Talos360

A Complete ATS Buyer's Guide

How to choose the right applicant tracking system for your business

By Frank Allen

Contents

What is an ATS?	3
Commercial benefits of an ATS	4
What ATS features you should look out for?	5-8
Key questions to ask any ATS supplier	9
Building a business case for an ATS	10
What a good application experience looks like?	11
Don't underestimate customer reviews and case studies	12
Your ATS checklists	13-15
Implementing an ATS into your organisation	16
About Talos360	17

What is an ATS?

An applicant tracking system (ATS) is software that helps organisations manage the hiring process, from posting roles to tracking candidates and making offers.

Early versions focused mainly on basic data entry with limited reporting, but modern ATS platforms provide automation, insight and a more streamlined recruitment experience enabling HR teams to attract, review, and manage candidates throughout the hiring process.

But what does a state-of-the-art ATS look like?

It's no longer enough for an ATS to simply distribute your jobs across different job boards or send automated messages to candidates. Recruitment is evolving, and the ATS must evolve with it.

A state-of-the-art ATS supports a right first time hiring approach. It does this through its ability to:

- Maximise the power of AI to help source top talent
- Increase candidate attraction with tailored career sites built within the platform
- Minimise the impact of unconscious bias by promoting merit-based skills and aptitude
- Co-pilot interviews with AI-powered interview insights
- Support legal compliance by securely storing candidate data
- Preboard candidates with integrated Right to Work and background checks
- Onboard new starter with tailored microsites
- Utilise AI-reporting intelligence to help recruiters make stronger, data-led decisions

Is your hiring process ready for the future of talent?

Ask yourself these questions - if you answer "yes" to most, it's time to consider an ATS. .

1. Are spreadsheets and manual workflows slowing your team down?
2. Are you juggling more recruitment emails than strategic initiatives?
3. Could faster, smarter hiring decisions give your business a competitive edge?
4. Would you like to spend more time on talent strategy rather than administrative tasks?
5. Are you ready to reduce time-to-hire while improving candidate experience and quality of hire?

Here's several reasons why other organisations are utilising an ATS to help them grow their business:

'Our ATS is saving up to 550 hours a week.'

The Entertainer

'Our new ATS delivered a full-scale recruitment transformation in just 17 weeks.'

wagamama

'We halved our time-to-hire using an ATS.'

Lancashire Cricket

Commercial benefits of an ATS

Despite the benefits of applicant tracking systems [ATS], it's interesting how many companies still rely on Excel spreadsheets.

As more HR teams look to invest in technology and AI-powered tools, a staggering, 30% of large businesses and 80% of small and medium-sized businesses still choose to recruit without an ATS.

All the while, 94% of businesses that have opted to use an ATS state the overwhelmingly positive impact their ATS has had on their hiring ability.

It's not difficult to see why.

An ATS streamlines and simplifies the whole talent acquisition process. It saves organisations' time, money, resources, and time spent on needless admin by automating manual tasks.

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

1. Reduced cost-per-hire
An ATS does the hard work for HR. Taking the sting out of admin reduces cost-per-hire, which means your business is saving cash with every hire.

2. Decreased time-to-hire
Time-to-hire is the measure for recruitment success, and the clock starts ticking from the moment your job ad goes live. With an ATS, your business delivers autonomous hiring; it delivers efficiency; it delivers decreased time-to-hire.

3. Improved time-to-fill
The average time-to-fill - *the time it takes to fill a position from requisition for a new hire to the appointment* - is currently 42 days. With an ATS, the candidate journey is managed from start to finish for a quicker, slicker, and more automated process.

4. Data-driven recruitment
Move away from hiring on 'gut feeling' or intuition. With AI-powered interview insights available within an ATS, your business will hire based on data, reducing cost, bias, and 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
Want to know where your hires come from? An ATS will pinpoint the sources of your applicants, improving your campaign effectiveness, future efficiencies, and ROI.

7. Superior offer acceptance rate
An ATS will automate communication and streamline your admin, so your candidates are better informed at every stage of your recruitment process. The better informed your candidates, the better your acceptance rate will be.

Choosing the Right ATS:

Beyond Features, Focus on Impact

With so many ATS solutions on the market, each promising similar features, how do you ensure your investment truly supports your business strategy?

