Talos360

A Complete ATS Buyer's Guide

How to choose the right applicant tracking system for your business
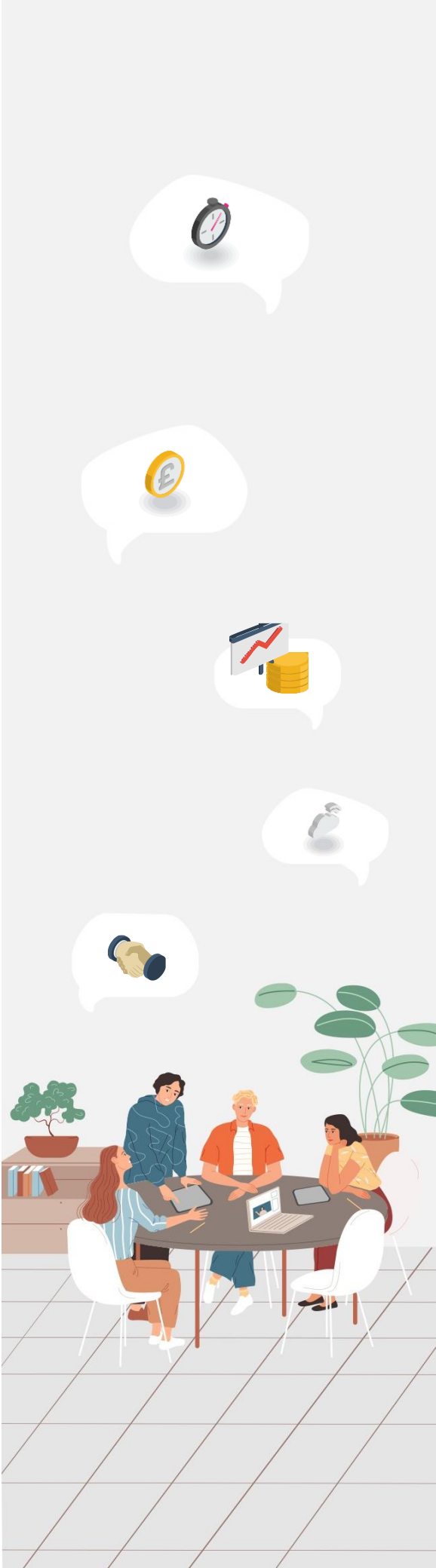
By Frank Allen

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Introduction

Despite the prevalence of applicant tracking systems [ATS], it's interesting just how many companies still rely on Excel spreadsheets. Even in a world dominated by technology and, in particular, AI capability, 30% of large businesses and 80% of small and medium-sized businesses still don't use an ATS.

These are staggering figures. Even more so when, 94% of recruiters that *do* use an ATS say that the software has an overwhelmingly positive impact on their ability to hire.

An ATS streamlines and simplifies the whole talent acquisition process. It saves organisations' time, money, resources, and a good portion of admin for HR teams by automating manual tasks.

Here's just a handful of commercial business benefits a good ATS can bring to your future recruitment strategy:

1. Reduced cost-per-hire
Effectively being able to reduce your cost per hire means that your ATS can become a huge money saver for your business.

2. Decreased time-to-hire
Defined as starting once your recruitment advertising campaign goes live, this is often used as a yardstick for recruitment success. An efficient time-to-hire often demonstrates a thriving employer brand and an efficient recruitment process.

3. Improved time-to-fill
Often conflated with time-to-hire, time-to-fill is the time it takes to fill a position from the very beginning of the requisition for a new hire to end. *The average time-to-fill in the UK is currently 42 days*.

4. Data-driven recruitment
Move away from hiring on 'gut feeling' or intuition. With an ATS, you can ensure you hire the best candidate every time, reducing cost, bias, and, ultimately, churn.

5. Enhanced candidate experience
An ATS simplifies the application process, streamlining the candidate experience and encouraging them to stay engaged throughout their application journey.

6. A better understanding of your source-per-hire
This is a highly important hiring metric allowing you to understand the effectiveness of your candidate attraction network. An ATS will pinpoint the sources of your applicants, improving your campaign effectiveness, future efficiencies, and ROI.

