Are you hiring because or despite the candidate experience you deliver?

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Are you enhancing your employer brand through the candidate experience you deliver or damaging it?

To get a broad idea about the impact and traction of candidate experience, you could do far worse than simply Google the term. Perhaps though, save yourself the trouble of wading through no less than 429m results. Just as there's no secret to the scale of focus currently being applied to the construct of candidate experience, there's similarly little secret as to why this might be the case.

Talent in so many employment marketplaces is at an unprecedented premium. If we focus briefly on the UK, it's hard not to arrive at the conclusion that this is unambiguously a candidate's market.

According to the British Chamber of Commerce, not only are 81% (the joint highest figure the BCC has ever recorded) of its members experiencing recruitment difficulties, but many are actually 'giving up' trying to hire. The most recent ONS figures suggest that the workforce added 167,000 jobs in the most recent quarter. Employment, at 75.8% has never been higher since comparable records began in 1971.

So, given the tightness and competitive nature of the variety of talent acquisition marketplaces recruiters are likely to be operating within, it would appear to make sense to apply an absolute premium to the experience provided to all candidates.

And, once again, there's no shortage of statistics that point to the importance of valuing and respecting a candidate's time and efforts.

According to research from LinkedIn, it is the acid test for your employer brand, where the promises of your Employee Value Proposition are either delivered or dashed - for them 83% of talent suggest that a negative interview experience can change their mind about an organisation they once admired. (With all the career, word of mouth and customer implications this covers).

For CareerBuilder, the experience 78% of candidates encounter during this process correlates closely to the employment experience an organisation will deliver once they join.

The delivery of a positive and value adding experience to candidates, then, appears beyond debate and particularly in the context of today's talent market.

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What, however, are the issues and challenges that can stand in the way of the talent acquisition industry's capacity to deliver the candidate experience they want to deliver?

It's an important question and one that Dangerfield posed to a number of key figures across our sector. We cannot thank them enough for their thoughts and opinions and the contribution they have made to this piece of research.

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Recruiter, Google

John Burnet
Head of Talent Acquisition, Thoughtworks

Natasha Cekerevac
Head of Recruitment, HighQ

Sally Conner
HR Director, St Elizabeth Hospice

Iain Everett
Senior Manager, Operational Resourcing, Asda

Matt Eyre
Candidate Marketing Manager, Co-Op

Kirstin Furber
Chief People Officer, Clearscore

Julie Griggs
Asst. HR Director, Manchester Met University

Amanda Jailler
Talent Acquisition Lead, Reckitt Benckiser

Sarah Langton
Global Head of Recruitment, Clifford Chance

Emma Neary
Head of Talent Acquisition, Moneysupermarket Group

Giorgiana Prihoi
Global Resourcing Lead, Bombardier

Jane Robinson
Head of Employer Brand, EY

Catherine Schlieben
Global Head of Talent Acquisition, Worldpay

Adele Swift
Head of Recruitment, Handepay

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Key Findings

- The candidate experience is where your brand and your proposition - your why, if you like - are put to the test in the most tangible and public way. There is no hiding. Either your employer brand delivers through this experience or it lets your candidate audiences down - again, very publicly.

- This is an area of real business advantage - or potentially just the opposite - with the capacity to enhance your employer brand and deliver the people who will progress your business.

- If your organisation is truly committed to people, their experience and their engagement - then there is no better way to demonstrate this (particularly at the start of this relationship) than through the candidate experience.

- Hiring managers tend to think recruitment is easy - it's ironically important that talent acquisition makes the challenges and competition of the resourcing landscape very clear and very regularly through quarterly market insight updates.

- Go further and commit to a candidate charter - what should great talent expect from the candidate experience you provide?

- If you are not engaging with and listening to your candidate audiences in order to shape and hone this experience on a regular basis, then be aware that competitor organisations undoubtedly are.

- If you are able to reduce the duration of the candidate experience, then do so.

- The longer talent acquisition have ownership of candidates, the better their experience is and the longer they are likely to stay.

- Think about your employee base - how easy is it for them to move internally? Does their candidate experience suggest an empowering employer or one which traps talent?

