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Title: Research and Evaluation on Application Tracking Systems and their usability: An Emphasis on building a new and improved ATS platform

🔁 Abstract

This dissertation aimed to critically evaluate limitations in existing Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and design an innovative, user-centered solution focused on optimizing usability and the recruiter and candidate experience. The research uncovered significant usability challenges and dissatisfaction with current ATS platforms through literature analysis, surveys, interviews, journey mapping, and usability testing.
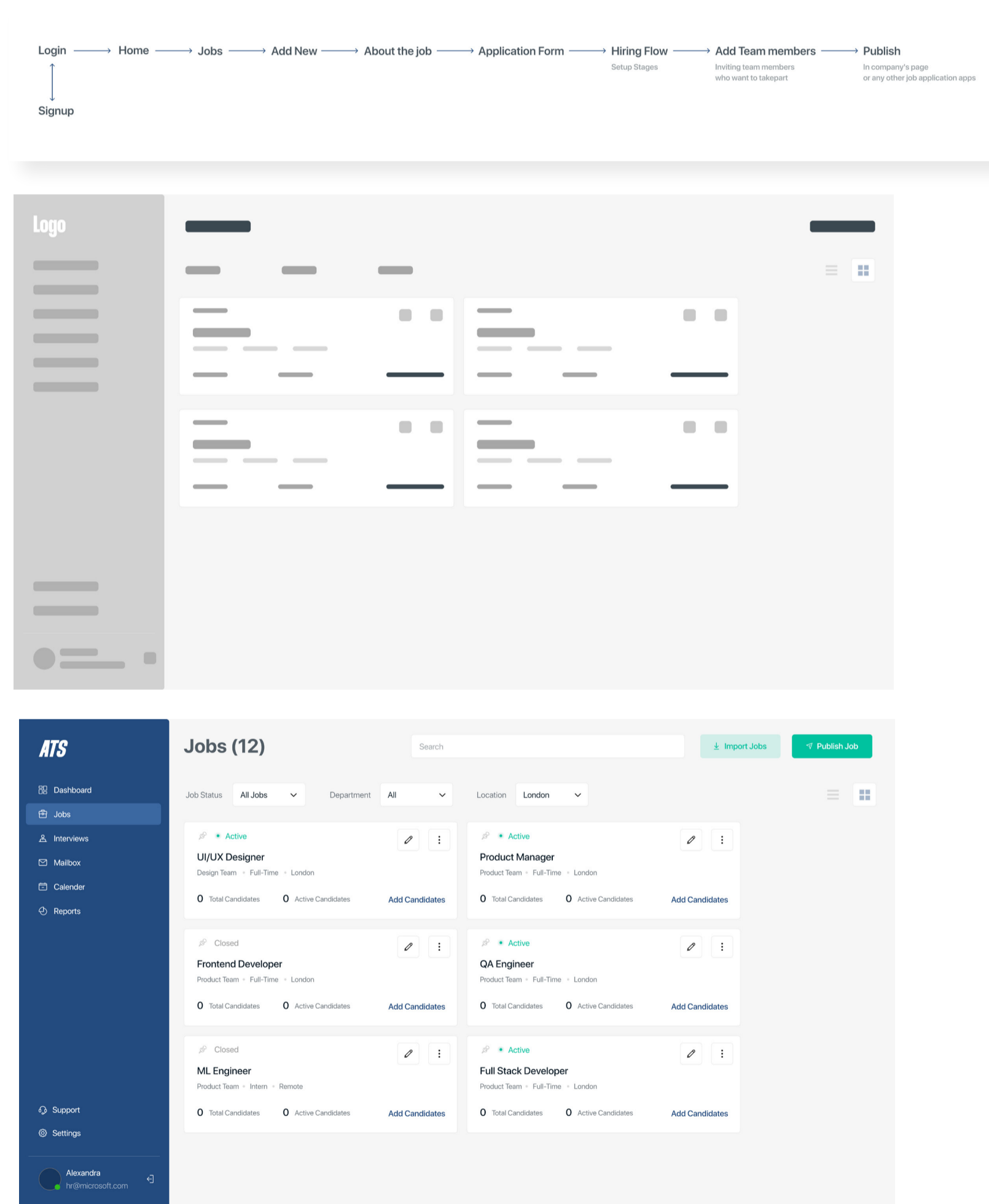
🖊 Introduction & Background

ATS provides a way to organize, track and filter applications through various stages of the hiring process. The use of ATS has grown exponentially, with over 90% of large companies utilizing them, seeking to create efficiency and standardization in recruitment. However, while adoption has grown, research indicates there are still significant limitations and usability issues with existing ATS platforms. Surveys of both recruiters and applicants reveal frustrations with poor system design, unintuitive interfaces, lack of customization, and integration challenges. Recruiters report an inability to extract useful analytics from ATS data, while applicants complain of a dehumanizing and opaque process. I want to design an improved ATS platform, the solution of this dissertation, that aims to transform legacy weaknesses into strengths. Clean, intuitive navigation removes usability barriers.

