ABCs of the ATS: A Job Seeker's Guide

When searching for a new job, there is one important acronym to remember: ATS. Applicant tracking systems are used by 99% of Fortune 500 companies and a growing number of small and medium-sized businesses.

Many businesses filter resumes through an ATS before a hiring manager gets their hands on it. And if the ATS doesn't find a resume qualified enough for its specific role, it may never get to a hiring manager at all.
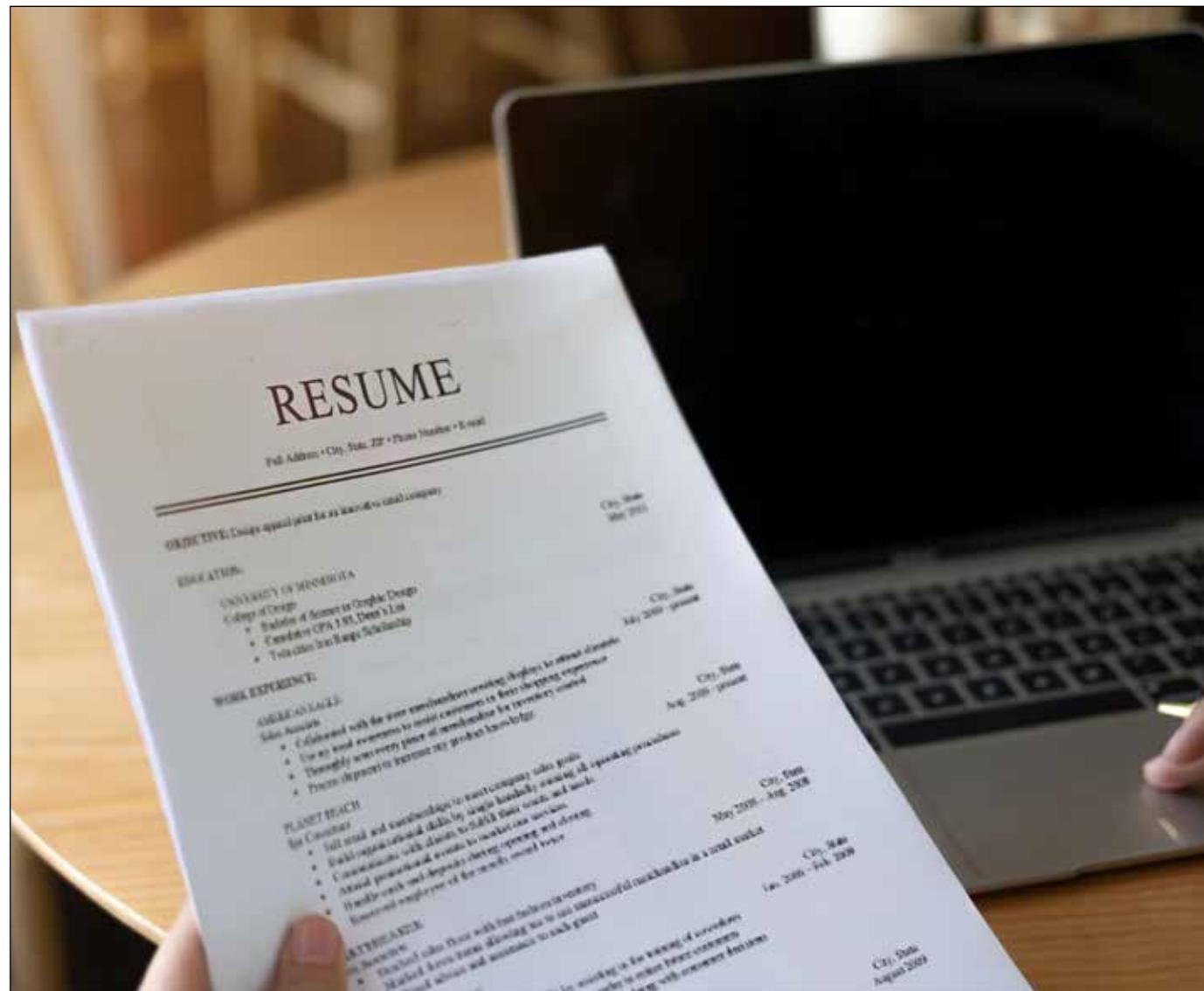
But what is an ATS and how can you beat it?

Unfortunately, there is no universal trick to "beating" applicant tracking systems, especially since different employers use different ATS programs.

Read on for some tips and tricks to make sure your resume is ATS-ready and properly prepared for the job market.

WHAT IS AN ATS?

Gone are the days when your resume goes immediately to a recruiter or hiring manager when you apply for a job online. It is first pro-cessed by an ATS. Top employers hire for several jobs at a time and receive hundreds of resumes for a typical job opening, hence why they need help sifting through applications when a new job is announced.

ATS software provides recruiting and hiring tools for companies. Even networking sites like LinkedIn and job boards like Indeed utilize ATS programs.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

ATS programs gather, collect and store resumes in a database for hiring professionals to access. They inte-grate keywords into their job search program to help only the most relevant resumes bubble up to the top of the rankings for hiring managers to consider.

For example, if a recruiter is hiring for an administrative assistant position out of 200 resumes, they will likely search for "administrative assistant" in their ATS program. Anyone that doesn't have that exact term in their resume is out of luck and may end up in a throwaway pile.

This underscores the importance of making sure your resume matches the role you're targeting.

These systems collect and sort thousands of resumes, among other things. They also organize and rank incoming resumes to help hiring professionals save time and energy in their initial review of a candidate.

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DOES FORMATTING MATTER?

When you upload your resume into an ATS, it may be reformatted into a digital file to make things more searchable.

This can lead to some of your information being scattered and distorted. This makes your efforts in properly formatting and organizing your resume highly critical.

Here's how to create an ATS-friendly resume:

• Use a chronological or hybrid resume format.

• Keep section headings simple.

• Use consistent formatting for your work history and dates.

• Avoid tables or complex graphs.

• Use a traditional resume font like Times New Roman, Calibri, Helvetica, Garamond, or Georgia.

• Use both the long-form and acronym version of keywords for maximum search-ability.

• Avoid including your photo.

• Use a .docx or .pdf file format.

Follow these tips and you'll be beating the ATS on your way to a new role in no time.

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