- What about referrals? Does the experience you put candidates through encourage or put off your people making such referrals?

- Is your candidate experience a virtuous circle or a downward spiral? Does the improving reputation of talent acquisition lead to better hiring manager behaviours and an enhanced employer brand, reduced costs and a clear business contribution, or the opposite?

- Be honest and clear with your audiences - if you're saying different things to external talent pools, different things to those people who become candidates and then different things again to those who join you, then is this more likely to confuse than convince? If you're committing to an Employee Value Proposition, it should be a consistent proposition.

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Competitive advantage

Even for the larger organisations we spoke with, employment markets within a certain sector, within a certain professional demographic, are often niche. People talk to each other and are likely to share their experiences of the candidate process they've just come across. Sadly, human nature means they're more likely to share tales of woe and disappointment in the candidate experience, than your organisation at its best.

The feeling that the quality and impact of the candidate experience was critical not only in terms of talent acquisition but also in terms of bestowing competitive organisational advantage was made clear several times. Many of the organisations we spoke with were undergoing change and transformation - the people they sought to bring on board, via their candidate journey, were key parts of such a change initiative. Employers such as Handepay and Manchester Met operate in relatively narrow candidate markets - if another organisation's superior candidate experience means talent goes elsewhere, our interviewees were very aware that this would have a clear and tangibly negative impact on their respective ability to form customer and student relationships.

For the retailers we interviewed, this point was even more transparent. To keep the doors open and the shelves full, they to continually hire people and in significant volume to meet consumer needs.

Similarly, there was a clear emphasis, particularly across the professional services firms we engaged with, that candidates (often more than 100,000 each year) should come away from the process, regardless of outcome, with an enhanced perception of that organisation.

"Very simply, the real strength of our brand is how people experience it."

Jane Robinson, EY

This is a key point that no one should ever lose sight of. The employer branding industry has few moments when it is tangibly put to the test. When the promises it makes are held up to the light. The candidate experience, however, is one such moment. And it's a test that your employer brand has to pass.

As well as being the right thing to do, it is not unheard of for such candidates to later re-apply or, indeed, to become potential customers. Similarly, for both EY and Clifford Chance, there is a very finite and identifiable number of immediate and direct competitors - all of whom would be delighted should negative feedback start to accumulate around the candidate delivery initiatives of a rival.

"Because we operate in such a competitive and niche market, then reputations are so important - a big part of that reputation is shaped by the way we work with candidates."

Adele Swift, Handepay

"Whilst we do have an online offering, and company-wide we are digitising our products and services, there is no escaping the fact we have large retail outlets that need customer focused and flexible colleagues."

Iain Everett, Asda

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How important are people within your organisation?

From a number of our interviewees came the view that the more obviously and vocally an organisation advocates people, the more likely it is to deliver on a great candidate experience. If hiring managers are regularly reminded what a difference great people make, they are more likely to value the time and first impression of an interviewing candidate.

"Much of an organisation's efforts around candidate experience come down to how much value the business attaches to talent."

Amanda Jailler, Reckitt Benckiser.

As such, an applicant coming across a poorly communicated and disjointed candidate journey could be excused for assuming that such an organisation does not value its people very highly when they become employees.

"If an organisation is keen to claim how important its people are, there are few more tangible examples of this than the way they are introduced into the business."

Adele Swift, Handepay

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Who owns the candidate and candidate experience?

The essence of this question is fundamental to the sort of experience such candidates are likely to encounter with any hiring organisation.

For many of our interviewees, there can be a deep-rooted assumption, from their business and line managers, that talent acquisition is a straightforward affair. Similarly, such a thought process is often related to the business naturally assuming that candidates should be queuing up to work at the organisation. Talent acquisition, in this respect, has a uniquely external facing perspective on candidate perceptions and behaviours - whereas many line managers can have an entirely insular understanding of the candidate.

This is a nuanced area, in that more than the simple question of who owns the candidate experience, but how long such ownership continues, is crucial. And the answers from our interviewees varied. For some, such ownership may well end at the point of offer, or when the candidate walks into the building for the first time or for their first three months.

"I see a lot of our role about being the external eyes and ears of candidates and their motivations and issues."