Fact: 62% of teams that use an ATS find more high-quality candidates, compared to those using traditional methods – **Select Software**

What is an ATS?

Applicant tracking systems have been around since the mid-1970s, with the first iterations being extremely basic, designed to make data entry easier but with minimal reporting options.

Fast-forward 50 years, and an ATS is a prerequisite for any recruitment team. Indeed, recruitment is needlessly difficult without one. With a state-of-the-art ATS, HR has access to a complete talent delivery platform that can attract, review, and manage candidates throughout the hiring process.

A good applicant tracking system can now distribute your jobs across hundreds of job boards and/or connect you with agencies to help attract candidates. An ATS also supports the entire candidate lifecycle from powering your careers site to managing your application database. More modern systems even offer onboarding microsites. These not only act to improve new starter engagement, but they also help reduce candidates dropping out of the hiring process post offer.

From a HR legal compliance perspective, an ATS will help HR navigate the complexities of storing applicant data securely (GDPR) while ensuring HR hires legally through integrated background checks. Throw in applicant screening that helps rank candidates easily, automated email/SMS comms, and seamless candidate progression management – it's not difficult to see why 90% of Fortune 500 companies use an ATS.

Do you need an ATS?

You're reading this guide. So, we can only guess you're considering an ATS for your business rather than passively browsing to while away the hours. Perhaps you've seen more spreadsheets than your accounts team, you receive more emails than the CEO, or you want to reprioritise your time instead of manually reviewing and shortlisting candidates and the huge amount of admin this entails.

Popular reasons to implement an applicant tracking system include:

•To reduce costs by having more visibility on hiring metrics

•To reduce time wasted on hiring administrative tasks

•The need to comply with HR legislation such as GDPR and background checks

•To reduce time spent manually processing large numbers of applications

•To access free job boards in order to reduce hiring costs

•To improve the candidate attraction network in order to acquire more candidates

•To improve the candidate journey to reduce application dropouts and maxmise recruitment advertising ROI

•To promote employer brand and engage with quality candidates

•To reduce reliance on costly recruitment agency fees

What ATS features should you look out for?
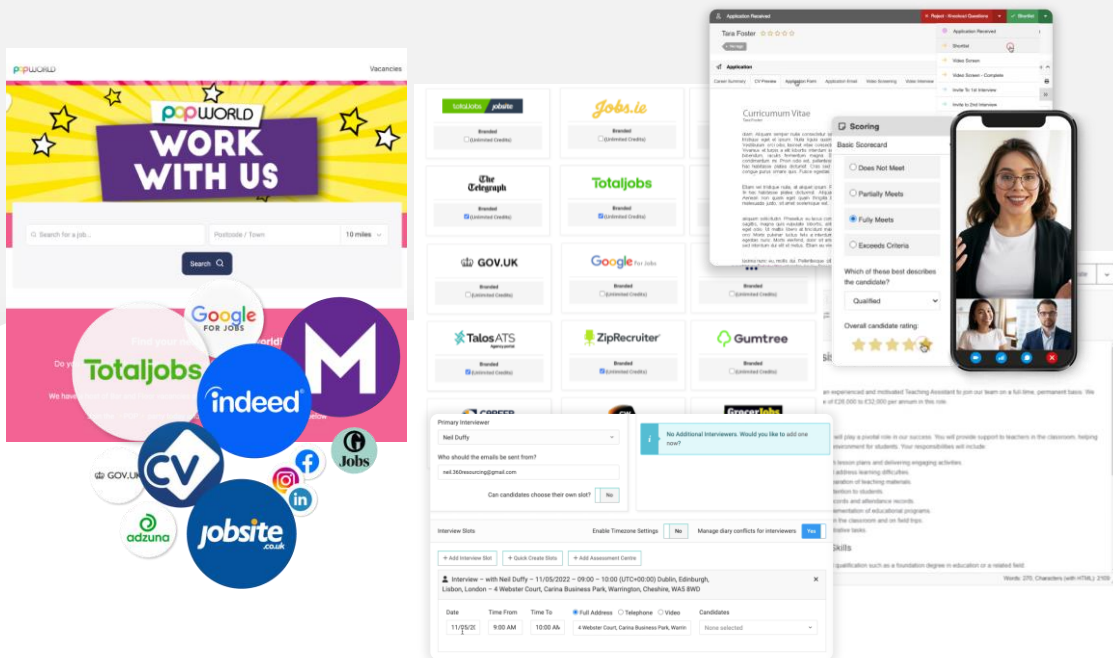
With so many ATSs on the market, choosing the right one is the real difficulty. Some have features which others don't. Others may not yet have the features you want, but it's on their product roadmap. Some applicant tracking systems are no longer building out their tech stack – so there is no future innovation planned. Some systems are self-serve with very little support, others offer guided implementations and even training.

