Get That Interview!
How to Beat the Dreaded Applicant Tracking System

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About the Speaker

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Ground Rules and Warnings

- **Group Participation: Ample Time for Audience Q&A**

- **Anything I say is just my opinion—try it and see if it works for you.**

- **I'll present opposing points of view on certain topics and let you decide.**

- **Artists**

Overview

- **What is an Applicant Tracking System (ATS)**

- **How to Avoid Applicant Tracking Systems**

- **How to Work with Applicant Tracking Systems (if you absolutely must)**

What is an ATS?

- **Applicant Tracking System (ATSs) started as a way to accept, store, and track resume submissions and job applications.**

- **They started as PC-based then migrated to web-based as online apps evolved.**

What is an ATS?

- **For years (decades!) ATSs were a benevolent tool for moving job applicants through the hiring process.**

- **The growth of mobile apps and job sites changed *everything*.**

- **Suddenly applicants could apply for jobs with a swipe of a finger.**

What is an ATS?

- **Companies started receiving *hundreds* of resumes from job applicants, most of whom were not qualified for the jobs.**

- **To counter this flood of non-qualified applications, companies added artificial intelligence to their ATSs to weed out the non-qualified candidates.**

What is an ATS?

- **People also started using job websites that would automatically submit their resume to jobs containing specified keywords.**

- **Now you have web AIs automatically sending resumes to job postings, and ATS AIs automatically rejecting them.**

- **Madness!**

What is an ATS?

- **ATSs use artificial intelligence to compare your resume to the job for which you are applying. It then ranks how well it thinks you match the job requirements and the job description.**

- **Only the top X% of job applications as ranked by the ATS are seen by real people.**

So what's a job applicant to do?

- **Stop applying for jobs via applicant tracking systems!**

- **Learn how to beat the ATS if you really must apply though one.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **The best way to "beat" an ATS is to not use one at all.**

- **It's a million times more effective to apply for a job using a personal connection in your network.**

- **So start building your network now, before you need a new job.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Your STC connections are your most valuable asset for job hunting.**

- **I know several people who landed new jobs in the past year via their STC connections.**

- **Those same people received ZERO interviews when applying for jobs via ATSs!**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Tip: Volunteering at the chapter/SIG level is a great way to build your professional network.**

- **Even better: Speak at the STC Summit, write for *Intercom*, etc.**

- **Best: Run for an office or volunteer at the Society level. It's a fantastic way to expand your professional network!**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Another place to network (pre- and post-covid) are local Meetups.**

- **Virtually, build your social media networks.**

- **Start by connecting with people you know on LinkedIn.**

- **Then join (and contribute to!) related groups on LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Let your network know you are looking. Also monitor your network to see who is hiring.**

- **The majority of job openings are never posted on the web—they are filled through networking and personal referrals.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Many companies offer their employees a bonus for referring candidates. It's faster and cheaper than posting the job online.**

- **So don't hesitate to ask someone to pass on your resume to the hiring manager.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Even if you don't know someone at a company, find people on LinkedIn who work there and ask them to forward your resume to the hiring manager. They may get a bonus!**

- **Even better: Connect to the hiring manager directly if possible.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Companies rarely list HR or Recruiter contacts on their website (to avoid spam).**

- **However, 99.99% of all company recruiters have a LinkedIn account.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Even if you can't find a writer or manager at your target company, you can ALWAYS find a recruiter at that company on LinkedIn.**

- **So reach out to that recruiter and ask if you can send him/her your resume.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

One of three things will happen:

- You'll get no response

- They'll reply, "Sure!"

- They'll reply, "No, but go ahead an apply via our website and I'll keep an eye open for it."

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

For the last option: You're still applying via an ATS, but at least you have a human looking for the application…

…who can also pull you out of the non-qualified folder if the ATS doesn't think you're a good match!

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Another option is to be so visible as an expert that people want to hire you.**

- **You're not asking them for a job, they're asking you!**

- **So speak at conferences, write articles, start a blog, post on social media, etc.**

- ***Be visible!***

How to beat the ATS.

Now that we've discussed how to avoid applying for jobs via ATSs, let's look at how to get past them if you absolutely must apply online.

How to beat the ATS.