🔍 Research Results

Along with the literature review from the previous publications, I want to gather insights from the actual users to understand the scope of the project. Created a questionnaire and shared it with the 5 participants to respond and share their thoughts regarding their experience around ATS platforms. These were the overall findings :

Clunky and outdated interfaces that are not intuitive or user-friendly

Difficulty customizing workflows, stages, and fields to match companies' unique hiring processes

Lack of mobile optimization and accessibility on smartphones and tablets

Insufficient ability to integrate with other HR systems and lack of API access for developers

Inability to handle high recruiting volumes and complexity of large enterprises

Challenges exporting analytics and generating customized reports

Privacy concerns due to data breaches, ownership issues, and candidate communication

🎙 Diagram / Design

From the key findings of the research, I had the list of areas to be improved or the potential feature enhancements in the exisiting ATS platforms. Then I define user flows, low fidelity mockups to actual visual designs to test on usability.

✧ Study Methodology

With the research findings and user expectations, through understanding their painpoints, I went on following the design sprint from defining goals and expectations, ideate on the user flows and to developing a prototype and testing on usability to improve further.

DEFINE   IDEATE   PROTOTYPE   TESTING
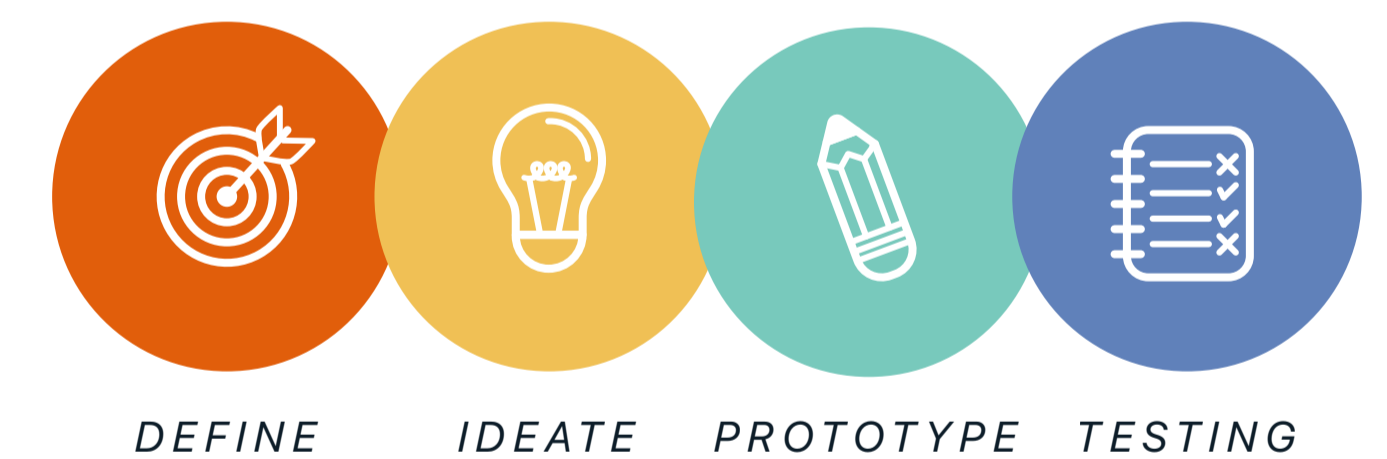
📑 Testing & Evaluation

The prototype and iterative stage was a critical part of developing the new ATS platform. This stage allowed for testing key features and functionality, gathering user feedback, and refining the system through multiple iterations before launch. The first step I took was to establish clear goals and priorities for the new ATS based on research and analysis. Key goals included improving candidate experience, reducing time-to-hire, enhancing recruiting analytics, and increasing hiring manager satisfaction. I focused priorities on the most important pain points to address which were identified through surveys, and focus groups with users of current systems. The user feedback seem to have improvement in the usability and enhanced interface experience and satisfaction.

📱 Conclusion & Future Work

The solution aims for simplicity over feature bloat common in legacy tools. Feedback confirms improved usability, experiences, and satisfaction. Therefore, optimizing recruiting technology requires proactive, regular engagement with users to deeply understand needs. Developers must shift their mindsets from tracking features to enabling recruiting success. By listening to users and prototyping solutions collaboratively, ATS can move user frustrations to intuitive systems enhancing engagement between candidates, recruiters, and hiring teams. The limitation of the work is not having an in-person engagement with the participants in the research and testing phases. As they live in different countries, the in-person observation is one of the limitation along with no candidate interaction and increase in more third-party integrations. This research provided both philosophical and tactical guidance for the next generation of applicant tracking.