The point is, only you can make this decision. However implementation of a new system is an investment of your time, so it's best to review what you're likely to need moving forward for your business in order to future proof your choice.

To give you a head-start, we've pulled together nine features you should look for in an ATS before even considering a decision…

Here they are…

1. Access to free job boards

Some job boards charge to advertise on their sites. Other job boards are free. An ATS with access to free job boards gives you an easy way to cut candidate acquisition costs. A wide variety of job advertising options should be an available in a good ATS.
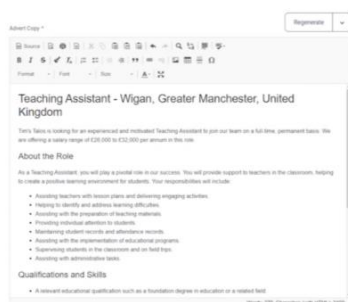
2. AI-generated job descriptions

Not every ATS will have this capability since this tech is still relatively new. In terms of genuine AI, this taps into ChatGPT and is the only genuinely AI-ready feature available to ATSs [though not all have it yet]. Access to this capability will simplify your advertising process by creating job descriptions based on your prompts.
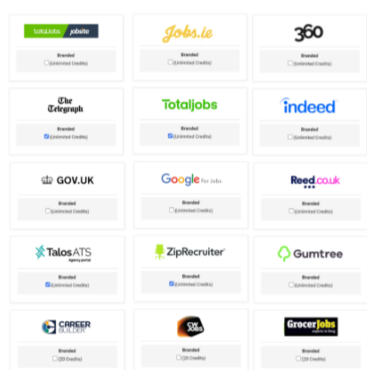
3. Integrated multiposter

Having the capability to distribute your advert to your choice of job boards, social media sites, and careers pages will save you heaps of administrative time AND energy. Make sure you find out if there are any additional costs for sending your roles to job boards. Some ATS systems have "posting" fees, some allow unlimited posting free of charge, and other ATS systems may require you to purchase a multiposter from a third-party supplier. Make sure you check what is included in the costings here as paying a posting fee per job can rapidly add costs to your licence fee.
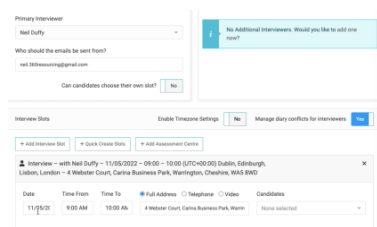
4. Interview booking

Time is one of the main currencies when it comes to recruitment. Look for the option for intelligent self-select interview slots. This allows candidates to select from time slots that you allocate, making interview booking quicker and more effective, saving your recruitment team unnecessary administration.

5. Video interviewing functionality

Video interviewing has massively increased in popularity since Covid. It gives both hiring managers and applicants the ability to have initial discussions without lengthy commutes and even for non-remote roles – it makes an idea first interview stage. It's highly efficient and convenient for all parties.
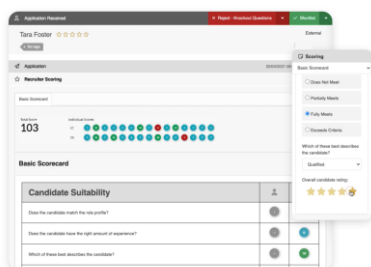