Amanda Jailler, Reckitt Benckiser

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(It would be fascinating to understand if there is any correlation between those organisations in which talent acquisition owns the candidate, and their experience, for, say, three months, and their relative subsequent tenure).

There were some horror stories articulated around the sorts of welcome that both candidates and new joiners received at the hands of reception or security. Similarly, our talent acquisition professionals felt they constantly had to monitor the warmth of the induction and on-boarding provided by certain elements of their business.

(We will touch on the subject of hiring manager education slightly later, but it feels as if talent acquisition needs to make the point about the importance of welcoming talent into the business right across the organisation).

For several of our interviewees, the larger an organisation is, the more moving parts are involved in the candidate experience process. The more moving parts, the more likely the possibility of things going wrong. The more people and departments there are with shifting priorities. And the more people and departments that need convincing of the importance of the candidate experience.

Ultimately, however, no matter which parts of the business are involved in delivering the candidate experience, just one area - talent acquisition - tends to be judged on its success and delivery.

The subject of ownership also touches the candidate journey. Particularly for smaller, high growth organisations, they find that ownership of areas such as Glassdoor feedback and even their careers site do not necessarily sit with talent acquisition but with areas such as comms or marketing - whose priorities and KPIs are not potentially too adjacent to the candidate journey and experience.

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Bias

Unsurprisingly, this was an area of real attention for the majority of the stakeholders we spoke with. Delivering a candidate journey that does not discriminate against any particular demographic and characteristics is hugely important from any number of levels - from simply and irrefutably being the right thing to do, through to talent acquisition not missing out on any talent pools. For both Google and EY, in particular, much work had been done in terms of ensuring that the candidate journey they provide is as inclusive as possible. This has been done through significant investment, hiring manager education and from on-going dialogue with all candidate audiences.

Referrals

There was an interesting relationship between enhancing internal engagement and a key resourcing channel. All organisations represented within our study make some, albeit anything but the same, use of employee referral channels. For those that make real and regular use of such a channel, this provides a key hiring route and one which has a positive impact on internal morale. Such organisations, however, were very mindful of the fact that their candidate experience for those people who had been referred by existing employees had to have a positive effect on subsequent relationships moving forward.

"Regardless of outcome, our process should feel fair and transparent to all candidates."

Jane Robinson, EY

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Educating line managers

This emerged, unsurprisingly, as the key and on-going challenge that any candidate process faces - the respective sensitivity of the hiring manager to the prevailing talent landscape.

"Not here, but in my past experience, a huge part of the role has been the frustration of constantly having to educate line managers as to the importance of responding to candidates."

Adele Swift, Handepay

For hiring managers who regularly have vacancies and, therefore, who are used to coming to market for such talent, there is less need for marketplace education. For those whose need to hire comes around less often, however, the movement of the labour market may not be front of mind. Several of the organisations we spoke with devote time and energy to sharing relevant market information with their hiring managers in an attempt to both manage expectations around resourcing pressures and to shape behaviours around the process.

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Particularly for those hiring managers whose recruitment activity is sporadic, there can be a tendency to be insular, to see the hiring process as one-directional, and not to take into account that the candidate has (an increasing amount of) choice.

Similarly, a lack of understanding around what motivates great talent today is likely to handicap the aspirations and ambition of some hiring managers.

Conversations with such people can focus on terms such as 'jobs for life', without a sense that people generally are looking for a different relationship with their employer. The expectation today that many candidates have around working from home or flexible working is relatively commonplace, however, for hiring managers ensconced in their company, without much of an external market view, this is not necessarily front of mind.

There emerged during our conversations the existence of a correlation between those hiring managers who themselves had been through the recruitment process relatively recently - and understood from personal experience what they were looking for - and those who had not moved for some time. Again, this touches on insularity - those managers who have understood personally the process from the candidate's perspective tend to be far more responsive and sensitive to applicant needs.

Some international managers too require greater clarification around the domestic UK labour market. If they have come from a market in which hiring is more straightforward, where there is less pressure on recruitment, or where their organisation is viewed significantly more highly than in the UK, then they can have challenges coming to terms with the domestic labour market.

