

# BEST PRACTICES FOR ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Pressing submit on an online application is a big step. Before you apply, you'll want to make sure that your application documents are optimized for online submission. From applicant tracking systems to following up on your submission, this guide will walk you through the top tips for the most common application process today.

## Applicant Tracking Systems

**What is it?** An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a software platform that many companies use to quickly receive and review applications before they reach the hiring manager. An ATS saves a company time by filtering out applications that do not appear to meet the qualifications for a position or seem otherwise unsuited. Using keywords programmed to represent the qualifications for a position, an ATS scans applications and only forwards those that meet qualification criteria to the hiring manager for review.

**How do I know if an ATS is being used?** You can often look at the URL of an application site and determine if an ATS is being used by looking at the domain name. If the URL says something along the lines of "company.taleo.net" or any of the common ATS names below, it is likely the company is using an ATS.

## Common Applicant Tracking Systems

- ❖ Oracle Taleo
- ❖ Jobvite
- ❖ Workday
- ❖ Bullhorn
- ❖ SmartRecruiters
- ❖ SAP Success Factors
- ❖ IBM Kenexa BrassRing
- ❖ iCIMS
- ❖ Workable

**How do I make sure my application gets through?** There are a few key pieces of your application you'll want to focus on to make sure your application makes it to the hiring manager.

- 1. Format:** Keep your resume simple and clean. Using a commonly used font and basic formatting such as those found in the Styles bar of Microsoft Word and avoiding tables and text boxes will help the computer to easily recognize each piece of your resume without skipping over it. Bullet points rather than text boxes or paragraphs will also help. If you want to test if your resume can be easily read by an ATS, it's a good idea to test it with a screen reader.
- 2. Organize:** Most ATS read resumes in a similar way so you'll want to make sure to use familiar headings like "Education" and "Work Experience". Additionally, consider listing your degree before your school and your job title before your place of work because this is typically how an ATS will look for these qualifications.
- 3. Follow Directions:** If the ATS has one space for your resume and another for your cover letter, place those documents in the correct submission boxes. If it says to submit them together, submit them together so that the computer knows exactly where to look for your documents.
- 4. Use Keywords:** Since keywords are the main filtration system of an ATS, you'll want to be sure to use the correct keywords in your resume. Try to match up your experience with the employer's job description with our resource: [Understanding What the Employer Wants](#). You'll want to use the employer's language to describe your skills so that an ATS recognizes that you have the qualifications the company is looking for.
- 5. Don't Abbreviate:** Spell out all abbreviations so that the ATS can recognize and understand what you are writing about.

## Staying Organized

**I'll remember where I have applied. Why do I need to organize?** Keeping a record of all the places you have applied to saves you a lot of time when you go to follow up with employers, creates less work for you when it comes to applying to similar jobs, and helps with interviewing when you know exactly what documents you sent to which company. Consider using a spreadsheet, folders for each position, or a combination of both to organize your online application process. It is all about what organization works best for you. Here are a few things you may want to keep track of:

- ❖ Date Applied
- ❖ Salary Advertised
- ❖ Last Contact Date/Details
- ❖ Questions/Notes about the Position
- ❖ Company Name
- ❖ Location
- ❖ Application Status
- ❖ Link and/or Screenshot of Job Description
- ❖ Position Title
- ❖ Contact Information
- ❖ Files Sent
- ❖ How You Found Out about this Position

## Following Up

You never want to send your application in the abyss of an online application system without following up on it with a human contact. If a contact is listed for the position, contact them. If there is not one listed, try your best to figure out who the hiring manager may be and contact them. When you contact them (typically via email) you'll want to include the following:

- ❖ Your cover letter and resume in PDF form
- ❖ A short summary of your experience
- ❖ The exact title of the position you applied for
- ❖ Your interest in the position
- ❖ Your excitement about the company

**Why should I send PDFs?** Document formatting may vary, and each person may be using a different version of Microsoft Word or another word processing system. Converting your documents to a PDF will preserve the original formatting of your documents and will ensure that your documents can be easily opened by the employer.

## Career Development Resources

Career Development is here to help! From our website resources to our events to our one-on-one appointments we are here to help you every step of the way. Be sure to check [Handshake](#) and our social media regularly for upcoming events regarding online applications. You can also use Handshake to schedule one-on-one appointments to discuss any stage of the application process.

