Optimizing Resumes for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)

What Is an Applicant Tracking System?

An applicant tracking system is a type of software that helps filter and sort online job applications so recruiters can find the people who are the best fit for their company. Since most companies get hundreds- if not thousands - of applications, an ATS is a time-saving tool for HR because it can filter out spam and applicants who aren't a good match, store resumes for future job openings, check references, and do other things that can help with the hiring process.

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How Do Applicant Tracking Systems Work?

There are 5 basic steps to how an applicant tracking system works:

1. A job requisition is entered into the ATS. This requisition includes key information about the position, such as the job title, desired skills, and required experience.

2. The ATS then uses this information to create a search profile for the ideal candidate.

3. Every ATS is different, but when you submit an application online through an ATS, you'll usually be asked to answer some "knockout questions". These can be short answer, yes/no or other simple questions that are used to screen candidates and quickly filter out the ones that are a definite no.

4. As applicants submit their resumes, the ATS parses, sorts, and ranks them based on how well they match the job profile. Recruiters often filter and score resumes by searching for key skills and job titles.

5. Hiring managers then quickly identify the most qualified candidates and move them forward to the next step in the hiring process.

APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM (ATS) TIPS & TRICKS

To ensure your resume is ready and equipped for the ATS scan, follow the tips below.

1. Use keywords from the job description in your resume
The ATS software scans your resume for specific words and pieces of information to determine if you are a qualified match for that particular job or industry. First, look at the job description that has been posted and identify major keywords. Include the keywords from the job description in your resume. This will ensure the ATS software finds you a qualified and supreme candidate for the position you are applying for.

2. Do not use fancy fonts, designs, colors, or images
Fancy designs and images can create problems when scanned through the ATS and are also found unprofessional by recruiters, so make to refrain from using them on your resume. Tip: Use a professional and approved font such as Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman, or Helvetica.

3. Check for spelling and grammar errors!
A single spelling error may cause your resume to be immediately rejected, so make sure it is free of mistakes! Read and reread it to eliminate any errors. Tip: Ask a professional or colleague to check it.

4. Use the correct file types
If you use the incorrect file type, the applicant tracking system may not be able to scan and read your resume. While the ATS may be able to scan a PDF, it is best to submit it in a .doc or .docx file from Microsoft Word to avoid complications. Tip: Look over the job description to see if the employer specifies which file type to use.

5. Make sure your file name is correct
Use a professional resume file name to ensure that recruiters can easily find and access your resume in the system. Examples of approved resume file names: JohnSmith.Resume.docx, JohnSmith.SalesManager.doc.

6. Label headings and sections properly
Use standard headings such as work experience, education, and interests. Make sure that you are providing clear and consistent information.

7. Be careful when using abbreviations
Spell out abbreviations on your resume. Example: CPA (Certified Public Accountant) This way, you will be good to go if the ATS is searching for the full word. Tip: Reference the job description to see how a specific certification or title should be abbreviated.

More information on how to optimize your resume for ATS can be found at **Jobscan.com**