ClearCompany

A GUIDE TO

Placing Your Candidate Experience Front & Center

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Is Your Candidate Experience Where it Needs to Be?

Every business professional in HR knows this to be true: delivering a candidate experience that is positive and engaging from end to end is crucial to the success and brand of your organization.

Exceptional Candidate Experince = *faster hires* + *A Players*

When you provide an exceptional candidate experience, your organization will hire faster and attract more A Players.

With an increasingly tight labor market, it's time for recruiters and hiring teams to re-examine their current processes and discover where there's room for improvement.

The Numbers Don't Lie

Candidate experience is an integral part of your recruitment and hiring strategy and also considered demonstrative of what the employees experience. It is important to remember that you aren't the only side making an evaluation - top talent will also be evaluating your team and their experience to decide if your company is the right fit. And negative experiences can affect more than their decision to accept a job offer. It can cause candidates to speak negatively about the process to other potential candidates, or even write a bad review on Glassdoor. Consider the following statistics as proof:

78%

Nearly four in five candidates (78%) say the overall candidate experience they receive is an indicator of how a company values its people.

80–90%

80–90% of talent say a positive or negative candidate experience can change their minds about a role or company.

60%

Nearly 60% of job seekers have had a poor candidate experience, and 72% have shared their experience on an online employer review.

69%

69% of candidates will abandon a job application if it takes 20+ minutes to complete, with 20% of those candidates giving up after only 10 minutes.

82%

82% of candidates expect potential employers to provide a clear timeline of the hiring process and to keep them updated throughout that process.

65%

65% of candidates never or rarely hear about their application, and 51% report it takes a month or more to hear back from an employer about their application.

75%

75% of hiring and talent managers use recruiting software and/or applicant tracking software when hiring.

Why the Candidate Experience is Important

The candidate experience covers the entire recruitment process—from their first impression of your career site to their offer letter—and everything in between. If candidates feel they're receiving a poor experience during the recruiting process, chances are it will negatively impact your company's ability to hire top talent in the future. In fact, 46% of candidates would sever a business relationship due to poor candidate experience.

Today, in a candidate-driven market, people have more choices when it comes to choosing employers, making it essential for companies to manifest what their organization means through its values, company culture, and employees, while also establishing a competitive advantage.

When it comes to providing a positive candidate experience, organizations can gain the trust and loyalty of applicants who may become ambassadors for your organization and help strengthen your employer brand. With a strong employer brand, organizations can distinguish themselves as job seekers' employer of choice in their industry.

The Value of an Employer Brand

During the awareness stage of a candidate's journey, applicants are starting to familiarize themselves with your organization's brand. In today's digital world, before applying for any job, most candidates will research your company to obtain a sense of who you are as a company. 75% of hiring decision-makers say it's easier to attract top talent when they know your organization.

When you build a strong employer brand, you're not only helping to develop a connection with a prospective hire, but you are introducing them to who you are, what you do, and why you're the place that applicants want to work. Without a viable brand, hiring and retaining the best employees becomes challenging and costly.

Showcase Your Brand

If a candidate has a lousy experience with an organization, they're going to let others know, either through word of mouth or on a public forum. Underestimating the adverse impact of poor online reviews or even word-of-mouth about your organization can tarnish your brand.

But upholding your brand doesn't have to be about damage control solely. When it comes to featuring the perks of your workplace, it shouldn't exclusively be consigned to the standard job posting. If you want to grab any candidate's attention, your strongest asset is your employer brand. Now is the time to highlight what makes your organization unique and what makes you stand apart from the rest.

Improve and Expand Your Employer Brand:

- **Share Stories** - Feature employee stories that cover their career paths, day-to-day tasks, company culture, etc.

- **Be Transparent** - Make it easy for candidates to do their research by linking out to employer review sites, articles about your company in the industry, etc.

- **Get Social** - Create social and career pages to connect with interested candidates on different social platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

- **Stay Relevant -** Feature content segmented to different skill sets that's tailored around your company's message on a public-facing blog.

- **Be Accessible** - Make sure your career site can handle mobile traffic.

Content isn't just for your customers. You're trying to attract talent as well as clientele, and that means HR managers need to think beyond a simple job posting. Consider how you can leverage digital media to highlight your culture and workforce through engaging, impactful content that resonates with job seekers.

Attract Top Talent

Today, it seems like the war for talent is never-ending, causing many challenges in attracting and hiring ideal workers. Delivering a recruitment process that is consistent, timely, and that offers a genuine and positive portrayal of what your organization is, can help you gain a competitive edge.

