

Crafting the Ultimate Candidate Experience:

A How-To Guide
for Staffing Companies





Staffing is about people, plain and simple. That's why the candidate experience you provide is at the very heart of your business. Right now, recruiting is incredibly tough - and no-calls/no-shows are out of control for some firms. In today's employment market, qualified candidates and associates are like gold.

The question is: How well are you taking care of them? If you're ready to stop talking about candidate experience (CX) and start making real improvements this guide is just for you. In it you'll learn:

- Where you might be falling short in terms of the candidate experience.
- How to evaluate your process at every step of the candidate roadmap.
- What you can do to improve your candidate experience at every stage.

What Is the Candidate Experience, Exactly?

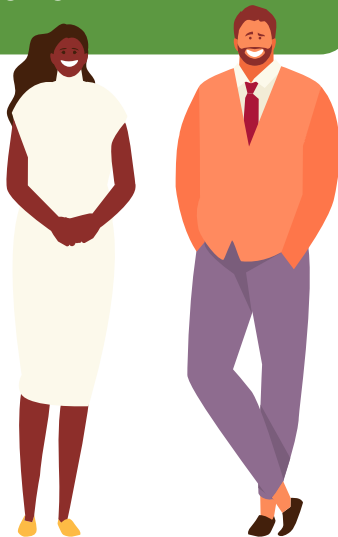
Before we dive in, let's define what the candidate experience actually *is*.

Is it... how the candidate interacts with their recruiter? How they move through the hiring funnel? What they do once they've been placed on assignment?

It's all of that, and much more.

The candidate experience encompasses everything about how a job seeker perceives your company's recruitment cycle, including sourcing, interviewing, onboarding, retaining, and re-engaging.

Crafting a great candidate experience is about a lot more than getting a good NPS score or securing five-star reviews. It's about making sure you're seen as a trusted career advisor, and someone that truly cares about the people you place, so that candidates don't need or want to turn to another staffing firm. Put simply, CX is what makes up the very core of your business.



Where Are Staffing Companies Falling Short?

We've learned what the candidate experience is, and it's pretty clear why it's so important.

The question is... where are staffing companies like yours falling short?

In our experience, companies tend to fall into a pattern of candidate experience mistakes. The most common ones are:

They're not putting themselves in the candidate's shoes.

How can you know what your candidate experience is like if you never go through it yourself? So many staffing firms never experience their own process, and there are so many possible friction points, from application to onboarding to credentialing to getting paystubs. You want to make it all as cohesive as possible, and you can't do that if you never take a close look!

They're not optimizing their technology.

Far too many staffing firms make huge investments in CX technology, and then don't fully deploy the tech. There are so many tools out there that can help you track and engage your best candidates, but if you don't optimize that tech and empower your team to use it, it's a waste of money.

They're not understanding the current candidate ecosystem.

In pre-pandemic times, candidates were the ones getting ghosted. These days the opposite is true: Candidates are in the driver's seat and won't think twice about ghosting your firm if they don't have a good experience. And with so few qualified candidates out there at the moment, you can't afford that.

The 5 Stages of the Candidate Experience

Let's walk through the main stages of the candidate experience together:



On the following pages we'll explore how to craft a better candidate experience during each stage of the process, from sourcing all the way to redeploying.

Step One: SOURCING AND ATTRACTING



Sourcing candidates is too often looked at as a numbers game: getting as many candidates in your database as possible. But when it comes to crafting a world-class candidate experience, you need to re-think this.

So, how do you source and attract candidates the right way?

#1: Use technology to your advantage.

Tools like Daxtra and Textkernel help you search across different job boards. SourceBreaker or HiringSolved use AI to match the right candidates with the right jobs. Boost your sourcing game with the right technology tools.

Sourcing can be done en masse, but it also needs to be very strategic.

#2: But don't rely on technology alone.

Remember that candidate job matching is, ultimately, based on only two inputs: the resume or CV and the job description. A lot of great candidates can get automatically screened out by your tech simply because they don't have the right keywords on their resume, so take the extra step to research candidates closely. Keep in mind that candidates aren't professional resume writers, and they might not update their profiles in a timely fashion.

#3: Strike a balance between automation and personalization.

Candidates don't like getting bombarded with what looks like robotic, spam messages. They're not likely to respond to them, either. This is the perfect time to communicate with candidates from your authentic voice that creates a connection to your brand. For practical tips to customize automated messages, [read this blog post](#).

Step Two: APPLYING AND QUALIFYING

As a candidate, there's no worse feeling than applying into a black hole and never hearing anything again.

That's why getting back to applicants – quickly – is so essential.

In fact, it's likely that the first recruiter who gets back to a candidate has the best chance of placing that job seeker. But applicants are rolling off shifts at all hours of the day, and many aren't applying during normal 9:00 to 5:00 business hours when your recruiters are in front of the computer.

Remember:

Automation and technology should ultimately facilitate more human connection, not less.

That's where automation comes in. Whether it's a 24/7 virtual assistant or the ability to text a business-enabled phone number, you'll want to have a way to get candidates' questions answered, fast. From there, you can get that person in front of a recruiter as fast as possible.



Step Three:

HIRING AND ENGAGING

Today's job seekers want an Amazon-like hiring experience. At any stage of the process, they want to know where they stand.

