make up most of your applicant pool, your ATS can help uncover why they wouldn't reapply — and give you the insights needed to make changes that reengage them when the right opportunity comes around.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

Branded career sites and job ads, seamless application forms, profile-free applications, and automated candidate experience surveys.



"We chose Jobylon because we wanted to have a really solid candidate experience. It should be easy to apply to our jobs and it should feel modern."

Siri Wikander, Director of People Growth, Scandic Hotels

Scandic



What a candidate-friendly ATS looks like:

- Easy, profile-free application process
- Self-scheduling for interviews
- Automated communication that keeps candidates informed and engaged
- Automated candidate feedback collection to improve the hiring experience
- Mobile-optimized application experience
- Customizable, branded job ads and career pages
- Streamlined application forms that only ask for what's relevant to the role

To learn more, don't miss our report on [candidate-first trends shaping recruitment](#).



9. CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Your ATS provider should be easy to reach and ready to help when you need support. Just as importantly, that support should be personal—and handled by a real person. When comparing vendors, look at what's included: Do they offer onboarding and training? And how much support will you need to get started?

For large organizations with hiring teams across departments, countries, and regions, you should feel confident in the rollout plan and the level of support available to get up and running as quickly as possible.

A dedicated customer success manager should also keep you updated on product developments and relevant training sessions. They should know your company in and out and know how best to support your business and how to get the most out of your ATS.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

Live chat, email, and onboarding assistance for seamless setup and usage, a dedicated customer success manager, and regular business reviews.

“

Perhaps unexpected, but great customer support is essential when choosing an ATS provider. I think this is severely underrated. Especially now, with new features and updates released so frequently, it's more important than ever to get an—ideally human—answer to any question within minutes. My experience using an ATS improves a lot when I know the customer support is timely, reliable, and kind.

Hanna Rzeczycka

Recruitment Consultant, Amby

10. COMMITMENT TO PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

A common reason companies switch ATSs is the feeling that they've outgrown their current system or that essential features are missing. However, in many cases, the features exist, but users aren't kept informed about platform developments.

Your ATS provider should show a strong commitment to continuous product development, not only by keeping up with

industry trends but also by evolving based on customer needs—including yours.

They should actively seek feedback and develop features that support modern hiring.

What to expect from a modern ATS:

Customer demos, resources and guides, invitations to events, and clear ways to request features and give feedback.



ATS FEATURES CHECKLIST

Manage jobs and candidates

- ☐ Branded career pages
- ☐ Job templates
- ☐ Automatic posting to job boards
- ☐ AI-assisted job descriptions
- ☐ Employee referral portal
- ☐ LinkedIn Recruiter integration
- ☐ Social sourcing browser extension
- ☐ Advanced database search and filtering
- ☐ Job subscriptions
- ☐ Recruitment marketing features

Collaborative hiring

- ☐ Agency access
- ☐ User, role, and access management
- ☐ Multi-language options
- ☐ Automated triggers and actions
- ☐ Build custom hiring teams
- ☐ Automated approval flows
- ☐ Group and video interviews
- ☐ 2-way ATS - email sync
- ☐ Integration with HRIS/HRM systems

Assess & qualify talent

- ☐ Feedback forms and scorecards
- ☐ Interview guides and templates
- ☐ Anonymized candidate data
- ☐ Weighted screening questions
- ☐ AI-powered skills matching

Candidate experience

- ☐ Multi-language support
- ☐ Custom triggers for inactive applicants
- ☐ Integrated candidate experience surveys
- ☐ Profile-free application forms
- ☐ Apply with LinkedIn integration
- ☐ Automatic interview scheduling
- ☐ Customizable offer letter templates

Data & analytics

- ☐ Track and visualize key metrics
- ☐ Customized insights dashboard
- ☐ Connect your own BI platform
- ☐ Automated hiring manager surveys
- ☐ Easy-to-share reports

Data protection & privacy

- ☐ ISO-27001:2022 certification
- ☐ SSO through SAML 2.0
- ☐ SSL & data encryption
- ☐ GDPR-compliance



STEP 3

Compare different ATS systems

Now that you understand your needs and what features you want in an ATS, it's time to search for relevant vendors and compare options.

COMPARISON AND RATING SITES

One of the best ways to get a reliable overview of an ATS is to look at user feedback on software comparison and rating sites.

Reviews on platforms like G2, Capterra, and TrustRadius can give you invaluable insights into user experiences and understand the strengths and potential downsides of different ATSs.

Additionally, buyer's guides (like this one!) offer helpful tips for selecting the right ATS. But remember, don't only rely on vendor-provided information. According to data from Capterra, [90% of HR software buyers who later regretted their purchase](#) had only used information from the vendor. As a buyer, you need to balance vendor insights with third-party sources.

ASK YOUR NETWORK

Some of the most influential recommendations come through word of mouth and personal recommendations from industry peers.

Tap into your professional network to gather insights on different ATS providers by reaching out to peers and discussing their experiences.

Some extra homework here can go a long way:

- Read LinkedIn posts about the product
- Ask your network directly for feedback on LinkedIn
- Listen to relevant podcasts and webinars talking about ATSs



RESEARCH THE VENDOR'S CUSTOMER BASE

Don't expect a vendor to change their approach once you become a customer. Instead, look at their existing customer base to see if they're a good match for your needs:

- What types of companies do they work with? Do they serve businesses of your size and industry?
- What challenges have their customers resolved using the system?
- How loyal are their customers? What are their contract renewal rates?

