THE HEAVYWEIGHT DEBATE

ADOBE

MICROSOFT

PDF vs WORD

★ ★ ★ RÉSUMÉS ★ ★ ★

Express®
EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

WELCOME TO THE MAIN EVENT!

This is one of the biggest debates in job search history. When it comes to résumés, times have changed. Job seekers have gone digital, and so have their résumés. Through the years, electronic résumés have come in a variety of formats including .txt, .doc, .html, .pdf, and .docx. But, which one is better at cutting through the competition and getting you noticed? Two contenders have stood the test of time – Word and PDF. These two file formats have duked it out for years, and Express Employment Professionals will help you choose once and for all which one best fits your personal job search.

THE REFEREE

The great format debate has been raging for several years, and job seekers and HR professionals are still split down the middle. Opinion on the debate seems like an even tie, but there is one factor that will be the deciding official in this Résumé Rumble – the applicant tracking system (ATS).

WHAT IS AN ATS?

An ATS, also referred to as a talent management system, is software that systematizes and chooses résumés based on key words or phrases employers believe are most important for the job. They create a searchable record of job applications and help automate the hiring process. The information in the database is used for screening candidates, scheduling interviews, checking references, applicant testing, and completing new-hire paperwork.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The economy still hasn't fully recovered, and companies are still seeing a huge influx of résumés every day. That's why more companies are relying on ATSs to sort through the large amount of résumés employers receive. Fewer and fewer hiring managers and recruiters are looking at all of the applications coming in. That means a computer program is the gatekeeper between a decision maker and the recycle bin.

A piece of software will decide whether or not you are qualified for the position. It lacks critical thinking and will only look for parameters set by the employer. Something as simple as a synonym or a file format could automatically keep you from consideration. That's why your résumé needs to be tough as nails, and here are the two main contenders that will be going toe to toe based on ATS compatibility.

JUST HOW TOUGH IS AN ATS?

- Applicant tracking systems kill 75% of job candidates' chances of landing an interview as soon as a résumé is submitted.[3]

- 61% of all North American companies use an ATS.[2]

- More than 90% of large companies use an ATS.[4]

- 74% of ATSs don't take contingent experience into consideration.[2]
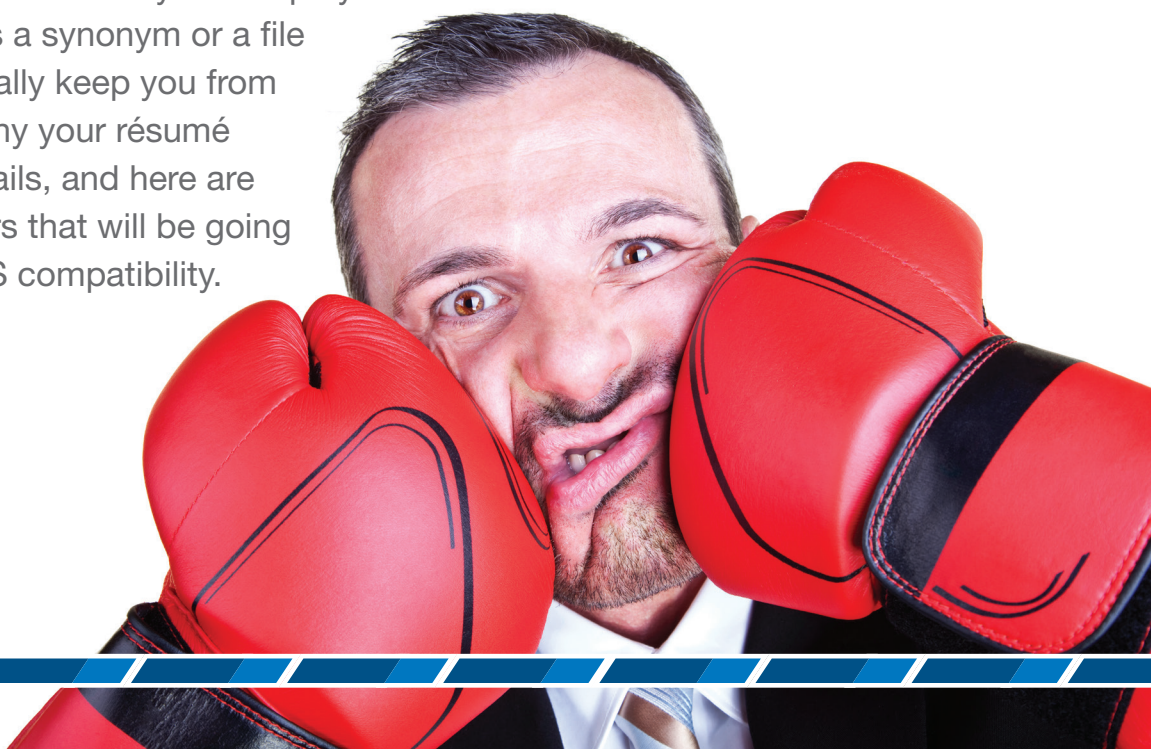
IN THE BLUE CORNER – MICROSOFT® WORD