Every company wants to source and hire highly-skilled and dedicated professionals that will help their organization achieve their mission and vision. It should be no surprise that every candidate your organization comes across is likely to receive numerous competitive offers.

For HR managers, using a data-driven approach that coincides with your organization's internal and external perspective will allow you to position yourself apart from other competitors to meet candidates' expectations, produce well-informed decisions throughout the hiring process, and secure top talent quicker.

Focus on Quality-of-Hire over Cost-of-Hire

Often, organizations believe that their most critical recruiting KPI is their cost-of-hire. True, cost-of-hire is a key metric to keeping your spending and process reined in, but cost isn't everything. Consider, too, the value of those you're hiring. It may be the case that you have to spend more to land that candidate who is the full package; good culture fit, exceptional skill set, and the right experience. That's an employee who will onboard quickly and stick with the company. Rather than focusing too heavily on cost-of-hire, we suggest instead:

① *Time to Fill the Position* - *How long do you anticipate this position to be open, and how many candidates will you bring in for interviews? If this position has specialized skills or is a higher level role, you might want to spend a little more so that you're attracting the bigger talent. The longer the process is dragged out, the more it's going to cost you.*

② *Culture Fit - A major indicator as to how well an employee will settle into their new role is how they align with company culture. Be sure to divulge what the office environment is like and ask questions to determine if their preferred work style fits in. This will aid in mitigating the risk of new hire turnover.*

③ *Time to Productivity - How quickly does it take your new hires to get fully onboarded and start producing work that contributes to your business? The faster you can get a hire trained and working autonomously, the less money you'll spend on having others help them get up to speed.*

④ *Hiring Satisfaction - Check in with your new hires and their managers. How does each of them feel about the progress being made and the potential for success moving forward? Poor hiring decisions are more costly than any other hiring mistakes you can make.*

Placing emphasis on value-of-hire will offset any increases to your cost-of-hire by ensuring the productivity and longevity of your hires and an increased overall satisfaction for both the new employee and the managers.

SECTION 4

Increase Personalized Interaction with Candidates

Candidates want to feel seen. Hiring teams should have a strategic plan in place to find those stand-out candidates and keep them engaged throughout the interview process.

Define the Role

Before hiring teams begin to look at prospective hires, define the role. Take some time to think about the different skills that your organization needs. Keep in mind that this is something that evolves quite frequently. For example, at ClearCompany, the behaviors and attributes we needed in a Customer Success Manager one year ago seem like ancient history now. Our product and organizational structure have evolved, and the role has followed suit.

When developing a job description's title, start with the basics:

- *Accurately reflect the nature of the job and the duties being performed*

- *Reflect its ranking order with other positions in the company*

- *Ensure that it doesn't exaggerate any important aspects of the role*

- *Make sure that any gender, age, or racial implications are removed*

- *Make job descriptions generic enough so that it can be compared to similar jobs in the industry for equity in pay and work conditions*

- *Craft job titles and descriptions as self-explanatory for recruitment purposes (the job title is always the main keyword when searched)*

If you're hiring for a role in recruiting, a good job title would be a Recruitment Consultant and a poor title for the same position would be a Talent Delivery Specialist. Can you tell the difference between the two? The first job title will show up easily in search and be clearly understood, whereas the second title could leave both candidates and job boards guessing.

As hiring managers move along throughout the process of corroborating different job titles, meet with other members in your hiring team to determine the expectations. A good job description uses clear human language to describe the objectives of the role, and the skills and experiences necessary to achieve those objectives. The more accurate the specifications are the more inbound candidates and referrals you'll receive.

Here are useful tips for creating a job description that will engage candidates:

- **Avoid using jargon** - When writing job descriptions, you should always stay away from using jargon statements. For example, remove acronyms such as SLAs or P&L and aim for simple explanations of daily tasks like 'supporting customers' or 'creating monthly financial budgets.' Always avoid abbreviations and speak in the second person to communicate directly with candidates. For example, "Seeking an entry-level marketing assistant to support the buying process, helping our team to meet goals and deliver on our promises to customers."

- **Sell your company** - The goal of every company is to be the best, but to hire the best, you need to be able to convince each candidate why your company is the best place for them to work. Promote the positive elements of your organization to encourage candidates to apply. Not sure where to start? Include details of company achievements, employee development, benefits, and perks.