6. Scorecards

Candidate scorecards are an integral element of recruitment since they ensure every candidate is assessed against the same criteria, helping to minimise the influence of unconscious bias in your hiring shortlisting process.
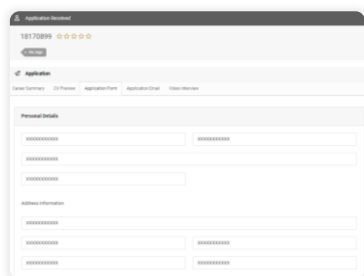
7. Unbiased recruitment features that support DE&I

This feature is usually identified by asking the ATS provider if you can remove identifying features from candidate application forms. If you can, you'll reduce unconscious bias and open the door to a broader talent pool.
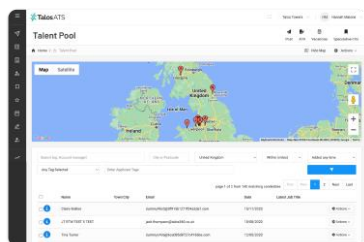
8. Talent pool

Having access to a database of potential employees is a feature that you'll wonder how you managed without. It can save you both time and money on future hires.
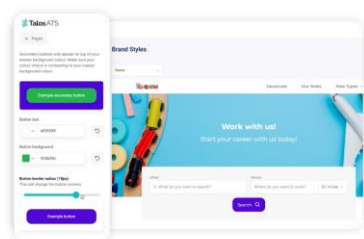
9. Careers page builder capability

With 37% of candidates going directly to an employer's website for job opportunities, can you afford not to have a shop window? Choose an ATS that allows you to develop your own careers site that will actively engage your future employees.

The benefits of using an ATS

As well as the features, it's good for you to glance at the immediate benefits implementing an ATS will bring to your company. We've only listed six here, but truthfully, we could have listed 66. When you have your ATS in situ, you'll wonder how you ever managed to cope without one.

Here's what we think might be the most beneficial aspects of using an ATS:

Saves time for your HR team
By streamlining aspects of your hiring process, ATS software will save time for your HR team – freeing up more of it so they can focus on the tasks that really count.

Cutting recruitment expenses and giving you control
Using an ATS can actively reduce your cost-per-hire while centralising your company's hiring process and promoting active engagement with your unique employer brand.

Improving the 'recruitment journey' for your candidates
The automation and AI features {if present} offered by your ATS will benefit your candidates just as much as your colleagues. While your team will save valuable time, your candidates can get off to the best start possible with your business – securing their future success and engagement.

Promoting data-driven recruitment decisions
Candidate compatibility is critical for ensuring long-term staff retention and maximising workforce productivity. Using an ATS provides visibility over applicant data – including CVs, survey results, interview performance, and professional experience, helping HR to achieve more positive, data-driven hiring decisions.

Improving employee / new recruit retention
With 1 in 5 candidates failing to show up on their first day, either because they've had a better offer or because communication has been sporadic, it's not a statistic that's necessary if you use an ATS. With an ATS, you'll have a greater capacity to nurture your candidates throughout the application process, presenting them with a positive, well-informed hiring and onboarding journey. Which, in turn, will reduce the risk of applicant turnover and build strong, lasting relationships between new recruits and your employer brand.

Allowing you to recruit candidates remotely
ATS platforms have many intuitive features to help you hire remotely, including video interview tools, paperless data collection and management, and remote onboarding features. *Ensure your business maintains a strong and effective hiring process – even when members of your team are working remotely.*

# So, you need an ATS. Here's how you build a business case

You know there's a more sophisticated way of managing candidates than an Excel spreadsheet. Countless hours are lost on administration that could be sped up using top tech – *you know this*, but does your manager, your CEO or whoever makes the decisions at your business?

