

5 Personalization Myths that Cripple Candidate Engagement

*How to Hire Quality Candidates Faster with
Personalized Candidate Experiences*

Introduction

Would you rather receive a mass market mailing from a big box store or a personalized email from your favorite niche hobby shop suggesting items of interest based on your past shopping behavior?

If you chose the second option, you're in good company. Almost [three-quarters of consumers](#) prefer personalized ads. And that penchant for personalization isn't limited to retail sales. Companies as diverse as Pinterest, Netflix, and Progressive Insurance have all used personalization to drive customer engagement and improve service.

Personalization has become an expectation in the marketplace today. It's part of the shift toward inbound methodology that we're seeing across all of marketing.

It's even changing the way we recruit.

71% of consumers prefer personalized ads

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What's the Big Deal About Personalization?

Recruitment isn't just about finding the right candidate anymore. It's also about convincing that candidate that he or she should come work for your company. Social media has made that easier—and also harder—than ever before. Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+ give you unprecedented opportunities to directly access candidates. But they also create a constant influx of information that eventually fades into white noise.

Your job as a recruiter is to cut through the visual clutter, seize the attention of your ideal candidates, and evoke a response. Personalization is the key to getting it done.

Personalization cuts through visual clutter, seizes attention, and evokes a response

Personalizing the candidate experience means delivering uniquely tailored content based on the interests and preferences of the people you want to reach. It means creating human interactions rather than just impersonal processes. And it means taking the time to research your prospects so you can increase the odds of capturing their attention.

In today's job market, you're competing with dozens if not hundreds of other recruiters, especially in highly competitive fields like technology, engineering, and healthcare. When you take the time to treat candidates like individuals instead of running them through your recruiting spam machine, you increase your chances of engagement.

5 Myths About Candidate Personalization

Buzzwords like personalization and content marketing show up everywhere these days. Everyone says they're doing it, but a lot of companies don't really understand the how's and whys.

Myth #1: You Can't Personalize Until You've Connected

This myth stems from the idea that personalization means gathering reams of data about specific individuals and delivering content and messaging based on the interactions and preferences of each one. While personalization *can* mean unique content based on individual actions (like Netflix's suggested content), it doesn't *always* mean that.

You can still create a personalized experience for new candidates the first time they interact with you. How? Start by gathering information about how people behave in their first encounters with your brand at various touchpoints and by capturing data such as geographic location, device, and traffic source. Use this information to deliver personalized experiences right from the very first interaction.

Myth #2: Personalization Means Unique Content for Every Individual

If you believe Myth #1, you likely believe Myth #2 as well. If personalization depends on capturing data about individuals, then it makes sense that each individual would see something different. But that's not the case

Personalization relies on a tried-and-true marketing strategy known as segmentation. MailChimp reports that segmented email campaigns generated [click rates 100.95% higher](#) than non-segmented campaigns.

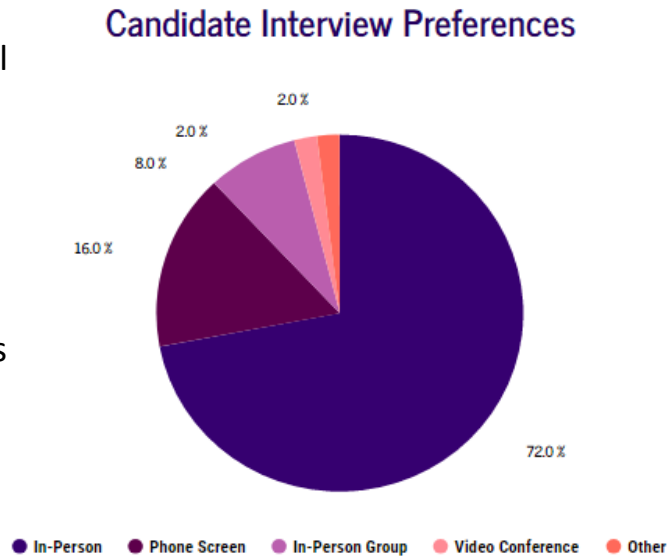
Segmentation divides your audience into groups based on common elements. It enables you to create content geared toward the preferences of that group without having to personalize at the individual level. You can segment your audience based on any number of characteristics:

- Country/region
- Job family (sales, engineering, management, HR, accounting, product development)
- Career stage (entry-level, intern, C-level, manager)
- Hiring initiatives (diversity, veteran, leadership, college graduates)
- Traffic source (website, social media, referral, email marketing)
- Motivating factors (fulfilling work, company culture, professional growth, opportunities for advancement, compensation)

Myth #3: Personalization Is Just About Content

Much of the buzz surrounding personalization deals with content marketing methodologies. But personalizing the candidate experience moves far beyond content. Once that candidate has completed an application, he or she will draw conclusions about your company based on the interactions they have during the screening and interview process.

