

CV SCANNING SOFTWARE

Technology is changing how CVs are structured and presented. Increasingly, companies are using Applicant Tracking System software (ATS) to reduce the cost of hiring. These serve as the first filter of applications to cull the volume to a reasonable number, therefore decreasing the number of applications “human eyes” need to review.

How does ATS work?

ATS scan individual CVs, looking for set criteria such as keywords, skills, former employers, qualifications, memberships and software used relevant to the position. The more instances of the criteria being met, the more likely it is that the CV will survive the filtering process. Estimates are that 75% of applications are rejected by this process and the ATS may also send automatic rejection letters.

The programs start by disregarding formatting. They then scan for specific keywords and phrases set by the hirer. The content of the CV is then sorted into individual categories such as contact information, education, skills and work experience. This information may then be used to populate the company’s hiring database for future use. Next, the hirer’s list of desired skills and keywords are matched against the raw data obtained from the CV. CVs with the highest scores relative to years of experience then trickle to the top of a list sent for review by “human eyes”. From there, a decision is made to interview.

Think of ATS like Google Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) for your CV!

How can you increase your chances of “passing”?

Some tips to maximise your chances are:

- Mirror the exact keywords from the ad throughout your CV. You might need to look at the company’s website and publications or talk to or look up the profiles of employees on LinkedIn to learn what language is favoured by that employer.
- Use text, not graphics.
- Separate out the sections of information in the CV with standard headings eg Education, Experience, Referees. This makes it easier for the software to identify the correct information.
- Spell out acronyms, no matter how commonly the phrase is used. The program may be searching for “Business Development Manager” not just “BDM”. The same rule should apply for degrees eg “Bachelor of Laws (LLB)”.
- Employ commonly used job titles eg “Sales Representative | Business Development Manager (BDM)”.
- Where possible, include keywords in a list of skills and in your achievements under relevant roles.
- Bullets are easier for the ATS (and human eyes) to scan.
- Consider including other wording important to the company such as its key values.
- It may be advantageous to include any relevant volunteering or memberships. These may result in additional instances of keywords appearing in the scan.

- Include your suburb and most importantly the state (we recommend “Suburb State Postcode” format) as finding the appropriate state on the CV is an obvious culling factor. It may well exclude for example all CVs that do not include “NSW” in the address. Some programs will generate a database of applicants that will allow the hirer to sort according to who lives closest to the role, if that it is an important consideration.
- Use your Overview section strategically. This is a good way to include keywords without looking like you are trying to “stack” the document artificially.
- While older ATS prefer text format documents, most newer systems can scan both Word or PDF formats.
- It may be more valuable to include unfinished degrees over having nothing at all.

What should you avoid?

- Don’t go overboard artificially trying to inflate the use of key words. A good ATS will spot this. In any case, without any substance, you will be eliminated at the human eyes stage.
- Avoid inserting tables, images or logos etc. You can use the columns function if you wish to split information into separate lists to save on length.
- Don’t use weird fonts as some older systems struggle with them. Some advice recommends using “sans serif” fonts such as Verdana, Calibri or Tahoma.
- Remember not to neglect any questionnaires that form part of an online job process. Most ATS will read these responses in conjunction with your CV (be sure to elaborate in your answers where possible).
- Check for spelling mistakes and typos especially on key terms. A very common one is for people to write “manger” instead of “manager” as this will not be picked up by a spelling check.
- Don’t include important information in headers and footers, such as this being your only incidence of contact information. Some systems are thrown by headers and footers and may skip the section, potentially resulting in a rejection.
- Start each role with the company or job title, not the dates. Starting with dates confuses the software which is more used to the conventional job-title-then-date formats.
- There isn’t a lot of value in listing lots of “soft” skills. It is highly unlikely that a recruiter will look for words such as “good communication” over functional “hard” skills such as “Adobe Photoshop”.
- Don’t use “white words” or other means of inserting tags. Remember that the CV will be reviewed by a person before a decision is made to interview and this just looks sneaky.

Your Converge Careers Consultant can assist you with any queries you have on this or other career-related matters.

MORE
INFORMATION

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