

How to create an engaging candidate experience from application to onboarding

Candidate experience is a crucial component of recruitment, yet it also spills into company culture and just about everything else in your organisation.

From impressive employee retention to unimpacted revenue, engaging candidate experiences protect the success of your business.



So, how can organisations engage candidates in the fast-changing world of work? What do applicants expect from job descriptions? How can interviews be made more intelligent? And why does feedback matter so much?

Read our research-backed recommendations and use this simple checklist to transform your candidate experience.

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Pre recruitment

Recruitment is a costly yet necessary activity. A bad hire at mid-manager level with a salary of £42,000 can end up costing an organisation more than £132,000¹. So, getting recruitment right is important. Before you even write a job description or publish a vacancy, it's worth taking a step back to consider your overall recruitment strategy, reviewing how you'll bring in new employees and fill skills gaps on budget.

But how does this impact candidate experience?

Candidates, too, expect you to have a recruitment vision that isn't specific to a singular role but to how you advertise, interview and onboard as a whole. Applicants look at the entire picture when they decide whether to apply for a job—and so should you. For example, 86% of people check online reviews before deciding whether to fill out a job application².

Now, recruitment performance and quality of talent are strongly linked to your 'employer brand'. According to 86% of HR professionals, recruitment is becoming more like marketing³ and a further 80% think employer branding has a significant impact on their ability to attract talent⁴.

¹ [Hiring Mistakes Are Costing UK Businesses Billions Each Year | REC](#)

² [40+ Stats for Companies to Keep in Mind for 2021 | Glassdoor](#)

³ [40+ Stats for Companies to Keep in Mind for 2021 | Glassdoor](#)

⁴ [62 Recruitment Statistics Every HR Professional Needs to Know | G2](#)



Employer branding, of course, relates to your performance as an employer. It takes into account testimonials, ex-employee reviews and culture-focused content on and off your website. Yet, employer branding is much more complex than this. In a way, it is your candidate experience and how it speaks for itself.

Look at recruitment at a macro level

Zoom out from individual vacancies and look at recruitment holistically. How can your process be templated and improved? What feedback can you implement in interviews going forward?

Forecast recruitment for the year ahead

Recruitment should be strategic, not rushed and reactive. Think about recruitment ahead of time, accounting for the next 12 months. What is the ideal number of people to have in your business at year-end? Which departments need the most support?

Adopt a marketing mindset

Employer branding opens up better talent, bigger candidate pools and more eager prospective employees during the hiring process. How can you improve your employer brand? How do candidates perceive you? Is this how you'd like them to?

Pre interview

To get the best talent to the interview stage, your application process must be deemed 'acceptable' and easy to complete for even the most discerning candidates. Today, one in five candidates expect job applications to take less than five minutes, with roughly the same amount of people stating two to three pages as the maximum they will consider completing on mobile before they give up¹.

But how does this impact candidate experience?

More than ever before, applications need to be short, to the point and user-friendly on every device to capture all the right candidates. Reducing the length of your application process is a proven practice, with those less than five minutes increasing application conversion **by 365%**².

While application needs to be outwardly streamlined, the behind-the-scenes of application to interview needs to be just as organised. Confusion around which stakeholders will be part of the interview process and poor coordination will impact candidate experience at its very pinnacle.

Job advertisement quality is also an important factor. Job descriptions must be descriptive to impress and contain all the expected information such as salary, responsibilities, location and contact details to qualify.

¹ [Job Seekers Are Now in the Driver's Seat and Expect Next Gen Recruiting \[...\] | Career Builder](#)

² [The Case for Providing a Positive Candidate Experience | Recruiting](#)

Even pre-interview, candidates find communication critical, with 51% of people viewing contact details on a job advertisement as a key factor in improving candidate experience³, while 36% outright expect to speak to someone from an organisation before they even apply⁴. That said, responsiveness to applications is also a factor to consider with many individuals preferring to receive a rejection over no response.

Make job descriptions, well, descriptive

Design job descriptions with the user in mind and don't expect them to understand brand lingo and inside terminology. Explain the job role, demystify its title and include all essential information such as responsibilities, salary, location, working hours and benefits package to remove any barriers. Recruiters should work closely with hiring managers to understand the requirements of a role before writing it.

Abridge applications and optimise the application to interview process

Shorten applications to be under five minutes, where possible, and optimise them for mobile, tablet and desktop. Which stages of the application could you automate? Which information is vital at this stage and what can be left for the interview? Remember, this simplification should stretch to every part of the application to interview process making sure successful applications are shortlisted and invited to interview with ease.

