About the Speaker

- **Technical Writer, Doc Manager**

- **President, ProSpring Technical Staffing**

- **Author, *Be The Captain for Your Career: A New Approach to Career Planning and Advancement***

- **The LavaCon Conference on Content Strategy**

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 or (worse), be submitted automatically.**

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What is an ATS?

- **Companies were now receiving a flood of job applicants, *most of whom were not qualified for the jobs for which they were applying*.**

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

What is an ATS?

- **Artificial intelligence (AI): Computer programs that mimic cognitive functions of the human mind, such as "learning" and "problem solving"**

- **Machine learning (ML): Algorithms that improve automatically through experience and by the use of data**

Wikipedia

So what's a job applicant to do?

- **ATSs use AI and ML to compare your resume to the job for which you are applying, and then ranks how well it thinks you match the job description/requirements.**

- **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 *before* you need a new job.**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

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

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

- **These 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 of building your professional network.**

- **Even better: Run for an office or volunteer at the Society**

- **Best: Speak at the STC Summit, writer for *Intercom*, etc.**

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!

- **Then let your network know you are looking. Also monitor your network to see who are hiring.**

- **I don't have an exact figure, but a 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 they know (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 the target company, find someone at that company on linked in and ask that person if they cane pass on your resume on to the hiring manager— they may get a bonus!**

- **Even better: Connect to the hiring manager directly (when possible).**

Stop applying for jobs via ATSs!

- **Almost no companies these days list HR or Recruiter contacts on their website (to avoid spam).**

- **However, 99.99% of all HR and Recruiters have a LinkedIn account because they use LinkedIn to search for candidates.**

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 will reply with, "Sure!"**

- **They will reply with, "No, 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 in your industry that people want to hire you.**

- **Your not apply for a job, they are applying to you!**

- **Speak at conferences, write articles, start a blog, post on social media, etc. Be *visible*.**

How to beat the ATS.

- **There are websites and complete books written on how to beat ATSs.**

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

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

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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 via an ATS is *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 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 wording*.**

- **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 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!**

- **But remember: Only apply for jobs via an ATS as a last resort. Always try to get a personal referral first!**

How to beat the ATS.

- **So what to do if 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!**

Summary

- **An ATS compares your resume to a job description, and will reject you if it thinks you are not a 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
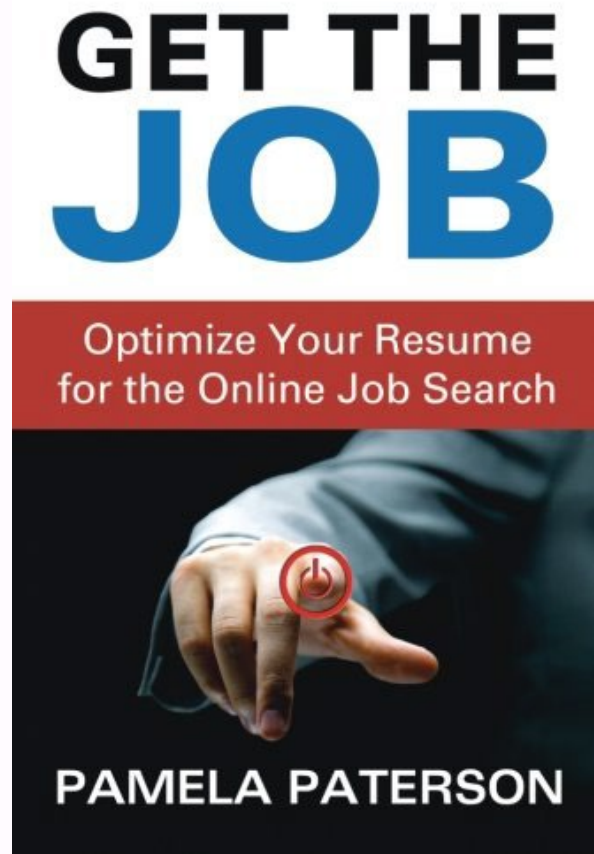
Let's network!

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

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