Start by aligning capabilities with your most pressing talent challenges:

1. ***'We can't find the right talent.'***
Look out for an ATS that promotes features that support data-led candidate insights and intelligent shortlisting to elevate hiring decisions.

2. ***'We want to reduce the risk of bad hires.'***
Watch out for solutions with built-in assessments, structured interview workflows, and compliance safeguards that actively reduce the likelihood of costly mis-hires.

3. ***'We're not promoting our employer brand well enough.'***
An integrated careers site and candidate engagement tools should be high on your wish list. If an ATS doesn't provide this feature, move on.

4. ***'Our onboarding slows new hires down. We need a slicker process.'***
Only 12% of companies onboard well. Look for features that accelerate time-to-productivity and promote quick employee integration.

Unlock the ATS Features You Really Need

Even if a system doesn't seem to have every feature upfront, that doesn't mean it's off the table.

Often, a simple conversation can unlock possibilities. Features that look unavailable on a website might be in development - or accessible through a proactive partnership.

Here are the questions that help uncover the right ATS for your business:

Roadmap & Integration:

- Is the feature you need already planned?
- When will it be available?
- Will it work with your HRIS and other systems?

Implementation & Support:

- How does your ATS compare to others we're considering?
- What does onboarding actually look like?
- Is it self-serve, or do you guide implementation and training?

Asking questions like these separates innovators from the crowd and helps you find a solutions partner, not just a product.

To make it even easier, we've pulled together 13 features every ATS should either have now or be planning for...

Here they are...

Candidate attraction

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 available in a good ATS.

2. Talent Analytics

Not every ATS will have this feature, since it's AI-powered. But those ATSs that do will give you an upper hand in hiring. How? Talent Analytics provides hiring managers with instant talent intelligence. Meaning that before you go out to market, thanks to real-time candidate data, you'll know how many candidates are available, how many have the right skill set, and how many reside in your location. This incredible data bank will allow you to salary benchmark as well as understand who else is hiring in your desired talent pool.

3. AI-generated job descriptions

In terms of genuine AI, this taps into ChatGPT and is one of the first genuinely AI-ready feature available to ATSs [though not all have it]. Access to this capability will simplify your advertising process by creating job descriptions based on your prompts. Not every ATS will have thi s capability, so keep an eye out for those that do.

4. Career site builder

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.

5. Integrated job boards

Having the capability to distribute your advert to your choice of job boards, social media sites, and careers pages will save huge amounts of admin time. But bear in mind that 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. Check what's included in the costings, as paying a posting fee per job can rapidly increase your licence fee.

70% of hiring challenges stem from not having the data for the current talent market – **HRForecast**

Candidate management

1. Candidate assessments

According to CareCheck, a staggering 51% of people lie on their CVs. But even more confounding than that stat is how underused candidate assessments are. Most hiring teams will use a separate provider if they use candidate assessments. But since you're on the hunt for a new ATS, look out for ATSs that present HR with the opportunity to use candidate assessments directly from their platform. The ATSs that offer this feature will save you money, help you to hire the right people, and lower the risk of bad hires.

2. Removing bias

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.

3. 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.

4. Video interviewing

Video interviewing has massively increased in popularity. 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 ideal first interview stage. It's highly efficient and convenient for all parties.

5. 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.

6. Interview insights

During interviews, judgment can be easily clouded, causing the risk of a bad hire to skyrocket. However, ATSs that offer an AI-powered interview co-pilot shore up this crucial component of recruitment. How? By automatically capturing, transcribing, timestamping and summarising the video interview so that you can concentrate on the interview itself, and make a more informed hiring decision.

Candidate onboarding

1. Preboarding checks

Preboarding is the digital bridge between recruitment and employment. The problem is, a lot of ATSs don't necessarily have this digital bridge embedded within their platforms. So, in your search, look out for an ATS that integrates with e-signature providers for smoother document management, as well as integrated checks such as Right to Work checks and any number of background checks.

2. Onboarding microsites

From a technological perspective, nothing integrates a new starter more effectively than an onboarding microsite. Because these are a relatively new addition to the HR toolkit, not all ATSs will boast this feature. Essentially, they work to enhance onboarding integration and engagement with your company and their new colleagues, with the knock-on effect of increasing speed to competency and improving retention. So, well worth looking out for.

