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## The Ruse-Mess

### ***Five Steps to Screening, Sorting and Qualifying Candidates*** ***Article contributed by Ira Wolfe***

With few exceptions, screening candidates has become a major problem for companies these days. An oversupply of unemployed candidates and unhappy workers seeking employment or better jobs is clogging up inboxes and bogging down productivity.

The deluge of resumes, or what I have been calling the ruse-mess, is a problem for small companies. Often the small business doesn't have a dedicated recruiter or HR manager which means that screening and interviewing candidates diverts attention away from other responsibilities. Spending the time to screen dozens or even hundreds of resumes just isn't possible. Employee selection then becomes "first come, first served," and quality and qualified candidates are missed.

Small business is not alone in this ruse-mess. Large business is overwhelmed with applications and they too don't have enough human resources and recruiting staff to manage the process, especially after the recession decimated their ranks.

Fortunately technology and automation has again come to the rescue. No more is an automated applicant processing system too complex and too expensive for the small business. Like the cost of almost anything involving technology, the convenience eventually becomes irresistible and the investment has an almost immediate return on investment.

While many vendors claim to offer applicant processing systems, all are not created equal. Five features should be included in any system if the system is to do what the employer intends it to do – find the most qualified candidates quickly and accurately.

To do this, I recommend this 5-point checklist for selecting the right applicant processing system.

- **Applicant dashboard.** A hiring manager or recruiter should be able to log into their company APS system and easily access a dashboard. The dashboard should show at a glance names of candidates and date of application, plus additional features I'll discuss shortly. By viewing this dashboard, the recruiter or hiring manager can quickly determine if current sourcing (Career-builder, Monster, LinkedIn, Craig's List, employee referral, etc.) is working and make adjustments accordingly.



- **Screening Questionnaire:** This is likely the second most important feature but biggest differentiator when comparing applicant processing systems – a means to quickly qualify and disqualify candidates. Many systems include the ability to ask qualifying questions. But few allow you to weight and rate the importance of each question. By including this function, managers can quickly scan the dashboard for applicants who scored the most points, narrowing down the candidate list almost instantly.

Management and HR can then agree to pursue applicants with a score above a specific number and pass on the others. Imagine how much time an applicant processing system feature like this saves compared to opening and reviewing every application.

- **Disqualify candidates.** Specific questions to qualify candidates might trigger immediate disqualification. This feature, like the questionnaire itself, is the exception in many systems, not the norm. For example, let's say the job requires licensing, a 4-year degree, or a willingness to relocate. Despite an ad and job description that explains these requirements explicitly, a company will still receive resumes from candidates who aren't licensed, didn't graduate, or won't or can't relocate. This is a huge waste of time and pet peeve for recruiters these days. An applicant processing system designed with the recruiter and hiring manager in mind will automatically disqualify candidates who don't meet minimum requirements. (Note the "YES" under disqualified. Recruiters can then focus their time and resources contacting and interviewing only the most qualified candidates quickly and efficiently.
- **Status.** The system should also have a method to track the progress of a candidate through the selection process. Examples of status levels might be DQ Phone (disqualified during phone screening) or Waiting for Info or Mgr Interview (candidate is scheduled for interview with manager). A report can then easily be run to evaluate the status of each candidate in the selection process.
- **Applicant Notification.** One of the most time intensive processes for human resources is responding to all the candidates. An applicant processing system should include an email system that allows the employer to send out automated emails informing the candidate that their application was received, requesting additional information, reminders to complete a pre-employment test, updates on the selection process, and even messaging the disqualified candidates that they won't be considered.

It has never been easier for people to apply for jobs. High unemployment, rising employee disengagement, and lean human resource departments have only pushed companies to the brink of crisis when it comes to screening candidates efficiently, quickly, and cost effectively. An applicant processing system can help turn the dreaded



experience of recruiting a candidate into a routine, productive, and easily managed event.

The Prevue APS-Pro system provides all the tools needed to avoid a Ruse-Mess in your company. Contact us today! **(661) 810-2446** or visit us on-line at [www.azarandassociates.com](http://www.azarandassociates.com)