Hiring managers can also be seduced by numbers applying into assuming that recruitment again is rather straightforward. Similarly, there was a view expressed several times that because recruitment at certain levels - often towards the junior end - is relatively easy, then all recruitment must reflect this. Such managers often do not understand the intricacies of the labour market and tend to see it in very black and white terms.

Similarly, the candidate experience can be impacted because of cultural differences - whereas in some countries, asking a candidate about their age or marital status is acceptable, clearly this is not the case in the UK. This can have a stark influence on the experience of a candidate.

"Ironically, organisations with a high corporate profile can assume that hiring is easy, based largely on their name, rather than a topical understanding of the labour market."

Amanda Jailler, Reckitt Benckiser

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(There can be more of a challenge for those organisations who have experienced acquisitive - rather than organic - growth. Such acquisition can mean that organisations have significantly different recruitment processes and approaches to the candidate journey from site to site, country to country. The challenge is, therefore, to take the optimum parts of each approach and learn from those acquired parts of the business).

The capacity to communicate the fact that, in many sectors, this is a candidate's market and to paint a picture of the talent landscape is an increasingly important demand of talent acquisition professionals.

There is little doubt of their own awareness of such a construct, it is more, however, how well and how meaningfully they are able to articulate this to hiring managers. Hiring managers, as we suggest earlier, who may well think that the process of recruitment is a very straightforward activity.

There was a lack of consistency about what information talent acquisition should provide to hiring managers - but this interface feels hugely critical in terms of an organisation's ability to enhance the experience that candidates come away with.

Clarity around average time to hire, unemployment rates, job density figures communicated on a regular basis feel as though they should facilitate the education process. During these conversations, the construct of a candidate charter came up - an employer effectively publicising the rights and expectations of a candidate during the process, in terms of feedback, communications and value add.

Perhaps slightly cynically, there was a view that when a hiring manager is effectively incentivised - particularly in the case of sales positions, for example - to fill a role with both speed and quality, then their contribution to the overall candidate experience tends to reflect this. Perhaps talent acquisition professionals could be more blunt about the potential implications of keeping a role unfilled due to a hiring manager's diffidence or lack of candidate alignment.

"Pretty bluntly, good managers hire and not so good managers blame TA."

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Reviewing the process

One of the most consistent themes to emerge from our research was one of near constant reinvention. All our talent acquisition professionals were highly aware of the importance of delivering an experience and process with was market competitive. They were determined to analyse not only the experience they were delivering to candidates but also how this stacked up against the competition.

"You'll come across a clear determination to continue innovating and raising the standards of what we do and what we deliver as a recruiter."

James Batchelor, Google

Indeed, certain of our interviewees saw the capacity to stay close to the market and their competitor set as a core part of their role. This external view often contrasted with the insularity of many of the hiring managers talent acquisition has to partner with.

Particularly, where organisations are in close competition with some very similar businesses - professional services, for example - the professionalism and seamlessness of the candidate experience can be a clear business differentiator - in both directions.

If we take the business services/accountancy marketplace, not only had EY reviewed their candidate process within the last few months, so too had two of their three main competitors within this space. Although all the Big Four main accountancy firms are huge organisations, they occupy a small world. Amongst candidate audiences - particularly hyper-connected ones such as entry level talent - good and bad news regarding candidate experience will travel very quickly.

The drive to create the optimum possible candidate experience as well as innovation is not merely a nice to have, it is an absolute business imperative. If an organisation is not investing in such initiatives, candidates will soon become aware and will act accordingly.

"The relationship that talent acquisition professionals have with our candidates is central to how the firm is perceived and how, ultimately, it performs."

Sarah Langton, Clifford Chance

"It's too easy to assume we know how candidates feel and what they expect. The power of listening to their feedback should never be underestimated."

Emma Neary,
Moneysupermarket Group

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Speed and honesty

Perhaps the two key elements of candidate experience that employers are looking to improve constantly are speed and honesty.

Our interviewees felt that one of the key outputs of a candidate driven market is the responsiveness they increasingly expect from organisations they apply to. The need to work to candidate's expectations of speed, rather than the other way around is driving a lot of talent acquisition initiatives.

