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Making Hiring Work for Small Businesses

Hiring looks different today than it did even a few years ago. Technology has made it easier than ever for job-seekers to apply to hundreds of openings in a single afternoon - often with highly tailored résumés and auto-filled applications. At the same time, small businesses are under pressure to move faster, respond more personally, and make strong hires with leaner internal teams.

For many business owners, the result is familiar: email inboxes flooded with résumés, folders full of semi-organized candidates, and good applicants slipping through the cracks because there's no system to keep things on track.

That's where the right hiring software can help - not to make hiring impersonal or overly complex, but to give you back control of the process.

Here's how small teams are using basic applicant tracking systems (ATS) to stay organized, streamline communication, and build a better experience for both themselves and the candidates they want to potentially hire.

Why small businesses are overwhelmed with applicants

The rise of job boards and AI-powered résumé tools has changed the dynamics of recruiting. Candidates can now apply to hundreds of jobs quickly, using automation to tailor each submission. That means when you post a role on a major job board, it's not unusual to receive 100 or more applications within a few days, even if the role is niche or localized.

For businesses that rely on Outlook, spreadsheets, or shared folders to manage candidates, this volume becomes unmanageable fast. Qualified applicants get lost, follow-ups are inconsistent, and the hiring process becomes reactive instead of strategic.

What hiring software actually solves

An ATS doesn't need to be complex to be effective. At a basic level, it addresses a common growing pain: once hiring volume increases, informal processes start to break down.

Instead of forwarding résumés between managers or tracking applicants in email threads and spreadsheets, an ATS creates a centralized record. Candidate information, interview notes, status updates, and communications are stored in one place, which reduces duplication and missed follow-ups. That structural consistency becomes more valuable as hiring activity increases.

Most platforms also function as a searchable database. Applicants who may not be a fit for one role can remain accessible for future openings, which can shorten recruiting timelines and reduce reliance on starting from scratch each time a position opens. Over time, this archive can become a practical operational asset, particularly for businesses that hire regularly.

Many systems also include résumé parsing or candidate matching tools that help organize and prioritize applicants based on experience, keywords, or defined criteria. The sophistication of these tools varies by platform. In some cases, they simply filter based on qualifications; in others, they may apply more advanced algorithms to rank or surface candidates.

Regardless of the specific functionality, the broader benefit is process discipline. A structured hiring workflow brings consistency to decision-making and reduces reliance on memory or informal communication.

Improving communication without losing the human element

One of the biggest advantages of hiring software is automated communication that still feels personal. Most ATS platforms allow you to set up automatic emails at key stages - thanking applicants for applying, confirming interview times, or notifying them of next steps.

Some systems even allow for light personalization, such as including a short video from a team member or a few lines about your company's mission. These touchpoints help candidates feel acknowledged, informed, and connected, even before a direct conversation takes place.

That kind of consistency matters, especially in a tight labor market where great candidates often move quickly and weigh multiple offers. A delayed response or unclear next step can be the difference between a successful hire and a missed one.

Choosing the right platform for your business

For most small businesses, hiring software doesn't need to be expensive or overly complex. Many platforms offer practical, easy-to-use options designed for companies that hire occasionally and need structure without a full HR department.

Some job boards, such as Indeed, include built-in applicant tracking features that can work well for very small teams. Other lightweight platforms, including tools like Breezy HR, Workable, or JazzHR, are built specifically for small to mid-sized businesses and provide structured workflows, résumé storage, interview scheduling, and basic reporting without significant setup.

For growing or larger firms, however, hiring needs often become more complex. Multi-location operations, higher applicant volume, compliance requirements, onboarding integration, or coordination across multiple hiring managers may require a more robust system. Enterprise-level platforms, such as Greenhouse, Lever, or similar tools are designed to support those larger-scale recruiting environments.

The appropriate solution depends less on brand name and more on operational complexity. A company hiring three employees per year does not need the same infrastructure as one hiring 30. The goal is to adopt a system that improves organization, responsiveness, and documentation without introducing unnecessary layers or cost.

Good systems create space for better hires

Small businesses often hire on tight timelines, with limited resources, and every hiring decision has an outsized impact on the team. That's why the goal of hiring software isn't to automate away your instincts or replace the personal relationships that make small companies strong. It's to create space for those relationships to grow.

Delays, poor communication, or disorganized processes don't just affect candidate experience - they increase vacancy costs, strain existing team members, and can lead to rushed hiring decisions that are far more expensive to correct later.

When your process is organized, communication is consistent, and your systems are aligned, you're better positioned to move quickly on great candidates and find the right fit for the job.

How your CPA can support hiring decisions

While your CPA may not be involved in the interview process, hiring has financial and operational implications - from compensation strategy and payroll tax exposure to benefits design and long-term cost sustainability.

Next Step

If you’re planning to grow your team, bring your advisor into the conversation early. A CPA can help you model the full cost of a hire, structure compensation and benefits, assess how new hires impact margins and breakeven points, and plan for scalability as your business evolves.

For personalized guidance, please contact our office.

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About Horty & Horty.

Horty & Horty, P.A. ("Horty") is a full-service public accounting and advisory firm providing personalized and unparalleled service to closely held businesses and owners throughout the Delaware Valley. We are trusted advisors whose service offerings and proven methodologies are designed to mitigate financial risk and help clients realize their goals and achieve success.

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