Be open to applicant queries

Providing the contact details of a talent manager or people officer in your advertisement is now a necessity. Although no one expects you to take large chunks out of your day to chat with potential applicants, answering a quick question is seen as standard. Let applicants connect with you on LinkedIn. Allow them to introduce themselves via email. Remember, if you value an applicant's time, they will value yours.

³ [8 Tips for Improving the Online Candidate Experience | Software Advice](#)

⁴ [Job Seekers Are Now in the Driver's Seat and Expect Next Gen Recruiting \[...\] | Career Builder](#)

The interview process

Much is riding on the interview process. The most obvious being the hire of an ideal candidate. Yet, interviews have an impact on all candidates—successful or not.



A staggering 83% of talent change their perception of a role or company they once liked when they encounter a negative interview experience, while 87% of people claim a positive interview experience can change their mind for the better¹. So, a pattern begins to form. Negative interviews have negative consequences and positive interviews have positive outcomes. For example, 71% of people are more likely to buy from an organisation they had a positive recruitment experience with—whether they were ultimately successful or not².

Creating a positive interview process should then be a priority for every HR professional. Research shows interviews, on average, have two stages that take 27.5 days to complete³. But more importantly than this: What do these stages consist of? How long in advance is the applicant aware of them? And how relevant does the whole thing feel to the role in which they're applying for?

¹ [Your candidate experience: Creating an impact or burning cash? | Deloitte](#)

² [8 Tips for Improving Online Candidate Experience | Software Advice](#)

³ [Job Interview Statistics | Job Description Library](#)

Transparency around the interview process, providing communication and a clear timeline, is expected by 82% of candidates⁴. Candidates want to feel prepared for the process and feel assured that you, as the employer, are too. Interestingly, harder interviews with more assessments have higher acceptance rates, especially in technical and professional industries⁵. Candidates want to be challenged and feel accomplished when they accept a successful offer.

Challenge applicants with assessments

Multi-stage interviews that involve a skills audit enrich the interview experience and engage top-tier talent. Career-driven individuals need to feel that job offers are earned and that the standards of the organisation they're joining meet their own. That said, interview difficulty should always go hand in hand with the seniority, experience level and technicality of the role. Make assessments too hard or too lengthy and you'll put perfectly good candidates under undue pressure and dampen their overall experience.

Communicate interview expectations

In addition to designing an engaging interview process, remember to tell candidates about it. Be transparent about timelines and how you assess individuals at interviews as candidates can come prepared and bring their best selves to the table. The better you are at coordinating interviews, the more comfortable a candidate will be.

Standardise interviews across the board

To keep up with the complexity of the expected interview process, standardise interviews with templated stages. Don't disengage when someone isn't an immediate fit, as even unsuccessful candidates can impact your organisation.

⁴ [Job Seekers Are Now in the Driver's Seat and Expect Next Gen Recruiting \[...\] | Career Builder](#)

⁵ [Why Do Candidates Reject Job Offers? | Glassdoor](#)

Post interview

Post interview isn't a time to take your foot off the gas, even though it might seem like all the hard work is over. Candidates expect decisions to be made fast, with over half of people (55%) naming two weeks as the cut-off point for hearing back from an employer¹.



Taking too long to decide or notify candidates of your choice has real consequences for your business. A staggering 40% of people have turned down a job offer because another organisation was quicker to make an offer²—a sure sign that top talent isn't “yours” just because they expressed interest in an interview.

In fact, talent tends to keep their options open right until the very end of the employment process. A further 51% admit to searching for other roles even after an offer has been extended³. The best candidates hedge their bets right up until a contract has been signed, a salary has been negotiated and all references have been checked.

¹ [Job Seekers Are Now in the Driver's Seat and Expect Next Gen Recruiting \[...\] | Career Builder](#)

² [The Case for Providing a Positive Candidate Experience | Recruiting](#)

³ [Job Seekers Are Now in the Driver's Seat and Expect Next Gen Recruiting \[...\] | Career Builder](#)

The candidate experience merges with the employee experience, being less about when a candidate officially becomes an employee and more about when a candidate views themselves as a permanent part of an organisation. An astonishing 33% of new employees quit within the first 90 days⁴, the majority blaming a disparity between their expectations and the reality of the role—something that can be managed throughout the hiring process. Yet, bad onboarding is also to blame, with only 12% of professionals labelling their current employer as ‘great’ at onboarding⁵.

Make fast but fair decisions

Find ways to make the assessment of an interview easier and quicker for everyone involved. While you’ll need to be sure you’re making a good, unbiased decision, there is pressure on organisations to settle on a winning candidate with speed.