- **Update previous job descriptions** - When an existing employee leaves your organization, ask them to compile a list of prior tasks and duties that they had performed. Make sure to compare their current responsibilities to an old job description. Hiring managers may find that previous assignments need to be updated due to additional roles being included or outdated.

- **Be specific** - Only highlight the essential elements of a role. You'll want to list different projects or tasks candidates will need to complete.

- **Attribute essential requirements** - In regards to emphasizing job requirements, feature your 'must-have' requirements rather than your 'nice-to-have' ones. With the 'must-have' requirements, you'll be able to find candidates who precisely develop the core skills to perform the job.

Once you have an overview of the job description, distinguish where new employees will be positioned on your organizational chart, who they'll report to, and what the core outcomes, expectations, and responsibilities of the position will be. The recruitment and hiring process should aim to define and personalize every step of the process for both the candidate and future candidates.

Without the right details set into place, finding candidates who fit any given role will be impossible for recruiters to find the exact skills that they are looking for in potential candidates. When your team has a clear vision of your ideal candidate, recruiters, hiring managers, and other stakeholders will have an easier time finding hires that match everyone's expectations.

Make a Good First Impression

We've all heard the phrase, "you only get one chance to make a first impression."

As the job market continues to get more competitive for hiring managers, generating a strong first impression can help your business stand out and continue to attract highly-qualified professionals.

For employers, this means it's crucial to give candidates a good first impression before and after the interview process, even if the candidate doesn't get a job offer in the end. This means creating descriptive job ads, constructing a seamless, adaptable application process, and providing a customized process for your candidates from beginning to end.

Respond to Every Applicant

When you post a job online, you can expect to receive a large number of applicants. But, out of every applicant pool, only a certain amount will be offered a callback or potential interview. So, what happens to the rest of the applicants? If they don't fit the specific job roles, HR managers and recruiters should still respond to those applicants. According to CareerBuilder, 47% of candidates never receive any form of communication from the organization they've applied to.

One of the common missteps many employers make during their interactions with candidates is not following up with candidates after they've submitted an application or have been through an interview. Recruiters are continually working in many very time-consuming positions. They might be focused more on who is moving along in the process, and not who has been declined. Or maybe the organization doesn't have the right technology or tools to allow communication to be as scalable as it needs to be to follow up successfully.

However, every applicant that's rejected can serve as an ambassador to your brand, and even a potential hire in the future. Every applicant should be treated with respect and replied to, regardless of their application status. Organizations who treat every candidate equally are more likely to have applicants re-apply to the company or encourage family, friends, and coworkers to apply.

Every candidate deserves a response, even if they will not be given an interview. Even if the response is simply an automated email, applicants will not feel that their time has been wasted. This might be a matter of your marketing team creating standardized messages for the different stages of the process that automatically send to the candidate when they are rejected, or offering rejected candidates the opportunity to sign up for a newsletter or alert for related job postings.
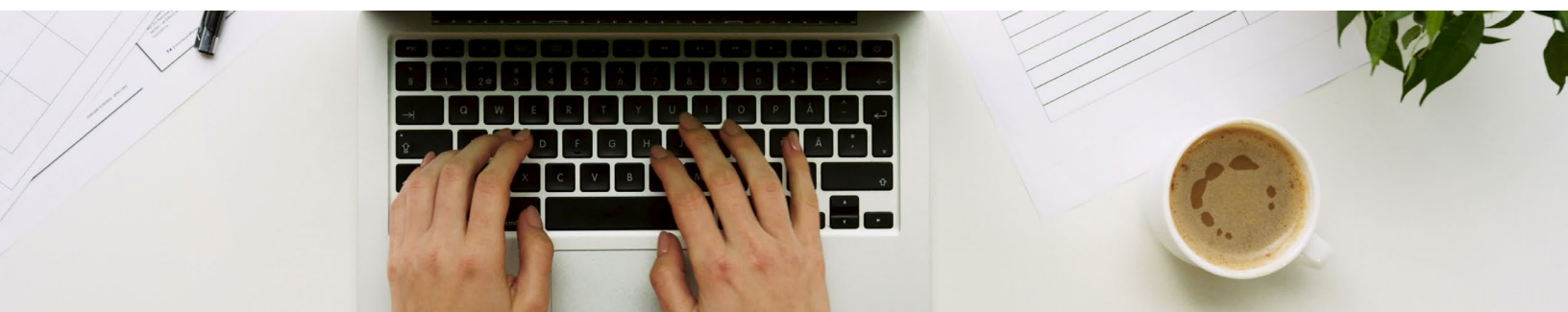
Create Unique Experiences

Hiring managers can create a smarter strategy in how they interact with applicants on an individual level by crafting personalized messages. As a recruiter, taking the time to invest in personalized messaging will not only increase a potential candidates' response rate but will give passive candidates a reason to respond to you. Staying in contact is an easy way to make candidates feel as though you're invested in them. Keep them abreast of where you are in the process and what they can expect. Expect that they're waiting to hear from you.

