

Humanizing the Candidate Experience



5 Steps to
Make Recruiting
More Personal

Ultimate
SOFTWARE

Why is the Candidate Experience Important?

The value of treating every applicant with respect

It's easy to forget that every employee hired into your organization was once a candidate applying for a new job opportunity. These applicants chose your company over hundreds of others in the hopes of starting a new career. But in the rush to fill positions and provide a solid new hire process, it can be tough to consider the candidate experience at all. However, treating candidates with respect, as well as providing them with the support and communication they deserve, can have a wide variety of benefits in the short- and long-term.

The candidate experience covers the entire recruitment process from pre-application up to onboarding, and everything in between. The experience a candidate has at each step along the way is what distinguishes one company from another for an applicant, and the difference can be immense.

A positive candidate experience can generate goodwill and highly beneficial word-of-mouth, even if an applicant is rejected! Potential employees that are treated as unique individuals, given a memorable, hassle-free application and interview process, and engaged with frequently during the experience are much more likely to recommend that others apply to open positions with your company. What's more, applicants who had a good experience during your recruiting process are more likely to recommend your organization's products and services to their friends and families as well. On the other hand, those who undergo an exceptionally poorly-planned or negative candidate experience have an even greater chance of sharing that with friends and family. This can damage your company's reputation, resulting in high-quality talent avoiding your company in their future job searches and even purchasing decisions.

Clearly, the pressure is on when it comes to planning for a positive candidate experience. Today's job seekers are more vocal than ever. But with the right plan in place, you can uncover the best talent with the right skills, enhance your organization's brand, and provide a uniquely engaging recruitment experience. The advice in this guide will show you how.

What Are the Consequences of a Negative Candidate Experience?

The feeling of being ignored or mistreated during the application process can produce lasting resentment in candidates who may otherwise have held your organization in high regard—even after a rejection. These experiences are not only unpleasant for the applicant but can potentially harm your company's reputation.

How can you avoid these bad experiences altogether? For starters, a majority of job applicants receive no response at all from companies they're seeking positions with. It's reported that only 20% of applicants received an email from a company to notify them that they were not being considered.² Why is this important? Over time, this lack of feedback can cause jobseekers to become jaded and view the companies they're targeting as "all the same." Because of this, your job candidates may have preconceptions about your organization before the application process has even started. One of the goals of your recruitment process should be to counteract any initial feelings of negativity and cynicism an applicant may hold, even if they came about due to an experience with another company.

If a candidate feels that his or her hiring manager is paying insufficient attention to the recruitment process, such as letting too much time go by without contact between interviews, this can leave a lasting bad impression. In fact, only 31% of applicants stated that they would re-apply to an organization after going through their recruitment process.² Similarly, if the candidate finds the interviews painfully generic or if the candidate's interviewer comes off as inconsiderate, he or she may feel disrespected and sour on the remaining part of the process.

Even if your open position was clearly a superior fit for a candidate's skills, poor experiences like these can drive them to another company. And when you consider currently employed candidates looking to advance their career at your organization, they may call off their job search altogether.

Of course the worst-case scenario for your business following a poor candidate experience is negative word-of-mouth. The widespread adoption of mobile technology and social media makes it easier than ever for an applicant to relate his or her experiences in detail to a wide audience, which may tarnish your company's reputation. Facebook posts or tweets that single out an organization as having a disrespectful or inattentive recruitment process can influence others that might be in the middle of an application, and even keep others from applying in the first place.



45% of job seekers say their biggest frustration is that employers don't respond to them.¹



39% of surveyed job seekers reported that they found it more difficult to find a new job from one year to the next—and for good reason.³

What Can I Do to Humanize the Candidate Experience?

Simple steps to make recruitment more personal

1. Make your first impression a great one. Pinpoint where your candidates are going first to learn about your organization and open opportunities. According to one recent study, 57% of applicants are still conducting their preliminary research by heading straight to the source—your website.² While this is still the preferred research channel for candidates, it is on the decline in recent years. Candidates are increasingly turning to employee, candidate, and customer referrals as a means of gathering information about your company,² and a majority are leveraging social media to research company cultures.³ On average, job seekers use 16 total resources in their job search.¹ A premium recruiting solution should include reporting capabilities that let you know the exact source of each and every applicant, enabling you to trace back quality hires and hone your talent acquisition over time.

2. Always respond to applicants, even if they won't be given a first interview. This can be an automated response, as long as it is prompt, respectful, and doesn't make your applicant feel that they've wasted their time. Best-in-class recruiting solutions can generate these "thank you" emails automatically following a new application. While spending any time on rejected candidates may seem unnecessary, you never know when that same jobseeker might be a perfect fit for your next open position. Plus, a staggering 47% of candidates never receive any communication, even past the two-month mark after applying²—leaving a huge opportunity for your company to provide a superior experience.

3. Create unique experiences for different types of applicants. With a robust recruiting platform, you can develop a different application process for candidates based on criteria such as the role and its location. Certain positions may require rigorous technical screening questions, while others might rely more on personality or cultural fit. You can even display specific job postings in an applicant's preferred language. When you take the time to personalize the recruiting process, you save your potential new hires from application fatigue caused by unnecessary or redundant steps.

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4. Truly know your candidates. Once the applications start flowing in, the individuality of each candidate can start to get a little blurry. Take the time to identify distinguishing factors between candidates during the recruiting process, especially for those with similar employment histories and experience. Give each candidate the chance to share what unique attributes they bring to the table by asking questions about their professional goals, and of course take a little time to get to know them at a personal level as well. This additional information will make for much richer dialogue with potential hires.

5. Gather feedback from your candidates to improve your recruitment process. The best way to identify and improve any recruitment kinks is to ask those who are directly affected by it—your applicant. Research has shown that nearly 30% of applicants who had a positive recruitment experience were asked to provide feedback along the way. In contrast, a staggering 88% of candidates who claimed to have a poor recruitment experience were not asked for any feedback at all.² This vital information is an important step toward improving each stage of your recruitment process.

Conclusion

Think back on what your last job search was like. Did potential employers respond to you promptly? Did you feel valued while being interviewed? If you felt that your time was wasted, did you tell your friends and family about how awful the process was? The experience you had as a candidate likely colored your feelings toward those companies permanently. Bear in mind that everyone who applies for a position with your company will be doing the same thing; only now, it's easier and faster than ever to communicate the experience. Follow the steps in this guide and you'll ensure that your candidate experience is a memorable one—for the right reasons.

For more information about supporting candidate engagement and relationships, as well as attracting, hiring and developing the best talent for your organization, [take a product tour of UltiPro® Recruiting](#).

1. How to Rethink the Candidate Experience and Make Better Hires, 2016 by CareerBuilder
2. 2016 Talent Board North American Candidate Experience Research Report
3. Job Seeker Nation Study, 2016 by Jobvite



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