Focus on vendors that already support businesses similar to yours in size and complexity— they are likely experienced in meeting your needs.



ATS BUYING FAQ

Why not just choose the biggest ATS on the market?

It's tempting to go with one of the major ATS providers in the US, for example, but it's worth considering if that option really fits your needs.

As Andy Turnbull from Bolt shared on [HR Tech Talks](#), despite his extensive experience with large, US-based ATS vendors, he's found real advantages in working with smaller European providers. For him, it's been refreshing to have “more access to things like product management and senior leadership,” an experience that larger providers often can't match.

ATS platforms each have strengths, and selecting the right one depends on your organization's unique needs. Some platforms are optimized for start- and scale-ups, others more geared towards enterprise. It is important to understand where your company is today but also pick a solution that can grow with your company and where it wants to be in the near future.



	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3
User reviews (insights from G2, Capterra, etc.)			
Overall rating			
Ease of use			
Customer support quality			
Feature satisfaction			
Network feedback (insights from peers, referrals, industry experts)			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Promoters	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Detractors	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Customer analysis (case studies, testimonials, etc.)			
Customer satisfaction			
Success stories & measurable impact			
Customer relevance (size, industry)			
Notes and overall impressions			

	Vendor 4	Vendor 5	Vendor 6
User reviews (insights from G2, Capterra, etc.)			
Overall rating			
Ease of use			
Customer support quality			
Feature satisfaction			
Network feedback (insights from peers, referrals, industry experts)			
Strengths			
Weaknesses			
Promoters	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Detractors	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Customer analysis (case studies, testimonials, etc.)			
Customer satisfaction			
Success stories & measurable impact			
Customer relevance (size, industry)			
Notes and overall impressions			

Take this scorecard and your notes to your product demos. Use it to guide your conversation and the questions you ask shortlisted vendors.

STEP 4

Shortlist ATS vendors



By now, you should have a shortlist of three to five (or fewer) ATS providers. It's time to dive deeper into the details and get to know both the product and the team behind it.

READ CUSTOMER CASE STUDIES

As you explore your shortlist, take a closer look at how each ATS performs in real-world scenarios. Customer stories and case studies can show how other companies have used the system to solve hiring challenges.

Most vendors have a “Customers” or “Testimonials” page on their website. Look for companies of similar size or within your industry to see if the vendor's approach aligns with your needs. Case studies can also reveal key strengths, such as ease of implementation, user adoption, and ROI.

BOOK TAILORED DEMOS

A product demo is your chance to see how an ATS works in practice—so make it count. Instead of a generic walkthrough, ask for a tailored demo.

Tips for a productive demo:

- **Come prepared.**
Share your hiring challenges and must-have features in advance so the demo is relevant to your needs.

- **Involve key stakeholders.**
Bring in recruiters, hiring managers, or HR leaders who will use the system daily. Their input is crucial.
- **Focus on real workflows.**
Ask to see how the system handles tasks like job postings, interview scheduling, or reporting—not just a standard feature tour.
- **Ask tough questions.**
How does the system integrate with your existing tools? What's the implementation timeline? What kind of customer support is included?

Keep in mind, a demo is also a chance to meet the team behind the software. The right vendor can be a key partner in your hiring journey and success.

Pay attention to their communication style and how they address your questions and concerns—these are important clues about how the working relationship might develop. You'll likely notice that some companies align better with your team and ways of working.



RFP PROCESS

So, you've decided it's time for a new ATS. How do you kick off the buying process?

A good first step is sending out a Request for Proposal (RFP) to potential vendors. An RFP helps you clearly outline your needs and challenges—giving vendors the opportunity to show how their solution can meet them.

Instead of listing every feature you can think of, focus your RFP on your biggest hiring challenges. Ask vendors how they would solve those problems, not just what their product can do. That shift in focus will give you more meaningful responses and help you compare solutions more effectively.

That said, if you've identified certain must-haves—like a LinkedIn integration or mobile-friendly design—make sure to include them and confirm each vendor can deliver.

As you draft your RFP, keep in mind the following:

- ☒ Your hiring goals
- ☒ Your most pressing challenges
- ☒ Your implementation timeline
- ☒ Must-have vs. nice-to-have features
- ☒ How responses will be evaluated and scored
- ☒ Who will be involved in the evaluation process

When evaluating providers, consider the needs and concerns of different stakeholders. The CHRO might not use the system day to day, but recruiters will. Hiring managers need an intuitive interface, and candidates should have a seamless application experience. It's also important to involve IT, finance, and legal early in the process, as they'll have their own priorities and questions to address.

To help you get started, download our free RFP template. It offers a clear framework for structuring your request, questions to ask vendors, and a feature checklist to support modern hiring.



Summary

The ATS buying process begins with a clear understanding of your company's goals, challenges, and how the right technology can support your hiring strategy. But a one-size-fits-all solution is not the answer if you're aiming for true transformation.

Ultimately, it's about finding a system that can grow with you—and a provider that's genuinely invested in your success. The right match offers scalability, customization, and the support you need to hire better, faster, and with confidence.

Want more ATS buying tips?

Book a call with one of our recruitment software specialists to discuss your needs and which ATS might be right for you.

For more hiring resources, sign up for our monthly newsletter.



hello@jobylon.com



Jobylon.com