Manchester Met, for example, has segmented its talent acquisition audiences and constructed varying candidate journeys for different levels of experience. For an organisation hiring senior professors through to catering assistants, it is important that knowledge of and empathy with different candidate pools is not consumed by a desire to homogenise the process. Some pools are moving from one Higher Education Institution to another, whilst others are moving from perhaps a commercial role into academia. Some pools will have a finely tuned CV, whilst others are unlikely to have one at all - varying candidate journeys reflect the importance of such sensitivity and awareness.

Interestingly, Manchester Met has thought too about the internal audience - how might it deliver a better candidate experience to those people moving within the university from one role or department to another.
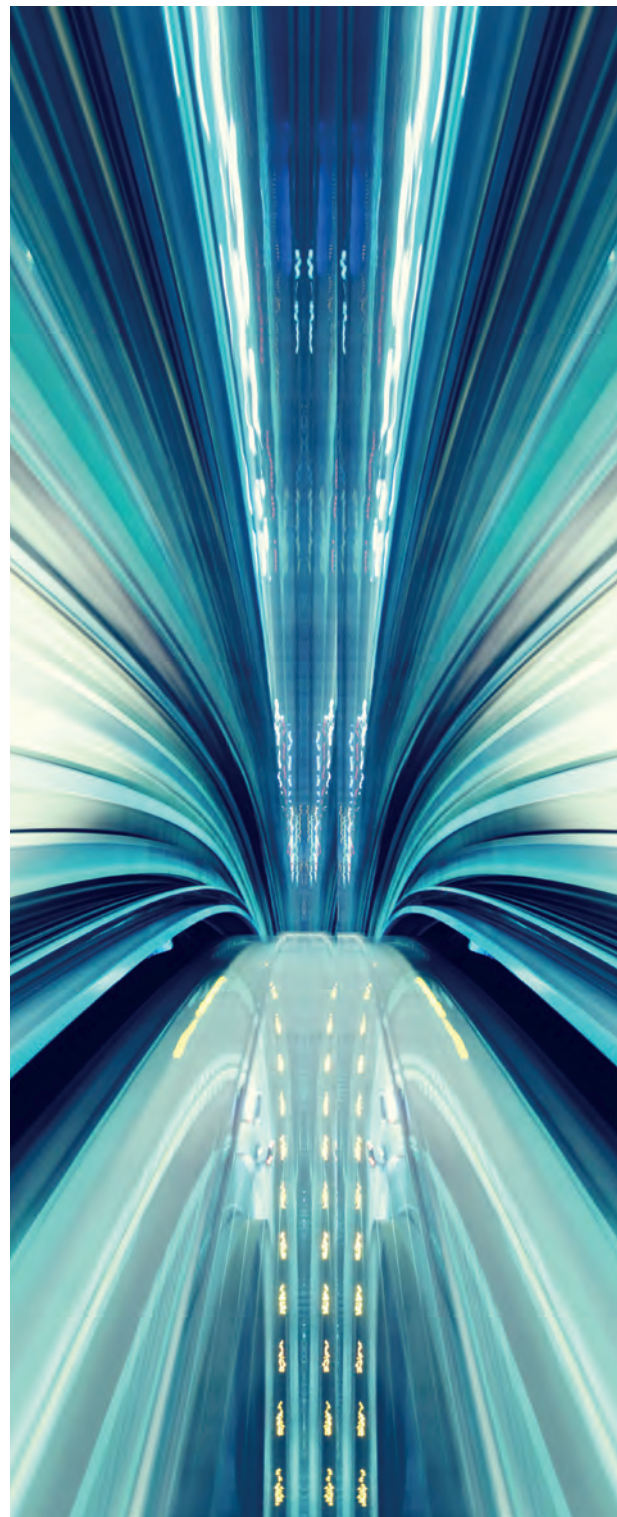
"People are now used to a highly personalised and swift customer service in their everyday interactions and purchases. They have the same expectations of their interaction with employers. People aren't happy to wait days for an online order, and they don't expect to wait weeks for a response from an employer. Especially in this candidate-driven market, speeds is fast becoming the most important element of candidate experience."

