

The candidate experience playbook - Part 1

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Practical interventions to improve candidate experience in the first phase

Our brands are very important to us and we invest a lot of money into building and protecting it. How people feel about our companies after any interaction can influence their views and future engagements with our brands. That includes how candidates feel once they have experienced your company's hiring process. At the recent Future of HR Summit, I focused on some practical ways to improve the candidate experience.

How the candidate experience affects your organisation

It is very important to understand the close connection between your main brand and your employer brand. A bad experience of your employer brand can have a damaging effect on your overall brand.

Many of our clients also have consumer facing brands that put them at a higher risk level due to the direct link between consumer behaviour and brand association.

Here are some of the ways in which your candidate experience can affect your organisation:

It can directly affect the loyalty of current customers and help you to create new customers.

According to Talent Board's 2018 [Candidate Experience report](#), based on a survey of 2,000 people, half the candidates who gave their experience the lowest rating said they would take their business elsewhere.

On the flip side, 70% of candidates who rated their experience the highest, said they would increase their buying relationship with the employer.

The candidate experience can also help to increase the depth of your talent pool and help you land the best talent. The IBM Smarter Workforce Institute found that candidates who were satisfied with their experience were twice as likely to recommend the hiring organisation to others. Word of mouth marketing in the age of social media can be very good or extremely dangerous. This further illustrated in the next point.

Consider for a moment that candidates satisfied with the candidate experience were 38% more likely to accept a job offer, according to the IBM Smarter Workforce Institute. In the competition for the best talent, especially in an economy where fighting on salary could be risky and difficult, the candidate experience is clearly critical.

There is an opportunity or risk for your bottom line when it comes to candidates' experiences. I would explain it in rands and cents with this calculation. Let's say the number of rejected applicants you have annually is 1,000 of which 15% were clients of your company at the time of application. If the average annual value of one customer is R1,000, your risk element is: R150,000. (1,000 x 15% x R1,000).

So, where to start for a better candidate experience?

The candidate journey can be divided into three main phases, namely first impressions, the hiring process and lasting impressions. Each of these phases encompass a number of elements which can make or break your candidate experience.

First impressions count

The first impressions candidates get are determined by your employer brand, careers page, job adverts and how easy it is to apply for a position at your company.

Employer brand

Talentegy did a survey of 4,000 candidates from various sectors and focused on a range of elements including employer branding, candidate experience and generational trends. Their report shows that 43.7% are spending at least 1-2 hours researching a specific employer with another 11.6% stating it's as high as 3-5+ hours. So, consider what candidates will learn about your company during this time.

Will people find true advocacy for your brand in passion displayed towards your brand? It often builds on the company's core messaging and is an ongoing interest. You therefore have to constantly work on tweaking and adapting your employer brand to keep people passionate about it.

One of the top attracting factors for applicants is a sense of purpose in what they do for a living. That is why brands who are serious about attracting and retaining top talent, need to demonstrate a strong ethic and belief in what they do.

That brings us to company culture. A great company culture can only exist and grow if the vast majority of employees believe in it, want to be part of it and have a vested interest in nurturing its growth.

Advocacy, events, links from websites and word of mouth, are all ways in which a business can prove its employer brand. But attracting the right type of attention is critical.

Careers page

Your careers page is another important element. Is finding your careers tab about as easy as finding a panda in a room full of Dalmatians? Research has shown that it is important for candidates to be able to find for example information about the company culture, values and how to follow up on an application. The majority across all age groups also want clear instructions on how to get help on a careers website.

Job advert

It will also certainly serve you well to make the most of your job adverts. So, call in the sales experts and use your job advert to sell. Choose your words carefully and don't make it too long. If your company has an amazing culture, this is the place to highlight it. Think about who you are talking to and address them directly.

Ease of application

Once you have the interest of a good candidate, you have to make sure the application process user-friendly and not frustrating. Some job application mishaps are technical problems with the registration and application process. Asking a candidate to retype a resume because of system limitations, incorrect use of screening questions and the lack of adaptive or mobile friendly design is extremely unpleasant.

Lastly, I will share some practical tips on how to improve the next phase. This includes feedback to applicants and the recruiting process through to the onboarding of successful candidates. If you can already see that you can do with some help to improve your candidate experience, you may be relieved to know that we have local experts and technology available to help improve all aspects of your recruitment management processes.

Henneri Crous is the Head of the Careers24 and Simplify Group's Sales Function. He has more than 19 years' experience in sales, with more than 11 of those years gained in the recruitment space.
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