Just as your business has its own set of jargon or industry-specific terminology, so does the software industry! If you are searching for **accounting software** or **payroll software,** the likelihood of hearing these terms is fairly high. Be prepared to speak with software representatives by understanding these key terms, and you will have a better chance of your needs being understood and met.

Application: This term is used to refer to a software program, as in: "That application works well for processing invoices." The term "Application" is often shortened to "App".

Compatible: Where software is concerned, compatible refers to whether applications can work well and exchange information together. Example: "Is this new **payroll system** compatible with the time clock we are already using?" This can also refer to whether this software can run on a particular computer.

Customizable: There are two references of "customizable" in the software world. The first is the ability to alter the settings of a program to meet your specific needs, such as adding or omitting fields of information or creating and saving your own templates for later use. The second use of this term refers to open source code products. When customizing an open source product, you can actually change the software code within the program, potentially changing its functionality permanently. Example: "I like our new software because the invoice designs are customizable."

Dashboard: Just as your car's dashboard shows you information about operating your vehicle, a software dashboard displays your most important menu options and tools available for operating your software system. This is typically the screen you see first when opening your program. Example: "The dashboard within this system makes it really easy to do my job."

Demo: Of course this is a shortened version of the word demonstration. A demo usually provides an opportunity to view a software package's functionality, whether in video format, guided online or live tour, or even a trial version of the software. Example: "The demo really helped us gain an understanding of what it's like to use that program."

Driver: Software program that, when installed, helps your computer understand how to use a hardware device. Example: "Once we installed the driver, we were able to use the new mouse right away."

Feature: Options or tools for functionality provided within a software program. Example: "Our new software program has more features than our prior program, allowing us to enter and pull out information in a way that fits our company better."

Interface: An interface refers to the communication between two software products. Many accounting software applications have an interface to payroll software applications, allowing you to post data with a few simple clicks. Interface can also refer to the way in which a software application is presented to the user as in: "The user interface for that program makes it easy to navigate and use."

Intuitive: This refers to how easy it is to operate a system without training. Example: "The system was so intuitive that I felt at ease using it after only a short time."

Legacy Products: Just as our ancestors have built a legacy, so have the age-old software products that have stood the test of time. In the software world, legacy products are those that have become outdated, yet may or may not still be supported. Example: "Though newer software is now available, he chose to stay with his legacy software program."

Migration: While you may associate this term with birds flying south, in the software industry it refers to the transfer of data from one application to another. A software company can often migrate your data from an older application to a newer one. Example: "The data migration is almost complete, and then we will begin using our new software."

Module: This refers to each software element that performs a distinct function, usually each of which can stand on their own without depending on other elements. Example: "The software company just added a ratios module which greatly enhances a company's ability to see where improvements are needed."

Network: A group of computers that can interact with one another. Example: "All of the users of our software can enter information into the same database because they are set up as a network."

Operating System: An operating system is the software within a computer that makes it run. The major providers of operating systems are Microsoft (for PCs) and Apple (for Macs). Example: "I just got a new computer which came with the industry's latest operating system."

Robust: If you think of coffee when you hear this word, you are not alone. However, robust in the software world refers to a software package's features being in-depth and complete. Example: "That system is robust and can surely handle our complex needs."

Support: This one may seem obvious. Most software companies offer support plans to go along with their software products. These support plans typically include assistance and problem solving for users of the software. Support can be conducted via telephone, chat, e-mail, the internet, via help documents and videos, and more, depending on the company. Example: "What kind of support plans does this software company offer for their customers?"

User Seats: No, this is not the chair you sit in while you use your computer. A user seat with reference to software denotes an independent user of the software system. Each user seat provides the capability for one person to be using the system simultaneously along with others. Therefore if you have three user seats, three people can be in the same program working at the same time. You will often see the word "concurrent" in front of this term. Example: "Two people will need to be entering payroll data at the same time, so we'll need two user seats."

Updates: An update is a new release of the software that can fix problems or enhance a software program. Example: "The software company recommends all users implement the latest update to their software, to ensure smooth ongoing operation within their program."

Version: Software companies often provide updates and improvements to their programs in Version schemes, represented by numbers or letters which demonstrates the importance of what is being released. Example: "I need to download the latest version of my software because it includes crucial elements which can really help my business."

Getting to know these accounting and payroll software terms will put you on the road to a better understanding during your software search.