Sarah Langton, Clifford Chance

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This is a hugely important subject if the university is to build on its reputation as an empowering organisation. The issue and challenge of trapped talent - those people whose backgrounds, responsibilities and education gaps often mean they are trapped in roles which do not relate to their potential - is of increasing importance, both in terms of external candidates and those already within an employer. The more that organisations such as Manchester Met can do to encourage and enhance internal people mobility, the less trapped talent will drive disengagement and internal morale issues. As a result, internal candidates tend to come across a much shorter candidate journey than external applicants.

Clearly, the speed and pace of the candidate experience touched on the subject of Applicant Tracking Systems. Interestingly, there was a nuanced level of feedback from our interviewees.

Across the board, there is a clear realisation that younger, Millennial audiences have increasingly high levels of expectations around the technology they want to encounter during their candidate journey. If they encounter clunky, non-intuitive technology during the candidate process, it's not unreasonable for them to draw conclusions around the quality of technology they will come across when working in that organisation.

"A student's online world is intuitive and seamless, they shouldn't notice too much of a difference when it comes to applying for a job."

Jane Robinson, EY

For digital natives, used to impressive levels of tech at university, they have little patience for organisations who appear to lack technological innovation and investment.

For Natasha Cekerevac, it can be all too easy for both hiring managers and talent acquisition professionals to attach the blame to an underperforming candidate journey on the ATS. For a newly hired talent acquisition professional, this is about truly understanding what an ATS is capable of - and what, indeed, it is not capable of - and working around that. It can feel as though a new ATS is a panacea that will rid talent acquisition of all its challenges.

"It's about taking the time to understand what a system is truly capable of and making the most of it."

Natasha Cekerevac, HighQ

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However, this is not to suggest that the role an ATS plays in the candidate journey and experience is anything but influential. Several of our interviewees differentiated between those ATS which appeared to have been designed with the candidate in mind, and those that appear to have been constructed from the internal users' perspective.

Again, the importance of adopting an external rather than insular approach to talent acquisition appears a point of real differentiation.

The other key element and influencer of candidate experience is that of honesty.

A number of our talent acquisition specialists felt that not only does the candidate journey have to be pacey and nimble, it also has to feel authentic. There is some suspicion and cynicism attached to those organisations who paint too glossy and attractive a picture about the working reality they provide during the candidate process.

If it becomes clear that a candidate's values or behaviour set - regardless of their experience or CV - does not reflect those of the employer, it is important that such honesty should be applied to the process.

There can be an explicit pressure placed upon talent acquisition professionals, by the business, to make the expedient hire, rather than the right hire - and particularly those organisations going through a significant growth curve.

In both scenarios posited above, a not untypical outcome is one of increased turnover - either recruiting people on a false premise or simply recruiting the wrong people is unlikely to improve either tenure or internal morale and engagement.

"We are looking at AI, we have to with over 300,000 applications a year. We need to use technology to ensure we can spot talented people but not at the expense of the candidate experience."

Matt Eyre, Co-op

Such premature departures represent something of a disaster for talent acquisition - for many of our group, if a new joiner leaves early in their tenure, then talent acquisition is often a usual suspect to blame for such an occurrence. In the event of such a departure, then the pressure and associated panic on both the process and talent acquisition itself becomes heightened, risking a downward spiral.

"It's as important for candidates to show the real them as it is for us to be real and authentic."

Sally Conner, St Elizabeth Hospice

"For us, it's candidate, process and then ATS. It's tough not to get locked into the process. I think we have learned not to be too rigid and to expedite the process when required."

John Burnet, Thoughtworks

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Aspirational vs Authenticity

Whilst the previous section touches on honesty and the candidate journey portraying an authentic view of the organisation and career prospects, this is anything but a binary point. Again, talent acquisition has to educate line managers - where there is a need - on selling the role and the employment experience. If both the approach of the line manager and the overall impression of the candidate experience feels underwhelming to the applicant, then this does not feel consistent with a resourcing landscape heavily biased in favour of talent. If highly marketable candidates are seeking to change job, it is unlikely that they will be speaking with just one potential new employer. Hiring organisations need to bear this in mind in terms of their candidate journey and the mindset of their hiring managers.

