

# Buying Accessible eRecruiting Technology: The Search is On

## An Employer Tip Sheet



### In the eRecruiting world, the best way to be accessible is to buy accessible

If you're an employer—in any industry—who is getting ready to issue a solicitation for eRecruiting technology products or support, or to talk to specific vendors about what they can offer, a little background research can help you identify the accessibility barriers and solutions for the products you are seeking. What you discover can then be incorporated into the procurement process, starting with your written requirements.

Generally, such procurements fall into two categories: **commercial off-the-shelf (COTS)** products, such as computers and standard talent acquisition software, and **custom products** developed for your organization, such as a recruitment website or app.

### Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) Products

Sources of information about the accessibility of COTS products might include:

- **Vendor (or Product) Websites.** Some companies provide extensive accessibility-related information about their products in one central place on their websites. Others index such information by product. Some publish their Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates ([VPATs](#)), while others will furnish one to you upon request as part of the procurement process. (Note: A VPAT is the tool used to report a product's compliance with Section 508 accessibility guidelines. It is a table that shows all of Section 508's provisions, and whether and how well the product addresses them.)
- **General Services Administration (GSA) [BuyAccessible.gov](#).** This resource—which is available to everyone, not just federal employees—lets you search for products by category as they are entered into the database by the provider. It includes a number of tools that may make research easier and more effective. For example:
  - ◇ [The Vendor Accessibility Resource Center](#) lists accessibility websites and points of contact for hundreds of companies.
  - ◇ The [BuyAccessible Wizard](#) is a web-based application that guides users through a process of gathering data and providing information about information and communications technology ([ICT](#)) and Section 508 compliance.

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- **Search Engines.** A simple search of the product name or category (e.g., HR software, eRecruiting, talent management), along with “accessibility,” “VPAT,” and/or “Section 508” will often turn up useful results, including consumer comments, [assistive technology \(AT\)](#) compatibility remarks, public presentations the company has made, and lawsuits or complaints. (Of course, keep in mind that the word “accessibility” can also have other meanings having nothing to do with disability, i.e., whether a user can reach a particular resource, like a database over a wireless network.)
- **Specialized Databases.** [The Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative \(GARI\)](#) provides a complete database of accessible mobile devices, and [the FCC’s Accessibility Clearinghouse](#) provides information related to accessible telecommunications.

## Custom Products

When a developer builds an eRecruiting website or app for you, it’s hard to be sure in advance how accessible it will be. That is why it’s important for your solicitation to include your accessibility requirements. But, in the meantime, you can search for information about each vendor candidate’s skills and processes related to accessibility. Here are some items you might want to look for, which are usually on the developer’s website:

- **Any mention of accessibility.** It’s easy to say “Sure, we do that” when asked about accessibility, but a spontaneous mention likely demonstrates a higher level of attention. Possibilities include general comments, company blog posts, or a formal statement of commitment (often combined with usability).
- **List of staff background and skills that includes accessibility training or other expertise.**
- **Participation in the accessibility and/or disability community.** This might include standards bodies, partnerships with consumer organizations, advisory boards, listservs, contributions to public documents, and presentations at conferences.
- **Client references and case studies** that mention accessibility.

## “We’re Buying That No Matter What You Say”

Some eRecruiting purchases are going to happen regardless of accessibility—the people who are going to use the tool want what they want, and you may not be able to change that. You will sometimes fight the good fight without success, at least not immediately. This does not mean that your efforts were without value, however. In such cases, here are some useful responses:

- **Get your facts straight.** If you have documented information about the inaccessibility of a product being fast-tracked, put it together in a clear report and distribute it through the right channels.
- **Propose accessible alternatives.** Even if they’re not going to be selected this time around, proposing alternatives can help lead to better future choices and undercut the argument that the intended product is the only one available.
- **Explain the risks.** Without being threatening, collect information about the relevant laws and regulations, complaints, and even case law if it applies.
- **Point to other customers.** One of the problems you may face is people on your procurement team thinking that only your organization is asking vendors about accessibility. This simply isn’t true. Your peers and competitors are asking too, and maybe even demanding improvements. Make the case that market demand escalates the importance and feasibility of accessibility improvements made by technology providers.
- **Prepare a “Plan B.”** If you can’t get the team to buy a more accessible eRecruiting product, you may still be able to exert some leverage with the vendor. For instance, you can require a remediation plan with firm dates and deliverables. You can also request the results of any accessibility tests the vendor has performed.

## Learn More:

- PEAT’s *Accessible Technology Action Steps: A Guide for Employers* - [Action Step 4: Buy & Implement](#)
- [GSA’s BuyAccessible Wizard](#)