Manage post interview stress in interviews

Think about what a prospective employee needs to get from an interview and spend time providing information rather than just focusing on extracting it. At the end of an interview, give the candidate an expected timeframe for when they’ll hear back from you.

Keep the momentum after an initial offer

Don’t let an offer go stale. Keep communicating with the successful candidate, especially if they have a long notice period. Plan their onboarding and give them a taste of what they can expect when they arrive.

⁴ [Why 33 Percent of New Employees Quit in 90 Days | Psychology Today](#)

⁵ [62 Recruitment Statistics Every HR Professional Needs to Know | G2](#)

Feedback

Nearly all candidates (94%) actively want to receive feedback¹. Yet, it's one of the most neglected areas of the entire recruiting process, with only 41% of candidates receiving it in reality.



In terms of candidate experience, this is a disaster. Glassdoor revealed 53% of people view feedback as a major contributing factor to a positive candidate experience². This is true for both successful and unsuccessful candidates, demystifying the belief that negative feedback is too 'awkward' or 'painful' to give to be worth it.

Providing feedback is crucial to your long-term recruiting strategy, even if you struggle to see the short-term benefit. Candidates are 4X more willing to reapply to an organisation if offered constructive feedback previously³. If it's the case that a candidate was a great culture fit but not the strongest skills match, it would be a shame to lose them to something as trivial as a few lines of feedback.

¹ [The Ultimate List of Hiring Statistics | LinkedIn Business](#)

² [30+ HR and Recruiting Stats for 2020 | Glassdoor](#)

³ [Candidate Experience Study | Workplace Trends](#)

What's more, feedback doesn't have to be hard, time-consuming or awkward. Over half of people prefer to hear bad news by email (64%), making it far less overwhelming to send a quick summary to someone's inbox⁴.

Give every candidate some form of feedback

Every candidate that attends an interview should be met with some form of feedback as a common courtesy for the time they've taken to meet with you. Not all feedback has to be elaborate, but it should clearly explain the reasons for your hiring decision and aim to help improve their interviewing skills in the future.

Customise feedback as you see fit

Use your common sense to give feedback, using the right channel and medium for the situation. Some feedback can be fleeting and text-based, while others deserve a verbal explanation. Decide on your feedback method based on the level of effort required to undergo the interview process.

Provide fair, constructive feedback

Give good quality feedback that isn't skewed by unconscious bias or your version of events. Feedback should be objective and explained clearly, backed up by real-life examples. Always indicate a solution and explain the purpose of your point.

⁴ [9 Key Stats to Providing a Great Candidate Experience | LinkedIn](#)

An important step to creating an engaging candidate experience

Making the interview experience more inclusive and ultimately unbiased with Screenloop

The majority of HR professionals (70%) already know the value of candidate experience, but less than half of professionals (40%) take the time to monitor it¹. We know candidate experience can only ever benefit from improvement and through our checklist and continual research on the topic, we also know which areas require the most attention. However, most HR professionals suffer from a lack of data and a gap in understanding how our candidate experience is performing.

That's where interview intelligence platforms come into play.

With 68% of professionals in agreement that investing in new technologies is the most important thing an organisation can do to improve recruitment performance in the next five years², the next step is obvious: to adopt an interview intelligence tool.

Interviews are the bread and butter of candidate experience. If you get this part right—the rest is sure to follow. In interviews, recruiters decide which talent to hire while interviewees assess their willingness to work with a prospective employer. A good interview can lead to great things as you acquire a new asset to the company. A bad interview not only ensures you'll lose worthwhile talent but it can also have a knock-on effect on your reputation, revenue and more.

¹ [Your candidate experience: Creating an impact or burning cash? | Deloitte](#)

² [The 5 Tech Tools That Will Have Biggest Impact on the Future of Recruiting | LinkedIn Talent Blog](#)

As such, there's no better place to start improving your candidate experience.

Remote interviews now play and will continue to play a key role in the growth of businesses around the world. Integrating with popular HR tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Workable, Lever and Greenhouse, Screenloop records and transcribes interviews and provides interviewers with real-time prompts to ensure all interviews are fair and consistent.

Screenloop tracks the insights of each interview and you as an individual interviewer over time to enable everyone to become an interview expert.

Candidates can be compared side-by-side with asynchronous feedback from the team on those hard to make decisions with facts and objective data. In turn, better and faster hiring decisions can be made, waving goodbye to decisions based on faded memories, bias and gut feel.

Book a demo with the Screenloop team today to find out how we're bringing data and facts to interviews to make sure that every interview counts.

Book a demo