The point around authenticity is important and one we touch on earlier in terms of honesty. However, the cohesion between an organisation's employer brand, its attraction messaging and its candidate experience is clear. For a number of the organisations we spent time with during this research, there is a view that the more applicant numbers in the system at any one time, the more likely candidate experience is likely to be compromised.

Alignment with an employer brand is important in this context too. If an individual is attracted to a particular employer or particular sector, the way they are treated during their candidate journey needs to be reflective of the organisational culture.

"People are attracted to our organisation because of its place in the care system - we have to demonstrate a similar level of care and consideration with our candidates."

Sally Conner, St Elizabeth Hospice

Whereas clearly AI is undertaking an increasing amount of the heavy lifting associated with the candidate journey, this should in theory free up talent acquisition to apply more, not less, personalisation to the candidate experience.

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"There is a clear relationship between an increase in applicants and a decline in our candidate experience NPS scores."

Catherine Schlieben, Worldpay

This feels important. An effective EVP should both inspire relevant candidates to apply to a particular organisation or scheme, whilst creating the clarity for less relevant people to filter themselves out of the process. Vanilla, come-all-ye-faithful EVPs are unlikely to provide the honesty and transparency whereby people realise this is not for them. However, our interviewees made it clear that unless efforts are made to reduce application numbers, then the experience levels of all candidates will decline - and it is not too much of a stretch to assume that exceptional applicants are more likely to vote with their feet when confronted by such a candidate journey.

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The candidate experience is or should be a two-way street

One of the consistent learnings from this research was the time and effort talent acquisition professionals put in to gaining feedback and insights from their candidates. Again, this touches on an earlier point around how the candidate experience should be organic, constantly learning, improving and evolving, based on the feedback of those going through such a process.

Clearly, one of the challenges around such feedback from an employer's perspective, is when to ask. Too early during the process and the candidate may be concerned about being too open and frank, as to impact on their chances of being hired. Too late during the process and candidates have lost interest and mentally moved on.

"We have to be sufficiently grown up and sufficiently nimble to adapt the candidate experience we provide if that's what candidates are telling us."

Giorgiana Prihoi, Bombardier

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What emerged from the research was the number of organisations who land surveys with candidates - usually post interview - but who are looking for a rounder, more qualitative view of how people are experiencing the candidate process. Several talked about running focus groups with recent joiners but felt that resources would tend to get in the way of such an initiative. Similarly, the question of candidate ownership came into such a consideration. If talent acquisition lose sight entirely of new joiners, freeing them up for such sessions becomes more of a challenge - whatever the positive outcomes likely to ensue.

What questions an organisation asks of its candidate base will vary depending on the nature of such a journey. Perhaps the most interesting and fundamental question to emerge came from Manchester Met and which effectively acts as a recruitment NPS metric.

For the major employers of entry level talent, then feedback takes on a slightly different meaning. They realise that they are typically rejecting effectively more than 95% of all applicants - what value can they deliver to those many excellent candidates who don't quite make it.

For the likes of EY and Clifford Chance, there is an appreciation that students spend a lot of time, effort and commitment completing comprehensive applications - and both firms want those who are unsuccessful to leave the process with more insight, information and self-knowledge as a result of their contact with their organisations.

Feedback in all sorts of directions is central to the delivery of a great candidate experience. Talent acquisition wants speedy candidate feedback from hiring managers. And it also wants to understand from candidates what sort of experience they are encountering. And, clearly, candidates do not want to fall into a feedback black hole, not knowing where they are in the process or, indeed, whether they are still in the process. Systems, again, should be a facilitator of such communications not the reason they are not functioning.

> "The fundamental question we ask is whether a candidate would recommend working at the university to friends and family based on the experience they have just gone through."
>
> Julie Griggs,
> Manchester Met University.

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Sourcing vs candidate experience

This was one of the most interesting and unpredictable outputs from our conversations. The last five years have witnessed a significant increase in terms of in-house resourcing/sourcing teams. Significant numbers of talent acquisition professionals have made the journey from recruitment marketing and recruitment consultancy through to in-house roles.