With access to the right technology, an optimized and automated application process that's tailored to the individual can help recruiters and hiring managers to review, communicate, and build relationships with each potential candidate throughout their journey.

For example, certain positions may require rigorous technical screening questions, while others might rely more on personality or cultural fit. Determine what materials and questions you'll need for each of your candidates, and deliver them in a way that is unique — maybe that's just automating first names in a template, or maybe it's recalling something from a previous conversation to signal that you were listening. Organizations can even display specific job postings in an applicant's preferred language to familiarize them with the role, making them feel more comfortable throughout the hiring process.

SECTION 5

Create a Seamless and Integrated Process

A good candidate experience is a brilliant recruiting and branding tactic for your organization. To turn your HR department into a powerhouse, fixing, developing, and implementing a strategic process to create the best experience is going to put you in the lead.

Enhance Candidate Sourcing

In today's hyper-competitive market, implementing a strategy to source the right candidates is one of the most valuable skills for recruiters to discover to hire high-quality candidates for their organization.

What is candidate sourcing?

Candidate sourcing is the process of searching for, identifying, and contacting potential candidates for roles you are either recruiting for or will be recruiting for in the future. Sourcing creates an opportunity for employers to take control of their pipeline and gain access to candidates that are both active and passive seekers.

More than ever, candidate sourcing has become one of the most useful tools to hire top talent. According to Hubspot, 31% of all hires are proactively sourced. For recruiters and hiring teams, you won't find highly-skilled candidates just by walking down the street. It'll take more of an effective and proactive approach than that. This means it's essential for recruiters to seek candidates- both passive and active-through different platforms such as resume databases and online communities like LinkedIn or Facebook.

The more sources you utilize to fill your job vacancies, chances are you will find quality candidates within your specified timeframe.

- **Ask for referrals** - Not sure where to start looking for candidates? Look at your current employees. According to Undercover Recruiter, employee referrals have the highest applicant to hire conversion rate – only 7% apply but this accounts for 40% of all hires. Involve them in your current hiring efforts by encouraging them to refer candidates who qualify for open roles throughout your company. You can start by building employee referral programs that include monetary or non-monetary incentives with employees. Actions such as this can help reduce time-to-hire and improve retention rates.

- **Use social media** - If you're looking for a prospective candidate, they are most likely on social media. Sites including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter offer unique tools that allow you to gain valuable insights into a candidate's personality to see if they are the right fit for a particular position.

- **Explore on job boards and databases** - Sourcing candidates through job portals and boards have great potential to draw in an influx of resumes and applications. It's important to use job boards thoughtfully and deliberately. Don't just post to every job board. Instead, find a career site that can benefit your company in the long run. Some job boards, such as Indeed, allow you to brand your company and open job positions rather than just simply posting a job description.

- **Use an ATS** - With an Applicant Tracking System, you can store and retrieve candidate information- past or present. When linked with candidate sourcing software, an ATS provides an array of platforms to discover new applicants instantly- saving companies time and money to find the right candidates for any position available.
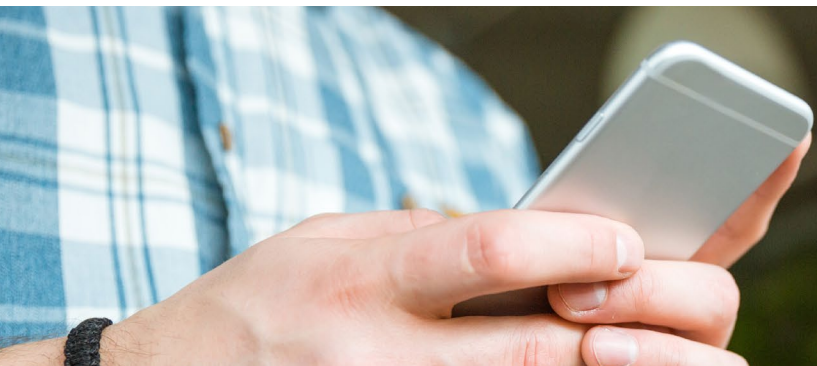
Become Mobile-Friendly

Is your company using mobile recruiting throughout your process? If not, a mobile-friendly web presence is a must. Taking advantage of the wave of mobile-based applications provides a significant benefit to not only the employer but to the candidate as well. For example, an organization can use a mobile-friendly application process to reach candidates while they're on-the-go.

