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How to create a
positive candidate
experience?

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Bringing new employees into your organisation can be a time consuming and challenging experience. Searching through hundreds of applications to find the person with the most relevant skills and best cultural fit is never easy. There is always going to be disappointment but how do you ensure that all those people who have taken the time to apply for your job receive a good 'candidate experience'.

With the impact of COVID-19 and the increase in unemployment, the number of applications per job is on the rise. It has therefore never been more important to assess your organisation's Candidate Experience and look at the perception you are giving as an employer. Not only have your applicants shown an interest in working for your organisation, they could very well be your customers or future customers. It is vital you to protect your brand and ensure applicants see your organisation in a positive light.

So, what should you do?

We have put together this short guide to help you identify where in your business you can focus your energy in order to get the best people for the right roles.

What is the candidate experience?

Throughout the hiring process, candidates go through many touch points with your organization. Just as you are assessing them for the role you have available, they are also assessing you at each stage to ensure you are the right fit for them.

They assess your job ad, job description, website, social channels, your communications and responses throughout the hiring process and the interview. They review your office space, other staff members they meet, the feedback they receive (if any) and overall experience. They may ask friends and contacts their thoughts on your organisation and look up media articles and search LinkedIn to see who currently works at the organisation - all to get a feel for the culture and workplace. Throughout the process, you can position your organization as an employer of choice and demonstrate your workplace culture.

Unfortunately, for many businesses, it can also be a negative experience for candidates.

Candidates submit applications for your job openings and receive no confirmation emails. One- or two-weeks pass, and there is still no response from your company. The candidate feels frustrated. They may complain to their family, friends or even current colleagues. They may even write a negative review on your company's social media profiles or other online channels or even Google. Their attitude towards your company and employer brand is now negative, and they are telling people about it.

This damages your brand - from both an employer perspective but also from a general business perspective.

Unhappy candidates are more likely to boycott your company's products and tell others not to purchase your products or services.

Virgin Media went through researching this very issue. They uncovered that a bad candidate experience was costing them over \$5.4 million a year.

Your unhappy candidates are also more likely to reject your job offer, never again reapply for your job openings and encourage others not to apply, negatively impacting your hiring process even further.

So how do you prevent it?

How to build a positive candidate experience?

When thinking about your recruitment process, it is important to identify the different touch points your candidates have throughout. This includes things such as sourcing and job advertisements, interviewing, testing, hiring and onboarding. Every interaction a candidate has with your company at any of those phases affects their candidate experience.

Candidate experience encompasses the candidates' feelings, behaviors and attitudes their experience during the whole process.

As a hiring manager, it is important to ensure that when you are hiring, the candidate experience is not compromised. As an organisation you can deliver an outstanding experience throughout the different touch points you have with each candidate.

In the candidate rich market that we are now facing with post Covid-19, there is no longer the same battle for top talent as we once saw.

Regardless of whether you are hiring 1 or 1,000 people the general road map to successfully sourcing the right candidate is somewhat similar. Steps you could take include sourcing, assessing, testing, reference checking and then offering and negotiation and onboarding - just to name a few.

When you are hiring in a candidate's rich market, you may think that having many candidates to choose from is a great thing. And indeed, it is. However, it comes with its own set of challenges that even the most experienced hiring manager will find time consuming, overwhelming and stressful.



One job ad can produce many hundreds of candidates - taking you an enormous amount of time and resources to filter through successfully, without bias. On top of this, the screening, testing and interviewing process can turn into a full-time job for someone.

Your hiring manager may begin to feel “burnt out” and overwhelmed and the candidate experience can start to be impacted.

The impression you leave with successful candidates is just as important as the one you leave with unsuccessful candidates.

When the candidate experience starts to become negative, your business may be described as unprofessional, poor communicators, not efficient, poor at decision making just to name a few. Candidates are smart and savvy and many do look at reviews of your company before making the decision to apply for the role you have advertised. Company reviews on Google and Social Media all provide a window view of what it is like working at your organisation and your reputation should always be a top priority to you.



So where to start?

Begin by acknowledging the task ahead of you and asking for help. Assessing candidates for a role is time consuming, but it is important to get it right. A wrong step taken during this stage in the recruitment process can have massive impact to your business moving forward, not just with the candidate experience but by way of reputation of your organization.

To navigate this risk, it is important to understand your own capabilities. **Do you have the right people in the right roles to deliver positive candidate experience?**

People who can also manage the mammoth task that is assessing each candidate for the skills and personality required to fill the role you have and embed them into the organisation from a cultural perspective?

Depending on your business and the type of role you are recruiting for, the assessment phase of the recruitment process can be daunting, demanding, overwhelming and fruitless if not done correctly. Recruiting and assessing for one role is time consuming due to your teams needing to filter and then assess. Skills and personality testing, interviewing and assessing each one has the capacity to have your internal HR teams stretched and unable to manage the day-to-day tasks your business requires.

If the recruitment process is not handled correctly, this leads to poor communication with the candidates, which in turn can lead to a poor candidate experience.