- **There are many websites and books on how to beat ATSs when applying for jobs.**

- **I'll list some of the main points here, but do your own research for other tips and tricks.**

How to beat the ATS.

- **A resume is just a vehicle that show that you match what the reader is looking for.**

- **This is especially true when the "reader" is an ATS AI.**

- **The main strategy for getting past an ATS is to make your resume look as much like the job posting as possible.**

How to beat the ATS.

- **Your title at the top of your resume and in your current and previous jobs** *must match the job posting exactly.*

- **If the job is "Senior Information Engineer," your resume must say "Senior Information Engineer"**

- **UI/UX Designer vs UX/UI Designer story**

How to beat the ATS.

Make sure that your resume shows that you match the job requirements *using their exact wording.*

How to beat the ATS.

The AI will also compare the job duties to your resume, so make sure your resume shows you've done what they say you'll be doing in this job *using their exact wording.*

How to beat the ATS.

- **There are websites where you can paste a job posting in one section and your resume in another, and the site's AI will score how well you match.**

- **Search the internet for "is my resume ATS friendly" to find one**

How to beat the ATS.

Note:

- **I'm not a huge fan of ZipRecruiter, but they have such an evaluation tool.**

- **Which is really useful if you're applying for a job via ZipRecruiter.com!**

How to beat the ATS.

- **So what to do if you haven't done or don't have one of the requirements?**

- **Figure out how to work in the needed keywords with a truthful statement.**

- **Example: If you have used RoboHelp but not Madcap Flair, you can say, "5 years experience with RoboHelp, similar to Madcap Flair"**

How to beat the ATS.

- **AIs can't parse long sentences, so use short phrases.**

- **Keep verbs and objects in close proximity.**

- **"Wrote training materials"** *not* **"Wrote a variety of content for end users and stakeholders, including installation guides, user manuals, SOPs, and training materials."**

How to beat the ATS.

- **AIs also can't read/parse:**
  - Tables and text boxes
  - Icons and graphics
  - Headers and footers, etc.

- **Make your resume as plain as possible.**
- **Save your gorgeously formatted and beautifully written resume for the interview, after you've beaten the ATS!**
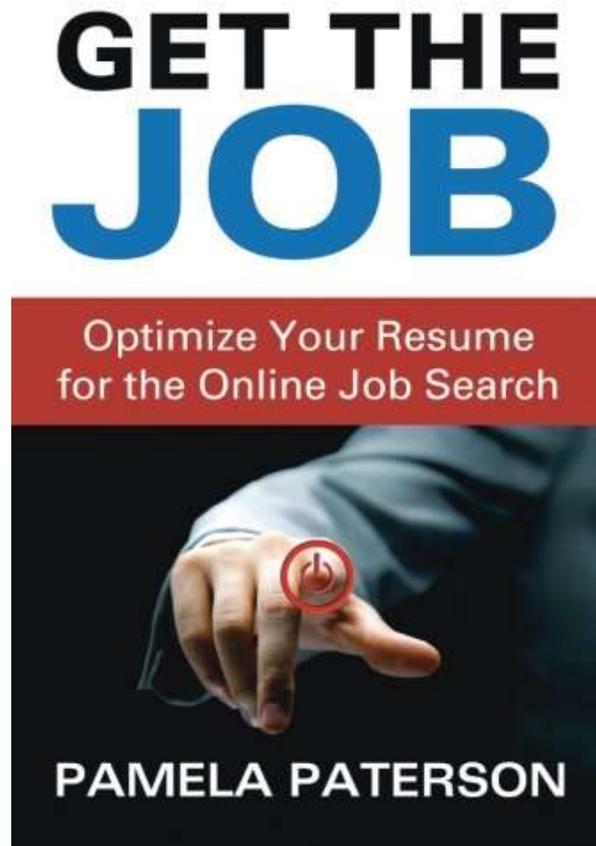
Q&A

Summary

- **ATSs compare your resume to the job description, and will reject you if it thinks you're not a good match**

- **Stop applying for jobs through ATSs. Get a personal referral from your network, from a stranger who works at the company, or a recruiter there.**

- **If all else fails, format your resume and beat the ATS at it own game!**

Recommended Reading

Let's network!

Connect with me on LinkedIn, follow me on Twitter, send me your resume!

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