A mobile website, complete with a career page and a mobile job application process handled entirely on a phone or tablet is something candidates are actively looking for. After all, we are continually using our mobile devices to manage the important aspects of our lives, and candidates—both active and passive—are conducting more job searches via their mobile devices. Now, it's time for recruiters to engage with prospective candidates where they spend the most time, but the only way to achieve this is for employers to be proactive about offering a mobile-friendly candidate experience. As smartphones are already being used to search for jobs, it makes sense for your company to facilitate mobile job applications. Enabling mobile-based applications will allow candidates to respond to your job listing quicker.

Fact: About 18% say the ability to apply on mobile would positively impact their candidate experience; while 15% say the same about a mobile-optimized job opening.

But before your site is ready to go mobile, you should evaluate if your process is readily equipped for the standard user. The last thing you want is a candidate giving up before completing an application because they found the mobile application process too complicated. Walk through the process in the perspective of the candidate and ask yourself these questions:

- How long does it take for the pages to load?

- How much typing is required?

- Is the form easy to read without zooming in?

- Is the copy concise, and error-free?

- Do users have the ability to save partially completed applications to finish later?

☑ DID YOU KNOW?

Only 13% of companies have a mobile-friendly recruiting process.

Become Text-Friendly, Too

A great way to increase response rate is to interact with your candidates via text message. Send interview reminders, status updates, and follow up with your candidates through text. They'll be able to have that information wherever they go, and it feels more personalized, too. Receiving a text message after an interview thanking candidates for their time will give than an instant return on their effort, and even if they aren't advanced to the next round, they'll exit the process with a positive experience.

Streamline Your Process

What better way to improve your overall candidate experience than by implementing an ATS? With your candidates at the forefront of the recruitment process, utilizing a management system such as an applicant tracking system can allow hiring teams to add hours back to their day to work on other tasks, and also ensures consistent communication between employers and candidates, leading to an outstanding candidate experience.

What is an Applicant Tracking System?

An applicant tracking system, or ATS, is a software program designed to automate, simplify, and speed up the entire recruiting process. Vast benefits of using an Applicant Tracking System are best demonstrated by its ability to improve the three most crucial hiring metrics: time-to-hire, cost-per-hire, and quality-of-hire. An ATS provides a seamless, automated solution for HR professionals to hasten the entire recruiting process from sourcing, interviewing, and hiring applicants.

Fact: According to Capterra, 75% of employers use an applicant tracking system in their recruitment process.

An effective ATS is simple and to the point. It helps guide applicants through the process, making it as easy as possible for both candidates and employers. The last thing you want from your ATS is for it to be overcomplicated and confusing. An extremely lengthy process for the candidate, makes applicants focus on the how of application process rather than the why.

Benefits of an ATS:

- *List to multiple job boards*

- *Central management database applicant resumes*

- *Automated resume screening*

- *Easy interview scheduling*

- *Ready to use templates*

- *Automated email responses*

- *Practical and easy collaboration and communication among teams*

- *Magnify recruiting analytics and reporting*

To set yourself apart in providing the best candidate experience, your ATS needs to do what it sets out to do. For an Applicant Tracking System to be useful, it needs to have: requisition management, an automated workflow, applicant-facing tools, pre-screening, scoring, and compliance. Take time to analyze your current process, and how your ATS flows into the rest of your operation, to improve and deliver better, faster results to your company. If you feel like you have to work around your Applicant Tracking System instead of with it, then it's not as effective as you think. Once every element of your recruiting process works, including your ATS, every part of finding the right talent will end up benefiting your hiring needs.

Get Started
With ClearCompany

At ClearCompany, your mission and vision for your company are a crucial element to our platform. Your candidates are out there and we're here to help you find, attract, engage, hire, and retain the best talent possible. With our ultimate Talent Management Solution, measure and improve your current process to create a positive candidate experience. So, what are you waiting for? Get started with us and sign up for your free demo today!