

BEAT THE BOTS

Get Past An Applicant Tracking System and Land An Interview

WHAT IS AN APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEM (ATS)?

Large organizations receive an overwhelming number of applications for each position. To assist in narrowing down the applicant pool, they are increasingly using software systems called “Applicant Tracking Systems,” or ATS for short. When you apply for a job, a computer will screen your application before it reaches the hands of a human. The rise in the use of the ATS means that even if you spent hours tailoring your application for a position, if you use the incorrect format or incorrect wording, your application may not make the cut.

Taking time to understand how the system works and implement the following suggestions can TRIPLE your chances of getting an interview (Jobscan). To “beat the bots,” you have to first understand how an ATS works.

HOW DOES AN ATS WORK?

1. You apply for a job, uploading your application materials (résumé, cover letter) into the system or copying and pasting information into a text box.
2. You submit your application. Your materials are then run through a parser, which removes all your formatting and converts the file to plain text.
3. The ATS scans the text and organizes your résumé based on sections it recognizes (contact information, work history, education, etc.).
4. A hiring manager can search an ATS using keywords OR your application will be scored and matched to an existing job opening.
5. Applications most relevant to the job opening based upon keywords are selected by the ATS and displayed to the hiring manager.

BEATING THE ATS — PROVEN TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- ✓ Keep it simple. When it comes to your résumé formatting, using an online or pre-formatted Word template may be easy, but it will not work when applying for a job or internship through an ATS. An ATS cannot read the information inside tables and text boxes. Start with a blank Word document or the résumé template provided by the Business Career Center.
- ✓ Images cannot be read by an ATS. Do not use pictures or logos on your résumé.
- ✓ Use simple bullet symbols (black circles). An ATS cannot read fancy bullet symbols like arrows.
- ✓ Know the keywords that are important in your chosen industry or function. Doing the research ahead of time will help you prepare a general résumé that is easy to tailor for each application.
- ✓ Read the job or internship description and highlight every keyword. Those are the keywords that the ATS is programmed to search for when scanning applications.
- ✓ Use the keywords from the internship/job description 2-3 times throughout your résumé. Using the same word more than that is called “keyword stuffing” and could cause the ATS to red flag your application.
- ✓ Make sure your résumé is people-friendly! After your application makes it through the ATS, it will be read by a recruiter and needs to make sense.

APPOINTMENT HOURS

Have your application materials reviewed by a career coach in the Business Career Center Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Call or visit MyPlan to make an appointment.

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(Continued)

UP YOUR GAME

Do you already have great bullet statements? If so, the following information will help you take it up a notch and learn how to strategically tailor your statements to match the internship or job description.

The following example demonstrates how to tailor one bullet statement from your experience as a New Student Enrollment (NSE) leader to an internship or job description that includes a form of the word “coordinate.” Remember that context is key and to pay attention to the use of singulars and plurals when integrating a word into your bullet statement. You need to use the exact keyword in your bullet statement, but your bullet statement still has to make sense to the reader.

Current Phrase (Past Tense)	Optimized Keyword	New Phrase (Past Tense)
<i>Coordinated</i> an educational program with 5 NSE leaders...	Coordinate	Selected to <i>coordinate</i> an educational program
	Coordinator	Served as <i>coordinator</i> of an educational program
	Coordinating	Tasked with <i>coordinating</i> an educational program
	Coordination	Excelled in <i>coordination</i> of an educational program

NEED ASSISTANCE?



Visit with a career coach in the College of Business Career Center. Your coach can assist you in tailoring your résumé, cover letter and LinkedIn profile so you can maximize your chances of beating the bot.

Appointment hours are Monday to Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Schedule via MyPlan or call 402-472-7272. Or drop in to our office Monday to Friday 1-4 p.m. for help.

On-demand assistance is also available using VMock CareerFit. For information on setting up your profile in the system, please contact the Business Career Center.