For those businesses who require many roles to be filled, this is a totally different ball game which needs a separate strategy in order to get you the qualified candidates you need for those roles. Psychometric testing, skills testing, video interviewing - these are all elements of a successful assessment process which your teams need to consider.

To ensure a positive candidate experience, be honest and respectful to the candidates throughout the stages of the sourcing process, wherever possible providing constructive feedback as they progress (or not) through the application process. But of upmost importance is to be clear and consistent in your communications and follow through with what you communicate. It is common courtesy to communicate and respond to those people who have spent time applying for your open roles and give them feedback on their application. This is not something that can be skipped if your team are overwhelmed, running a recruitment drive extends to all facets of interaction and needs full input from your team for it to be successful.

What is your EVP?

As a business you should have a clear Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which helps guide you throughout your hiring process and sets you up for success. An EVP communicates what it's really like to work for your company. By communicating what you stand for and the experience of working at your company, you'll attract like-minded candidates who are a natural fit with your company and the way you do business.

Did you know that even before entering their first interview, most of the candidates had already had as many as 50+ touch points with your company?

Once viewed as the poor cousin to the consumer brand, the employer brand has risen in prominence over the past decade. Today it is regarded as not only as important – in some regards – as the consumer brand, but also intertwined with it.

Your employer brand is how candidates, existing employees and the wider public view you as an employer. Statistics from LinkedIn reveal:

- 72 per cent of global recruitment leaders agree that employer brand has a significant impact on hiring.
- 59 percent of recruitment leaders worldwide are investing more in employer brand.
- They also report that they receive 50 per cent more qualified applicants and their time to hire is 1-2 times faster.





Get a sense of your existing culture – and access what employees are saying about you

Would your employees recommend you as an employer to their friends and family? What would they say? In their eyes, what does your company do exceptionally well? Are there any areas that need to be improved? An employee survey will reveal these answers. It might also be worth probing on what your employees believe makes your company different to the others in the industry. From these responses, it's possible to firstly gauge what your unique value proposition (employer value proposition or EVP) should be, and then funnel this into any branding efforts.



Find your brand advocates

Job candidates are attracted to companies that feature existing employees in their branding efforts. For example, it might be a video testimonial on your careers page, or 'day in the life' style blog posts from existing employees. In this way you will attract people who are passionate about the work they do and the organisation they work for – just like your own employees. Those brand advocates will be your most powerful allies – and remember, personal recommendations or stories about an employer are sometimes more effective than hugely expensive branding or advertising initiatives. That's the power of word-of-mouth.



Test your candidate experience

The recruitment experience is a critical touchstone for the employer brand – it's here where a solid or enticing brand can both lure in candidates and convince those who may be sitting on the fence. It's important to walk in the shoes of the candidate. How would a first-time visitor to your office feel? Would they be impressed with the manner of the receptionist? Would they be put off by the dirty carpet in the reception area?

Secondly, how is the recruitment process itself? Is it too long? Is there enough communication with candidates? Was the interview process satisfactory? The easiest way to assess these factors, of course, is to survey new hires, or even ask those who come in for an interview to take a few minutes to do a survey.

A recent survey of Adecco shows that 24% of respondents said when looking for a new role most important to them is the feedback on their application at each step of the process. Further, 23% said that the entire hiring process needs to be quicker and more efficient (three weeks or less).

21% said that transparency about the organisation and the role was most important to them. So, it is time to be clear about who you are and what type of culture your future employees can expect.

On the flip side, 38% of respondents indicated that lack of communication throughout the recruitment process would deter them the most from working with a new company. With potentially hundreds of applications reaching out to you for any one role, it is important to get these basics right.



Get your website up to date

Your company website will likely be the first port of call for candidates wishing to learn more about you. What impression does it make? Ideally you should have a dedicated careers and jobs section. Instead of merely being a corporate portal with not-particularly-interesting information like the company vision or mission statement, try to provide real insights into what it's like to work there. Outline how you like to work (is flexibility offered?), the company culture (do you get an early mark on Fridays?), and the organisational structure (is it centralised in one spot? Are there multiple branches or offices? How many steps from the lowest to the highest roles?). Employee success stories can add the best insights – they can highlight learning and development initiatives they've undertaken, or the rewards or benefits on offer.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that your employer brand should not be manufactured or dreamed up by a committee.

It should be a natural reflection of your corporate culture and authentic. Your brand shouldn't promise one thing and then fail to deliver. Leaders, managers and employees should be committed to the brand. It should be an enticing insight into how your company operates, the type of people who work there and the values they hold. Your employees are one of your biggest assets. Recruiting top talent and having an engaged workforce is imperative in today's environment. After all your people are what will make or break your business.

Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients.

– Richard Branson

One of the hardest things is that there is often greater competition for the best staff – it can often come down to a salary war between two companies looking to hire the same person.

If you can adopt a strategy that develops your reputation as an employer of choice then you will find people are coming to you, wanting to work for you and putting the choices in your hands. This can put a company in a powerful position.

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If you are experiencing difficulties hiring the right people, give us a call. We will tailor just the right 360° HR solution for our needs, we will consult you on your challenges and we will be your trusted partner through-out the whole process.

Make the right choice.

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