First things first, you need to collect the reasons why a good ATS will benefit the *whole* organisation and not just HR. Here are some scenarios to get you thinking…

1. You're spending too much money finding suitable candidates.

2. Recruitment agency costs and outsourcing are taking up a high proportion of your budget.

3. You're spending too much time sieving through irrelevant applications.

4. You've no talent pool, so every time you go out to recruit, you start afresh – which takes time and costs money.

5. Everyone hires differently, and there's no joined-up approach to hiring.

6. A lack of transparency.

7. Your employee churn is high.

8. Your candidate spreadsheet takes more in-house maintenance than time spent recruiting.

9. You've no easily accessible data to improve processes.

10. Feedback to candidates is slow, and you lose them to competitors.

11. You have no multiposter and are spending time negotiating with multiple job advertising sites.

When you have a list of reasons relevant to your business, you need to track your current candidate experience as best you can.

To simplify this part, we've mapped out what a good application experience should look like…
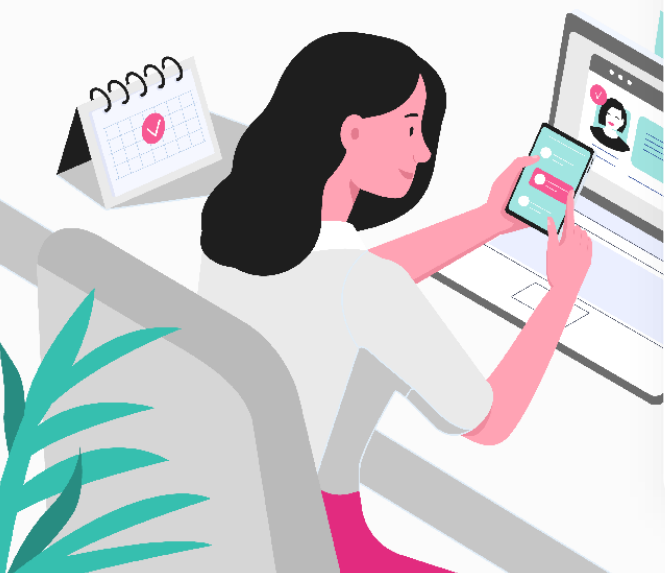
What does a good application experience look like?

Easy to find jobs

Make your vacancies easy to find by including them on a selection of free job boards. If you have the resources, utilise premium job boards and consider agencies when you need help to source the right candidate for your business. A good application experience starts here.

Declutter the process

Once you've captured a candidate's attention, don't repeatedly ask for the same information or request every single scrap of employment history since leaving school. An application process should be relevant, user-friendly, easy to complete, simple to follow, and transparent.

Make it speedy

The length of your job application is for you to decide. But whether you ask for a singular CV, one with a covering letter, or you'd like the applicant to complete a full application – the process should be speedy. The longer the application process, the higher the drop-off.

It has to be mobile-friendly

In 2022, 67% of job applications were completed on a mobile device. Furthermore, with a person checking their mobile phone on average 85 times a day - if your application isn't mobile-friendly, you could potentially miss out on a large talent pool of candidates.

Engaging communication

The better your communication during the application stage, the less likely candidate drop-off will be. Be upfront, give an overview of the process, map out candidate touchpoints, and, where possible, utilise automation to keep in regular contact and nurture your candidates.

Reply to every candidate

One way to damage your employer brand is by neglecting candidate feedback: It's critical and essential to a good application experience. Remember, even if a candidate is unsuccessful, they may be suitable further down the line – so keep the lines of communication open.

Million-dollar questions to ask any ATS supplier
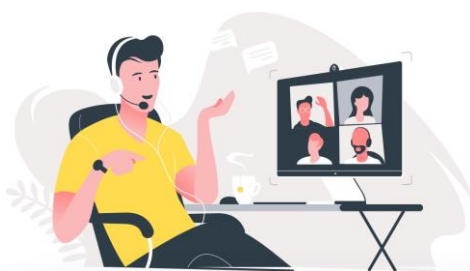
According to GetApp, more than 86% of recruiters say that using an ATS has reduced their time-to-hire, and a further 79% have found an increase in the quality of hires following ATS implementation.

So, while it's clear an ATS will improve your hiring, the candidate journey, and the quality of the hire, what isn't clear is where to begin your search for an ATS that matches your needs.

This is where you discover that detective streak you never knew you had. Many ATS providers will knock on your door, claiming their tech is the best on the market. And maybe it is. But that's not for them to tell you; it's for you to find out.