Technology has given recruiters some excellent tools to facilitate screening, but in-person interactions still play a vital role in the recruiting process. For example, research demonstrates that most candidates still prefer in-person interviews over phone screens, video conferencing, or group interactions:



Source: [Manpower Group Solutions](#)

Personalized interactions matter. That's especially true in the case of passive candidate recruiting when you're trying to convince a candidate to make a job change he or she wasn't looking for. Researching the candidate's job history, knowledge and skill base, previous experiences, and current level of responsibility can go a long way toward establishing the vital connection you need to motivate action.

Myth #4: Personalization Is Always Interest-Based

It's true that creating targeted content based on the interests of the candidate can promote engagement. That's at the heart of content marketing. But interest is only one dimension of personalization. Sometimes, personalizing the candidate experience means showing that candidate a path to success and demonstrating how they can make a difference in your company or achieve a long-term career goal. It may also mean demonstrating how the position you're seeking to fill provides relevant connections to a candidate's strengths.

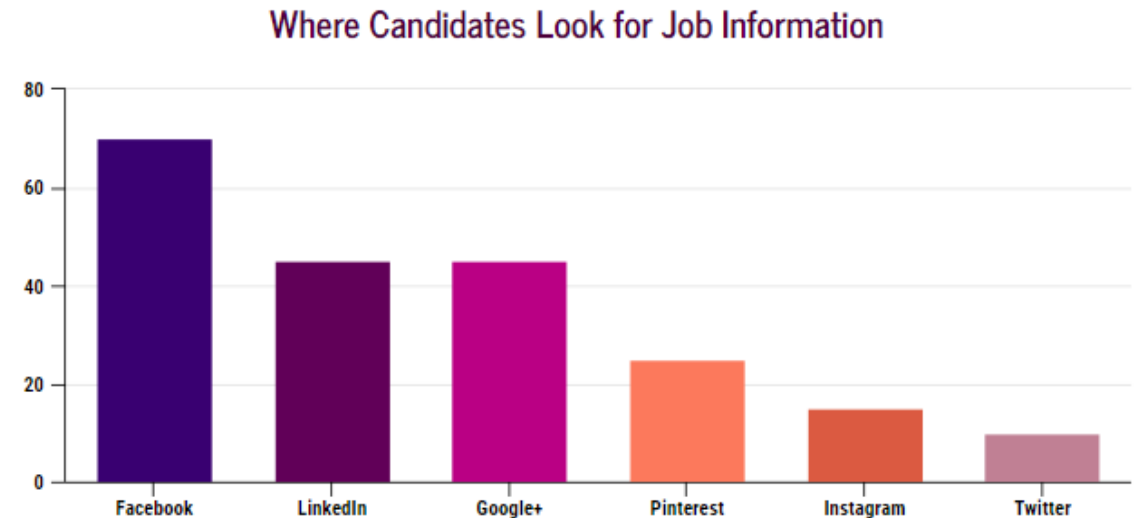
For example, a candidate might consider an HR position not because she has an interest in HR, but because she is good with people and wants to help them succeed. In this case, personalizing her experience might mean focusing on developing interpersonal connections, promoting company culture, and investing in employee satisfaction.

Myth #5: Personalization Is Expensive or Difficult

You can begin personalizing your candidate experience today. It doesn't require expensive technology platforms or an overhaul of your marketing strategy. However, like any initiative, the more you invest the greater your potential for positive results. Personalization can yield high ROI in a relatively short period of time when you're willing to consider strategic changes.

How to Personalize Your Candidate Experience

It's easy to assume that most candidates will find you through your job postings or career page. But that's not always the case in the digital age. Social media has become a go-to source of job information for many candidates—and not just on LinkedIn:



Source: [Manpower Group Solutions](#)

Prospective candidates encounter your company at numerous touchpoints before they decide to apply.

That means you need a consistent, engaging presence on your company website, LinkedIn Jobs page, LinkedIn company profile, blog, social channels, and emails if you want to attract the best candidates.

