

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The New Definition of Candidate Experience

Jan 11, 2022 • Cat DiStasio



Right now, job seekers have the upper hand and their expectations are markedly different than in the pre-pandemic era. As Forbes argues, “[For] candidate[s] in the post-pandemic world, [the] job search experience should matter: Organizations should strive to make it more holistic and frictionless.” And we already know that [a great candidate experience](#) helps employers make better—and often faster—hires.

Before we dive into advice on how to update your candidate experience for 2022, it's crucial to revisit the idea of what candidate experience actually is. Talent acquisition professionals need to make sure that what they're thinking of as candidate experience matches what candidates are actually experiencing. Today's reality—which will shape the future of recruiting for years to come—requires TA pros to evolve their concepts, strategies, and practices to achieve their goals.

Who Counts as a Candidate?

Understanding candidate experience starts by rethinking who your candidates are. Recruiters tend to talk about potential employees in three categories: job seekers, applicants, and then candidates—and many efforts to improve candidate experience focus solely on the last group. That mindset ignores a big (and important!) part of the candidate experience — in other words, the very top of the recruiting funnel. [LinkedIn](#) notes that job seekers are “looking at your website, LinkedIn company page, employer reviews, and other employer assets prior to submitting their application”— and we know people form opinions about potential employers based on what they see, a strong indication that the candidate experience starts early — much earlier than the traditional model suggests. In fact, a bad candidate experience before the application probably means that there are lots of people who simply aren't even interested in investing the time to fill out an application. In other words, a bad candidate experience early in the process means you aren't converting as many candidates as you could be.

Adopting a new definition of candidate experience is imperative if you want to improve your recruiting results. You need to shift your mindset and realize that every person you might want to hire, **now or in the future**, is a candidate, and every interaction they have with your organization, whether they are actively in progress with you or not, influences their experience with your organization.

Talent acquisition should be taking a page out of the marketing playbook to better appeal to today's job seeker: in the marketing world, it's not just about reaching customers - but about the broader world of *consumers*. It's not just your current, buying “customers” that matter in terms of providing a great “customer experience.” It's important to pay attention to anyone who fits your target customer persona, even (or especially) if you haven't engaged with them yet. Similarly, TA teams should be thinking about candidate experience beyond just those who have applied (completed a transaction with your organization), and instead broaden out your understanding of the candidate experience to describe every interaction a potential employee has with your organization. This is a critical shift that TA teams need to make to compete in the candidates' job market of 2022.

The Candidate Experience Begins Before You Ever Meet Them

The research we mentioned earlier illustrates the importance of first impressions for job seekers. In 2022, first impressions are everything and, for most candidates, the first touchpoint is your social media presence, your employer brand, the content on your careers site content, and even your individual job postings.

The first thing a job seeker sees, reads, or hears about your organization is when the candidate experience starts. If you don't make a strong first impression at the start — and offer multiple opportunities for engagement — you'll lose their attention before they even apply. This means you need to provide options outside of an application for candidates to engage with you, whether that's with a [recruiting chatbot](#) on your job postings and careers site, interactive virtual recruiting events, or even simply a 5-second contact form that collects the candidate's name, email address, and target job title. Employers who empower candidates to connect when and how they feel comfortable will gain a reputation for a great candidate experience — and drive more candidates through the



process.

How to Improve the Candidate Experience from the Start

If the first step to improving the candidate experience is adopting a new understanding of what it is, the next step is [evaluating your current candidate experience](#). Re-imagine and map out your candidate experience journey from the candidate's POV—starting not with your hiring process but with those first points of contact—all the way through the complete hiring and onboarding process.

Collect candidate feedback throughout the recruiting process and track engagement metrics to get a snapshot of your candidate experience. Look for opportunities to improve and respond swiftly to the inevitable pieces of negative feedback you uncover. For instance, you might add new content to your career site if candidates say they want to know more about your mission, values, or work culture. Continue asking for feedback and evaluate the results over time to look for cause and effect. Did engagement increase? Did candidate opinions improve?

Leverage [virtual events](#) to boost your candidate experience, too. Events can be especially effective at the top of the recruiting funnel when they are focused on what candidates need. Consider hosting educational and informational events that help candidates learn about your organization or connect them with industry experts who can share insights about career advancement and personal development.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel to provide a stellar candidate experience. Adopt [proven best practices](#) from [award-winning employers](#), such as investing in HR tech and adding more communication throughout the recruiting process. Talent Board's [2021 Candidate Experience Global Research Report](#) found that top 10 companies in North America utilize AI recruiting technology to improve their recruiting and hiring processes 15% more often than the average for all companies.

Organizations with high candidate experience also offer more feedback, which candidates appreciate. Candidates at CandE-winning organizations receive information about next steps after the application 13% more often than the average through a variety of channels, including recruiting chatbots and text messaging.

A Better Candidate Experience Leads to Better Hires

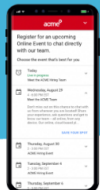
Sourcing and connecting with quality candidates will continue to challenge TA professionals in most industries for years to come. As more Baby Boomers retire and people continue quitting their jobs to look for greener opportunities, the quality of your candidate experience is rapidly becoming the defining factor in your hiring outcomes. Start making small changes now, and focus on offering the best first impression you can. Over time, you can improve your candidate experience and your metrics will reflect your efforts.

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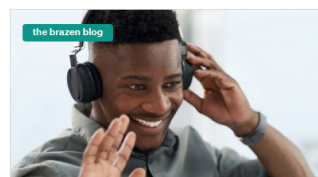
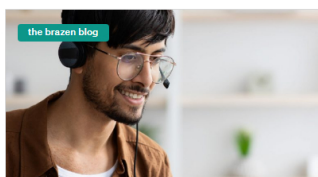
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