Reporting

1. AI-powered reporting

Most, or all, ATSs will have a reporting function. But not every ATS will have an AI-powered reporting feature. What's the difference? Quite a lot. With basic reporting dashboards, HR receive basic, static data. However, ATSs that have added AI to their reporting functions add another layer to their customers' recruitment reporting. Imagine accessing nuanced data, such as 'How many applications have we received from the South West area?' AI reporting propels ATSs that have it to the forefront of innovation, reporting on the data you need, when you want it.

36%

of HR professionals believe that inadequate technology leaves them unable to streamline their onboarding processes

Think Learning

47%

of businesses struggle with onboarding new employees

The Year of Access Report

Essential questions to ask any ATS supplier

Most ATS providers will insist that they have the best tech on the market.

But now you know what features an innovative ATS possesses, separate the good from the bad with our million-dollar questions.

An ATS is a major investment – it's up to you to find out which tech matches and exceeds your expectations....

1. Does your ATS have the flexibility to meet your current *and* future needs?
2. Will your ATS be compatible with our existing tech stack?
3. Will your ATS help us manage hiring compliance?
4. Does your ATS support a modern, autonomous approach to hiring?
5. Does your ATS support the offer management process?
6. Do you offer a multiposter and access to free job boards?
7. How well does your ATS handle onboarding?
8. Does your ATS utilise ethical AI?
9. Will you provide a project-managed deployment?
10. Do you offer training? Or will we be left to work out the ATS for ourselves?
11. How thorough is your commitment to making sure the implementation goes well?
12. Does your ATS support integrated right to work and background checks?
13. How does your company protect data, and what is your approach to security?

Building a business case for an ATS

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

If they don't. You need a business case that collects together the reasons why a good ATS will benefit the *whole* organisation and not just HR. Here are some scenarios to get you thinking...

Recent studies indicate that an effective ATS can decrease the average hiring cycle by as much as

60%

SelectReviews

36% of professionals believe that inadequate technology leaves them unable to streamline their onboarding processes

Think Learning

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 sifting 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

89% of job seekers will use their mobile phone to look for their next job. 67% of these job seekers will apply on their phone for those jobs. The average person checks their mobile phone 85 times a day. The upshot? If your application isn't mobile-friendly, you're missing 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.

Don't underestimate customer reviews and case studies

So, you've built your business case. Management is happy for you to progress. You've spoken to various vendors. But you want to be absolutely certain you've isolated the best partner.

What do you do?

Nine times out of ten, before you buy something online, you'll check the product reviews before you purchase. Purchasing an applicant tracking system is no different.

Have a look at software review sites and the reviews left by fellow HR professionals. What are they saying about your preferred vendor?
Want more convincing? Check out your preferred vendors' case studies. Here, you should find real-life examples of how their technology has improved hiring for businesses like yours.

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. Are clients happy with the implementation and support?
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?

To illustrate, check out our testimonials and case studies **here**..

Once you're incognito fact-find is done, it's time to match up the competitors.

To help you with this arduous task and 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 2026 ATS Checklist

Compare essential ATS features with other vendors here or **contact us** to find out more

	1. Talos360	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	✓		
Talent Analytics (Live Market data)	✓		

	1. Talos360	2.	3.
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	✓		
AI-assisted interview insights	✓		
Cost & time-to-hire reports	✓		
AI-powered reporting	✓		
DE&I reporting	✓		
GDPR compliance & ISO 27001	✓		
HR software integrations	✓		
Free set up and implementation	✓		

Job board ATS integrations checklist

Compare Vendors Here

	1. Talos360	2.	3.
LinkedIn jobs	✓		
TotalJobs	✓		
Cater	✓		
Reed.co.uk	✓		
Retail choice	✓		
CV Library	✓		
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	✓		

Implementing an ATS into your business

You've spent months analysing options, comparing features, balancing needs with budgets, and narrowing down your shortlist. Now it's tempting to just sign on the dotted line. But before you do, ask yourself: how will this ATS actually integrate into our business? Any provider worth their reputation will project manage this process for you, guiding your team every step of the way. If they cannot or will not, step away. A smooth implementation is not optional; it is critical to getting the system to deliver real value.