The good news is that you don't have to overhaul your strategy all at once. You can attract, engage, and retain quality candidates by making step-by-step improvements to your candidate process:

- **Start small**—Focus on one channel at a time, and make changes incrementally. Make a list of the channels you currently use (company website, career page, LinkedIn, blog, etc.) and determine which ones will deliver the greatest impact.
- **Segment your audience**—Determine which segments you want to focus on and begin creating content that speaks to those segments.
- **Use candidate personas**—Develop a persona to represent each segment. Personas help you view candidates as real human beings rather than simply aggregations of data. As you flesh them out with specific details, you'll gain a better perspective about the kinds of content that will engage them.
- **Avoid templates**—Templates feel impersonal and spammy, and that's a great way to turn candidates off. That doesn't mean every email has to be written from scratch, but it does mean putting more thought into them than simply adding their first name to the greeting. Include a few personalized details based on what you know about the individual and your messaging will stand out from the crowd of template junkies.
- **Consider candidates at different stages**—Don't assume that every candidate is encountering your company for the first time—but don't assume that candidates know your company intimately either. Write for individuals at varying stages of awareness, from those encountering your company casually on social media to those seriously considering a career change.
- **Include a call to action**—Every piece of content you produce should include a call to action. What do you want the candidate to do when they finish reading that email or post? Do you want them to apply, sign up for your jobs newsletter, follow your jobs hashtag, or give you a referral?

- **Engage at every stage**—At every touchpoint, have a process for engaging with candidates. That might mean replying to a comment on LinkedIn, creating email autoresponders for the screening process, or setting up an in-person meeting. Wherever candidates encounter your company, they should walk away feeling positive about the interactions they had. This idea extends beyond the hiring process into onboarding and training as well. When personalized interactions become part of your company culture, you have established a solid foundation for engagement and retention.

“People make recruitment exciting. Pour energy and enthusiasm into every conversation and candidates will respond to that excitement.”

- Robin Harris, Hire Velocity Talent Acquisition Consultant

10 Personalization Ideas to Get You Started

Personalization means taking the time to research your ideal candidates and develop content and processes that engage them. That kind of approach doesn't lend itself to a one-size-fits-all strategy. But that doesn't mean you have to start from scratch either.

Here are our top ten ideas to get you started:

1. **Ramp up your employer brand.** Develop your employer value proposition and create a unified branding strategy.
2. **Leverage data effectively.** Use predictive analytics and market intelligence strategies to learn more about the candidates you're trying to reach.
3. **Evaluate your technology.** Determine whether technology upgrades or additions could help you reach candidates or develop a strategic personalization platform for more satisfying candidate experiences.

4. **Launch targeted hiring initiatives.** Develop personalized strategies to reach diversity candidates, veterans, college graduates, and other candidate segments.
5. **Include information about job families on your career website.** Show candidates how jobs relate to one another and what kind of hierarchy they can expect.
6. **Offer personalized job recommendations.** Use candidate data to generate job recommendations based on qualifications, experience, or interests.
7. **Create a jobs email list.** Give candidates the opportunity to sign up for job alerts or a career newsletter.
8. **Diversify your content.** Generate content aimed at candidates in all stages of the consideration process. In addition to specific job postings, consider employee spotlights, pieces highlighting your culture, videos, event blogs, newsletters, and infographics.

9. **Reach out directly.** There still is no substitute for direct, in-person contact with a highly desirable candidate. Direct outreaches boost engagement and increase conversion—especially when it’s evident you’ve done your homework.
10. **Don’t overlook social media**—A strong social media strategy can extend your network and build your employer brand. Take time to learn the nuances of each channel and audience.

Personalization has become an expectation for almost every online interaction—including recruitment. If you’re ready to design a personalization strategy that results in quality hires, we can help.

At Hire Velocity, our passion is to bring quality candidates and companies together using transformative recruitment process outsourcing strategies. We help you find and hire the right people with customized workforce solutions designed to boost candidate engagement, decrease turnover, and drive down costs.

Let’s make recruiting personal.



About Hire Velocity

Hire Velocity designs talent strategies that build great teams and great businesses. We are a proven leader in Human Capital Solutions and trusted by companies for customized Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO), Search, and Talent & Digital Advisory solutions. Hire Velocity partners with clients across nearly every industry to solve recruiting challenges and achieve sustained outcomes. Consistently recognized as a partner that goes the 'extra mile', we are devoted to delivering outstanding service.