One of the interesting perceived implications of such a shift is a focus on proactive candidate sourcing and identification. Such professionals are making use of an increasingly sophisticated array of tools in order to track down and begin engaging with candidate audiences. What this can mean, however, is that speculative applicants are perceived as more random, less relevant and a potential burden to the task of sourcing candidates.

Interestingly, there was a view that the purpose and contribution of in-house sourcers is more real than for external, third party recruitment professionals. The reason for this is that those people working in-house get to see the impact and influence of those people they have helped hire. They appreciate the difference such an individual is contributing to the business.

Talent acquisition could do worse than to produce a quarterly newsletter touching on some interesting, challenging hires who are already doing great things within their organisation. Such a newsletter could highlight the impact that a particularly enlightened hiring manager had to securing such recruits.

"The last five years have witnessed a significant increase in terms of in-house resourcing|sourcing teams."

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Relationship between the EVP, candidate experience and on-boarding

Interestingly, all of our interviews put the candidate experience their organisation offered as being an absolute priority - over and above constructs such as their EVP.

(Perhaps the fact that such talent acquisition professionals are more actively involved in the creation and delivery of candidate experience, helps to explain such feedback, more so than an EVP which often has its origins in the agency an organisation uses for such purposes).

For some, but not all of our interviewees, there was a very clear and actioned relationship between their EVP and the deliverables of the candidate experience. Google, for example, has as an EVP 'For Everyone'. In order to deliver to such an EVP, Google makes sure that it goes out of its way to provide the tools, services and encouragement to enable every applicant to give of their best during the candidate journey - whether this is a signer or a translator.

Google's very enshrined team philosophy means that everyone has a responsibility to ensure the best possible candidate experience.

The clear and logical connectivity between Google's messaging and its candidate journey touchpoints was not reflected necessarily with all organisations in our research.

For some, the relationship was largely accidental and for other organisations, there was an absence of a clearly defined EVP.

For an organisation, however, such as EY, there is a desire to extend the commitment and promise of the EVP through the attraction messaging, through to the candidate journey and then on to the on-boarding that a new joiner is exposed to.

Clearscore has a deep-rooted understanding of their behaviours, however as the organisation scales, it is about being clear what the expectations of those behaviours are at the level of the role today and with an eye to the future. Defining these behaviours are often challenging when individual, team and company requirements are fluid.

"We have to be mindful of any disconnect in our EVP and the reality of joining the organisation which is constantly evolving."

Kirstin Furber, Clearscore

"There is a clear desire to go the extra mile in engaging with all candidates, regardless of their backgrounds, to make sure they give the best possible account of themselves."

James Batchelor, Google.

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Summary

Whether we like it or not, there are clearly a number of areas across talent acquisition in which a recruitment professional has less control than might be ideal. There is only so much control they can have over how their employer brand is processed by external candidate audiences and social media. They have little sway over the vagaries of the labour market. They can do little as regards competitor activity, their employer branding and their remuneration levels.

However, the candidate experience is a critical area of talent acquisition during which an important element of control is both possible and desirable. That control can be both direct and indirect. It might, then, touch on the on-going education of hiring managers, so preventing an insularity of outlook and perspective. It might, too, relate to a constant review of what others are doing and how alternative approaches might make the process more efficient and more timely.

A similar level of control is possible through regular engagement with candidate audiences in order to gauge how such an experience is landing with talent communities.

Control can also be achieved through the delivery of a co-ordinated and consistent series of messages to candidates, new joiners and existing employees. Through an effective mapping of the process, such talent acquisition professionals have a degree of control over the speed, honesty and efficacy of the process they are delivering.

If there are certain aspects of the candidate journey and experience which sit outside the control of a recruitment professional, much however remains within their gift. And we hope that this document functions as an aid to asserting such control.

There has never been so many people within the UK workforce. There have never been so many competitor vacancies. And there has never been something like Brexit.

It's time to take back control.

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To learn more about how DANGERFIELD can help you re-engineer your candidate experience and develop an effective employer brand, please get in touch with as at: hello@dangerfieldglobal.com

About

DANGERFIELD is a consulting firm that helps organisations raise their hiring performance by focusing on the key elements of the candidate journey and the transformation of their core hiring process.

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