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. So, preferably, during the acquisition stage, 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 helping businesses implement HR tech for over a decade, so we know what works. Whether you're adopting an ATS for the first time or switching providers, one thing is clear: once a decision is made, the whole team needs to get behind it.To make the process successful, three things are essential:

1. Leadership buy-in – Everyone from HR to executives must support the change and champion its benefits.
2. Clear communication – Explain why the change is happening, what it means for each team, and how it will improve workflows.
3. Structured adoption – Follow a guided implementation plan with training, check-ins, and support to ensure the system is fully adopted and delivers value.

Need more advice? We're here to provide it. **Contact us.**

You've reached the end of our ATS Buyer Guide - now what's next?

To make your decision even easier, schedule time with our hiring experts for an in-depth look at our autonomous hiring software, and put everything you've learned into action.

In your tailored walk-through of our system we'll aim to:

- Understand more about your business, your current recruitment processes.
- Talk through your key challenges to uncover what you are looking to improve with your new hiring software.
- Showcase our key features of Talos ATS most likely to benefit your hiring objectives

About Talos360

Talos360 enables businesses to attract, recruit, onboard, develop and retain the best talent with our AI-powered autonomous people platform

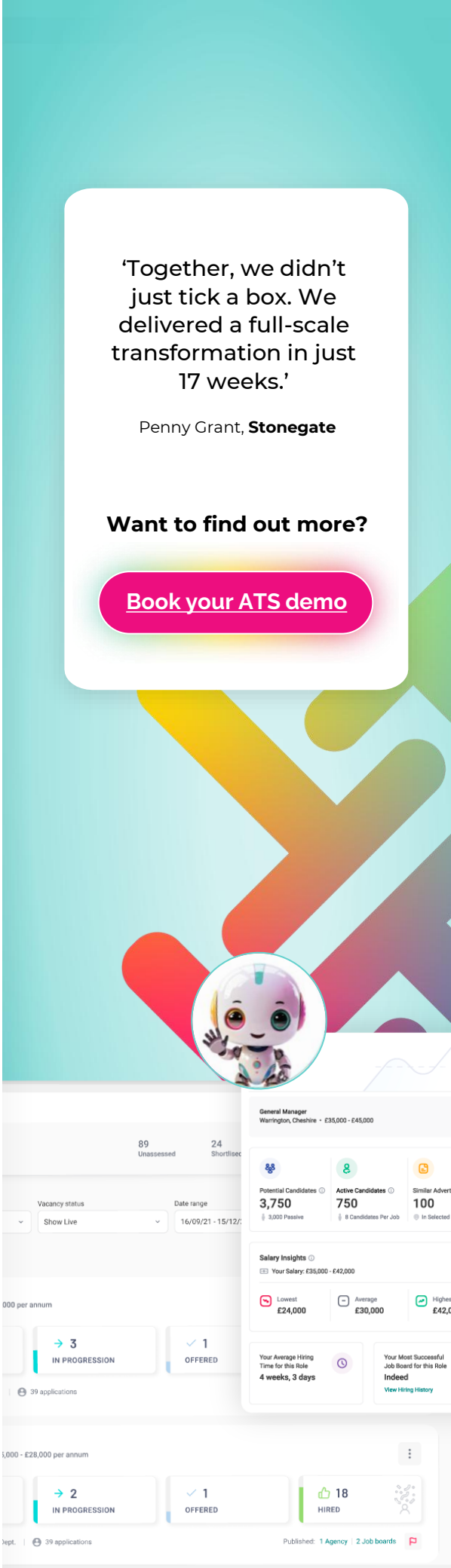
Talos360 is the market leader in people technology, empowering businesses to hire smarter, grow faster, and unlock their people's full potential through autonomous SaaS solutions. Their award-winning technology unites intelligence, insight, and ethical AI to transform every stage of the employee journey - from hiring to high performance.

No other ATS will partner with your business like Talos ATS.

If you have a question about our ATS or anything you've read in this guide, please get in touch!

'Together, we didn't just tick a box. We delivered a full-scale transformation in just 17 weeks.'

Penny Grant, **Stonegate**

Want to find out more?

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