Real-time feedback is essential to keeping candidates engaged and creating an amazing experience. Even if a candidate hasn't moved forward in your process, find a reason to stay in touch. For example, you could update the candidate with something like, "We still haven't heard back from the client on your submission, but you'll hear from us soon." Or, you might share relevant content to stay top-of-mind: "Have you seen this article from our blog on interview tips?"

Candidates don't get fired up over receiving too many messages from their recruiter. They get fired up when they don't receive enough.

Remember: delivering bad news – that a client doesn't want to hire your candidate, or a piece of constructive feedback as to why they weren't the right fit – doesn't mean your relationship with a candidate is over. It means the opposite.



Recruiters who deliver that information the right way create relationships that last. Those are the candidates who will come back, the candidates that will provide you referrals.

From there, you can work on retaining them.

Check out [this blog post](#) for more ways to improve candidate CX with real-time feedback.

Step Four: EXCITING AND RETAINING

The candidate is hired. You've got 'em. Now what?

What kind of communications are you using at this stage? There's no point in reaching out to your candidates just to "poke" them. Random check-ins aren't retainment tools. So, how do you work on retaining?

- **Deliver content with value.** How can you help your newly placed candidate get off to a good start? Can you offer custom-tailored onboarding information, best-practice advice on starting a new job, or maybe blog posts related to their industry? This is not the time for generic email or text messages. If you want to strengthen relationships with your candidates, provide real value and personalize the information you deliver.
- **Don't overlook the operational touchpoints.** Prompt the candidate with, "Have you logged into your pay portal?" "Have you heard about our referral program?" Keep the lines of communication open.
- **Be smart about your methods of communication**
An 18-year-old isn't checking their email, so consider texting. Meet your candidates where they are in terms of communication, and you'll see positive results.



Step Five:

REDEPLOYING AND RE-ENGAGING

Once you've recruited and deployed an associate, how do you keep them working with your firm? How do you keep them engaged with your recruiters and the process? What's to keep them from jumping ship?

#1: Be proactive with automation.

You know when the candidate's assignment end-date is. Having an automated process in place that gets teed off on that date is an easy win. Automated messages like "I see your assignment is ending in a month," or "We've found jobs you could be a great fit for" make all the difference. For the candidate, just knowing that you're there, ready and willing to help, is a big deal.

#2: Give the candidate the next step.

Craft your messaging the right way. Don't say, "Hey, what do you want to do next?" or "Hi! How's it going?" Provide the candidate with the next step – make it easy for them. Try messaging like, "We don't want to lose you. We've got another great job right here."

Remember: technology is an enhancer. Whether you have an automated system in place or not, your recruiters need to focus on the personal relationship-building side of the equation. Find that balance between technology and the human touch to make ongoing communication efficient and personal.

#3: Don't just focus on the A players.

Let's face it – not all candidates are A players. And even if a candidate isn't a great fit for available assignments, that doesn't necessarily mean they're unplaceable. Even if you can't immediately (re)deploy them, "silver medalists" and B-players should be a part of your ongoing candidate experience workflow – so you have backups ready when first-choice candidates don't work out.

So... How Do You Measure Success?

What does a great candidate experience look like? How can you tell that your efforts are working?



Analyze the data.

Candidate retention rate, referral numbers, job board spend versus conversions...tracking the metrics and analyzing your data is always a good place to start.

Track NPS scores.

Feedback ratings are always a good indicator of where you stand in terms of candidate experience. We often use NPS scores to measure client satisfaction, but there's no reason not to use it for candidate satisfaction, too.

Talk to your candidates.

Here's a simple one: Talk to your candidates to find out what's working and what's not. You'll be surprised at what you learn.

Walk through your candidate experience.

Whether it's a branch manager, a member of the leadership team, or a recruiter, having someone walk through your own candidate experience is invaluable. There's no faster way to find roadblocks and gaps in the process that need fixing.

Inspired to Improve Your Candidate Experience?



In today's market, candidates' expectations are higher than ever – because they have more options than ever! If you want to beat the competition, resolve to build a better candidate experience.

Put yourself in your candidate's shoes and walk through the experience your company provides. Find out what's working and what's not at every stage, from sourcing and applying through hiring and redeployment.

Use technology to your advantage. Rely on automation to respond to candidates when your recruiters can't be in front of their computers. Use the tech to enhance the candidate experience. Automation and technology should help you talk with more people, not less.

Analyze the numbers to find out what success looks like for your organization. Systematically test technology and process improvements to continually raise the bar on your candidate CX.

Creating a world-class candidate experience benefits your company at every level – not only does it make candidates happier, but it also makes your recruiters better at what they do and keeps your clients coming back for more.

Need Help Crafting the Ultimate Candidate Experience?



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Webinar: [Crafting the Ultimate Candidate Experience](#)

Webinar: [Sense, Herefish, and Automation, Oh My!](#)

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Secrets of Staffing Success Podcast: [Finding Balance on Social Media with Practical, Useful Automation](#)

GET IN TOUCH

Haley Marketing can help you create the right mix of people, process and technology to deliver a world-class candidate experience. Our marketing automation experts can audit your platform and build journeys to take your candidate experience to the next level – and maximize your results.

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