Here are some questions you can ask any provider that will give you more clarity on whether their tech matches your expectations:

1. Does their ATS have the flexibility to meet your current *and* future needs?

2. Will their ATS be compatible with your existing tech stack?

3. Will their ATS help you manage hiring compliance?

4. Does their ATS support a modern, innovative approach to hiring?

5. Does their ATS support the offer management process?

6. How well does their ATS handle onboarding?

7. Do they offer a multiposter and access to free job boards?

8. How does their company protect data, and what is their approach to security?

9. Will they provide a project-managed deployment?

10. Do they offer training? Or will you be left to work out the ATS for yourself? How thorough is their commitment to making sure your implementation goes well?

Implementing an ATS into your business

You've spent months analysing, pouring over varying ATS features, weighing each one up against what you're looking for, what you need, and what you can afford – it's time to implement. But where to start? One of the key hazards to negotiate when purchasing an ATS is how you will project-manage the ATS into your business. Any provider worth their salt will do this for you. If not, step away.

What a successful implementation looks like

A reputable ATS provider should hand-hold you through the acquisition process and guide you through implementation. We say *should*. Not all will. During the acquisition stage, you should make it very clear that you expect the following:

1. Clear and realistic guidelines.
2. A structured onboarding process.
3. Regular clear communication
4. Comprehensive training and support during implementation.
5. Streamlined migration.
6. Best practice advice and great customer service.
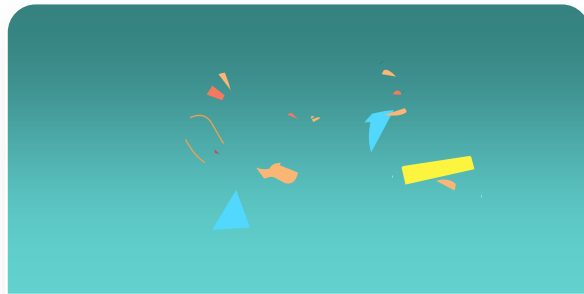
Top tips to guide your implementation process

We've been in this business for over a decade, so we know a thing or two about tech implementations. While every business is different, and some of you reading this will be considering ATS tech for the first time, others looking to update or change their provider, what is consistent is that once a decision to purchase new tech has been made, everyone needs to embrace the decision and be supportive of the change.

To embrace the process, three necessities are necessary:

1. Build a dedicated project team.
2. Get stuck into testing.
3. Be open to new processes.

Customer reviews and case studies

Often what confirms of the suitability of any new software implementation is often the reviews left by happy customers. An applicant tracking system is no different.

Have a look into software review sites and see what kind of reviews prospective vendors are predominately getting – you'll find a wealth of helpful information written by HR professionals just like you.

Another good source of information can be case studies. They offer real life examples of how technology can improve business processes, and often have some helpful strategic and tactical content to assist with your hiring process.

GetApp

Software Advice.

Capterra

REVIEWS.io

While looking through reviews and case studies, remember some of your high priority questions or requirements from each vendor. Nine times out of ten, you'll find the answers to your questions.

Often the answers to basic questions can be found within these reviews, such as:

1. Does the vendor offer accessible support or assistance?

2. Are they an international company or UK-based?

3. Do they respond quickly to software issues?

4. Do they value customer service?

5. Do they assign an account manager to look after their client?

6. What training do they offer their clients to set them up on their system?

7. Does the system appear easy to use?

8. Are they willing to configure the system to their clients' needs?

9. Do they have HR integrations?

10. How long is the tech onboarding stage? And are clients happy with the implementation and support?

You can always view our testimonials and case studies here

Lastly, to help you narrow down the choices, use our ATS evaluation checklist to ensure you're 100% certain which ATS is the right ATS to bring you recruitment success.
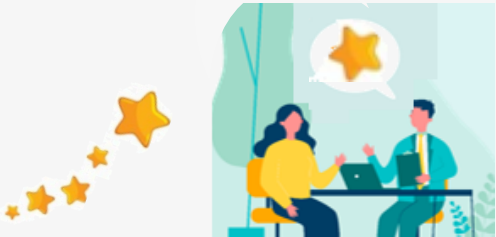
Your ATS checklist