The Boy in Blue is no stranger to this game. If anything, the Word document has a lot of experience and popularity. With a coach like Microsoft®, it's a no brainer why Word is an international standard for word processing software. Here's the contender breakdown:

PROS

Most HR professionals who go through résumés prefer receiving them as a Word document. The vast majority of businesses have Word on their computers and employees are accustomed to the program. Employers like being able to easily copy and paste the relative information, then send résumés to managers in the company.

Word documents can be read by an ATS with relative ease. Some of the formatting may not be 100% correct, but your information and key words will still be picked up by an ATS. Sometimes Word documents take up considerably less disk space than PDF résumés, which often exceed the file size limits for uploading a résumé.

CONS

The drawback is that what your résumé looks like on your screen, may not be what it looks like on another computer. There are several versions of Word, and some older versions may not be able to read files saved in newer formats.

Current versions of Word save files with the .docx extension, while Word 2003 or earlier versions are saved with the .doc extension instead. The older versions of Word are more susceptible to hacking and tampering than the updated .docx files, but even those files can contain hidden viruses and lingering track changes you thought were deleted.

REVISION MARKS
CAN STILL BE SEEN ON WORD DOCUMENTS
EVEN AFTER
GETTING RID OF THEM.[5]

IN THE RED CORNER – ADOBE® PDF

The Renegade in Red is often considered the people's champion of document software. The Portable Document Format (PDF) is becoming more popular due to their stability and reliability in presenting a finished product. Coach Adobe® is a smart cookie to make PDF viewing for free and PDF creation can actually be done through Microsoft® Word. Is this up-and-comer the résumé format job seekers have been waiting for? Find out in the contender breakdown:

PROS

Having a résumé as a PDF will keep the formatting of your résumé the same on anyone's computer, whether it's a Macintosh®, Linux®, or PC. PDFs are also more secure than Word files, which means they can't easily be doctored or changed. Unlike Word documents, it's very hard to put a virus or dangerous software within a PDF file.

Adobe, the company that created the PDF format, has free software that enables computers to read this file type, and most computers already have the software installed. Microsoft® Word has the option to save files in PDF format as well. For these reasons, many prefer to have their résumés in PDF format.

CONS

While these systems are getting better, it's still a long shot before the majority of ATSs start reading PDFs. Your résumés may be safe, secure, and structured, but it won't matter if your content can't be scanned by the system. While Adobe® products are becoming more of a standard on workplace computers, not all managers have it or will want to open a separate program to view a résumé.

While ATSs are slowly beginning to add PDF-translating capability to read and search the file, and some have even moved to accept LinkedIn profile formatting, the standard among them is still Microsoft® Word. PDFs are also not categorized properly in an ATS's database, which will make PDF résumés harder to find in a search.

PDF FILES CANNOT BE READ BY MORE THAN

90%

OF PARSING SYSTEMS USED BY HR OFFICES AND RECRUITERS.[2]

AND THE WINNER IS...

You! If you've networked with someone and they would like to see your résumé, you may want to go ahead and send the PDF. If you're applying to a big company with an ATS, try using the Word file to ensure the automated system reads it properly. You may want to paste your résumé into Notepad or WordPad and save it as a .txt file. Text files make it easiest for an ATS to pick up key words from the job description that you put in your résumé. If you're really in doubt, consider sending both Word and PDF files to hiring managers to let them choose which one they prefer.

Formatting is a personal choice. But, to improve your chances, make connections with hiring managers and decision makers in person. Building a network of business relationships will help set you apart from the competition no matter what the hiring process is. This way, you can become the champion of your own job search.

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