



Candidate Experience

Candidate experience is a term that relates to recruitment and is used to describe the interactions that take place between a potential new recruit engaging with the organisation in a way that leads to them becoming a candidate (most often, seeing a job advertisement) through to the conclusion of the recruitment and selection process, whether as a successful or unsuccessful applicant.

Candidate experience includes employer brand; the external perception of your organisation as a place to work. It encompasses all of the processes, from application forms to psychometric tests to the interview itself. Candidate experience has also been described as the way that an organisation makes people feel during recruitment and selection processes.

Why is candidate experience important?

In an age of increasing transparency, candidates, successful or otherwise, will share their experiences on company review sites, or talk about it on social media. Many candidates will check out review sites and review social media feeds, researching way beyond the corporate website. They will form an opinion of an organisation from this vast array of data – and the interview process will either confirm or deny those first impressions.

Job applicants may also be consumers or service users, linking inextricably the consumer brand and the employer brand. Even unsuccessful candidates can be an advocate for your brand if you provide them with the right kind of experience.

Providing great candidate experience is also about engaging talent in a competitive market; its overall experience provides an insight to an applicant on what it will be like to work for you every day, should they accept. A poor candidate experience may directly impact on whether someone chooses to accept or reject a job offer. When they do accept, the steps before their actual start date can either reaffirm that decision – or call it into question.

The candidate experience is also, for a successful applicant, the start of the employee engagement process – something for which all organisations strive.

The Role of the Manager in Candidate Experience

Candidate experience is influenced by the initial process including the advertisement and the application and what happens before an interview (often managed centrally by a recruitment team), such as the communication process, but then generally the hiring manager takes over.

The behaviour and competence of the hiring manager is critical to candidate experience. The specific hiring manager responsibilities in relation to candidate experience are:

- providing an engaging and informative interview experience including appropriate preparation
- effective, fair decision making
- communication of that decision making
- provision of constructive, useful feedback
- keeping in touch with successful candidates and the arrangement of an effective and engaging induction.

Managers should ensure that they have been trained on interviewing skills and unconscious bias before undertaking interviews.

Good Candidate Experience

Candidate experience can be influenced by the following:

- transparency of process, including information on how and when a decision will be made
- the application process itself, and the speed of response
- the communication, both written and verbal, during the process

- how fair the process feels
- the activity of a recruitment agency involved in the recruitment
- the interview itself, including the format and the questions asked
- what happens after an offer (or rejection).

Poor candidate experience can lead to poor employer brand and reputation, poor reviews on external review sites and rejection of job offers.

Candidate experience continues until the new starter joins the organisation and during the first few weeks of employment. For more information on creating an effective induction, please see our additional resources in Managers' Essentials in StaffNet.