Compare vendors here or contact us to find out more

	1. Talos ATS	2.	3.
Advertising multiposter with no additional fees	✓		
Free job board access	✓		
Premium job board access	✓		
Vacancies posted to social accounts	✓		
Vacancies posted on internal job board	✓		
AI generated job adverts	✓		
Customisable job advert templates	✓		
Recruitment agency portal	✓		
Vacancy authorisation/requisitions	✓		
Customisable hiring permissions by user	✓		
One click apply job board integrations	✓		
Password free application process	✓		
Customisable application forms	✓		
Customisable screening questions	✓		
Careers site builder	✓		
Free careers site hosting	✓		
Multi-brand functionality	✓		
Talent pool	✓		
Vacancies overview dashboard	✓		
Templated email comms	✓		
Interview scheduling	✓		
Self-select interview slots	✓		
Video screening	✓		
Live video interviews	✓		
Candidate assessments	✓		
Recruiter Scorecards	✓		
Anonymised hiring for DE&I	✓		
Progression stage automations	✓		
Reference checking	✓		
Activity alerts and notifications	✓		
Right to Work checks	✓		
DBS and background checks	✓		
Legally binding contract e-signs	✓		
Onboarding management	✓		
Candidate onboarding portal	✓		
Candidate insights	✓		
Cost & time-to-hire reports	✓		
Source-of-hire reports	✓		
DE&I reporting	✓		
GDPR compliance & ISO 27001	✓		
HR software integrations	✓		
Free set up and implementation	✓		

Job board ATS integrations checklist

Compare Vendors Here

	1. **Talos**ATS	2.	3.
LinkedIn jobs	✓		
TotalJobs	✓		
Cater	✓		
Reed.co.uk	✓		
Retail choice	✓		
CV Library	✓		
Monster	✓		
Monster network	✓		
Google for jobs	✓		
The Guardian jobs	✓		
Jobsite	✓		
360 Resourcing	✓		
Hotel professionals	✓		
Fish4jobs	✓		
Journal Des Palaces	✓		
Gov.UK	✓		
Glassdoor	✓		
Adzuna	✓		
ZipRecruiter	✓		
Career Builder	✓		
Caterer.com	✓		
The Telegraph	✓		
CW Jobs	✓		
Hospitality Jobs	✓		
Leisure Jobs	✓		
Grocer Jobs	✓		
Jobs ie	✓		
Job Medic	✓		
NHS Jobs	✓		
CharityJobs	✓		
NI Jobs	✓		

About Talos360's Software

Talos360 was established in 2009 to provide businesses with a better way to attract, recruit, and retain the best talent. With our core products, Talos ATS, Talos Engage, and Talos Attract, we now offer some of the UK's most innovative recruitment and employee engagement software solutions.

Our award-winning applicant tracking system, Talos ATS, offers in-house recruiters the opportunity to deliver the ideal candidate journey, putting the candidate first to attract the very best talent. Talos ATS also delivers a streamlined experience for hiring managers to reduce admin time, save recruitment costs and fill roles fast to achieve business growth

Based in the UK, we pride ourselves on our excellent customer service. Over the years, we've been privileged to work with forward-thinking client partners, from SMEs to public sector organisations, charities, and household brands. Our aim has always been to build long-lasting client relationships.

Our dedication to offering the best talent solutions is evident in our product roadmap, recent module releases, and product integrations with TrustID, Credence, and DocuSign, to name a few.

Our product team continually innovate to ensure our clients have access to the very latest hiring software features and our DNA of finding businesses a better way, differentiates our solution from the many other applicant tracking systems on the market.

If you'd like any help reviewing how to create your ideal ATS hiring workflows, or would like to talk about how any of the features of an applicant tracking system can benefit your business, then we'd love to help.

No question is too small so please get in touch!

Talos ATS

Advanced Hiring Software

Like what you read?

Would you like to Demo our award-winning ATS?

Ready to get started?

Book your personalised demo today.

Get demo

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