9 Tips for Unblocking the Journey to a Superior Candidate Experience

People often know what they need to do to be successful, but the hard part comes in actually doing it. This explains how 91%* of talent acquisition leaders say they believe candidate experience impacts Quality of Hire, but only 58%* measure it. It is also common sense that getting feedback from candidates will improve their experience, but that is another concept that gets lost in practice.

Why is there such a big gap? What is standing in the way of people doing what they know needs to be done to ensure success? The truth is that many organizations, despite knowing the negative effects, still struggle with improving the basics such as having an overly complicated application process, and not asking applicants for feedback. Most have not shifted their thinking about candidate experience to focus on the holistic journey as opposed to a one-off set of quick-win improvement projects. According to Talent Board, only 53% of talent leaders consider their approach to candidate experience "ongoing," with 25% admitting their approaches are "ad hoc."

This is critical to get right, because beyond merely improving a candidate's opinion of the organization, candidate experience also has a business impact. In the simplest of examples, if a person has similar offers from two potential employers, they are going to pick the one who treated them better.

Designing your candidate experience to attract the best talent will have a transformative effect on your organization's culture and bottom line. The following tips will help you stop merely talking about the value of candidate experience and start using it to create business impact.

1) Create an "experience," not a "process."

As American poet Maya Angelou once said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." In the drive to show ROI and quantifiable uplift, organizations often fixate too much on process improvement and end up inadvertently dehumanizing their approach. The trick is to balance the metrics your organization values while maintaining a focus on how candidates are feeling. Remember, we are dealing with human beings.

2) Have a simple vision.

A clear vision operates the same way as a snappy brand tagline or a stirring mission statement – it is easy to get behind. As you engage internal stakeholders, it is important to tailor the value proposition to your different audiences so they are clear on the benefit to them. But having a more single-minded vision can act as the glue that holds the threads together.

3) Walk in the candidate's shoes.

Have your leaders actually go through the application process themselves. They will see the good and the bad, and truly understand how the process makes a person feel. 77% of leaders believe qualitative and quantitative data are of equal value, with another 20% of leaders are more likely to act on qualitative data than quantitative. It is also a good opportunity to address the persistent problem of what Bersin by Deloitte calls **"The Overwhelmed Employee."** The blessing of the digital age – constant information coming at us in the form of text messages, emails, social media posts – also can be a curse when it affects our ability to focus and be productive. An organization that shows they understand this problem and will effectively address it will stand out.

*Changeboard Research

4) Map the candidate journey.

Until you visualize something, it remains an abstract concept that is difficult to put into action. This basic but critical step allows you to physically see the experience journey and its pain points. Keep this map updated to track progress and maintain ongoing alignment with internal stakeholders.

72% BELIEVE MAPPING THEIR CANDIDATE JOURNEY HAS IMPROVED THEIR QUALITY OF HIRE

5) Set a baseline.

"But don't take our word for it" is a cliché for a reason. It works! When it comes to making the business case and communicating the value of candidate experience, consider a third-party and objective diagnostic such as participating in **Talent Board's CandE awards**.

6) Measure Quality of Hire.

Research has continually shown that organizations consider Quality of Hire to be their most important metric, including our "**Talent Acquisition 360**" report, which found that 93% of the more than 700 HR/Talent Acquisition leaders rated it their top priority. But, as is the case with candidate experience, organizations are not good at measuring Quality of Hire. Going back to basics and establishing what success looks like is a good place to start, followed by building your journey to attract the type of candidate most likely to succeed against that profile. Other important measures can follow, including candidate satisfaction, hiring manager satisfaction, cost of hire, time to hire and diversity metrics.

What is the single most important metric your organization would like to see improve as a result of candidate experience initiatives?

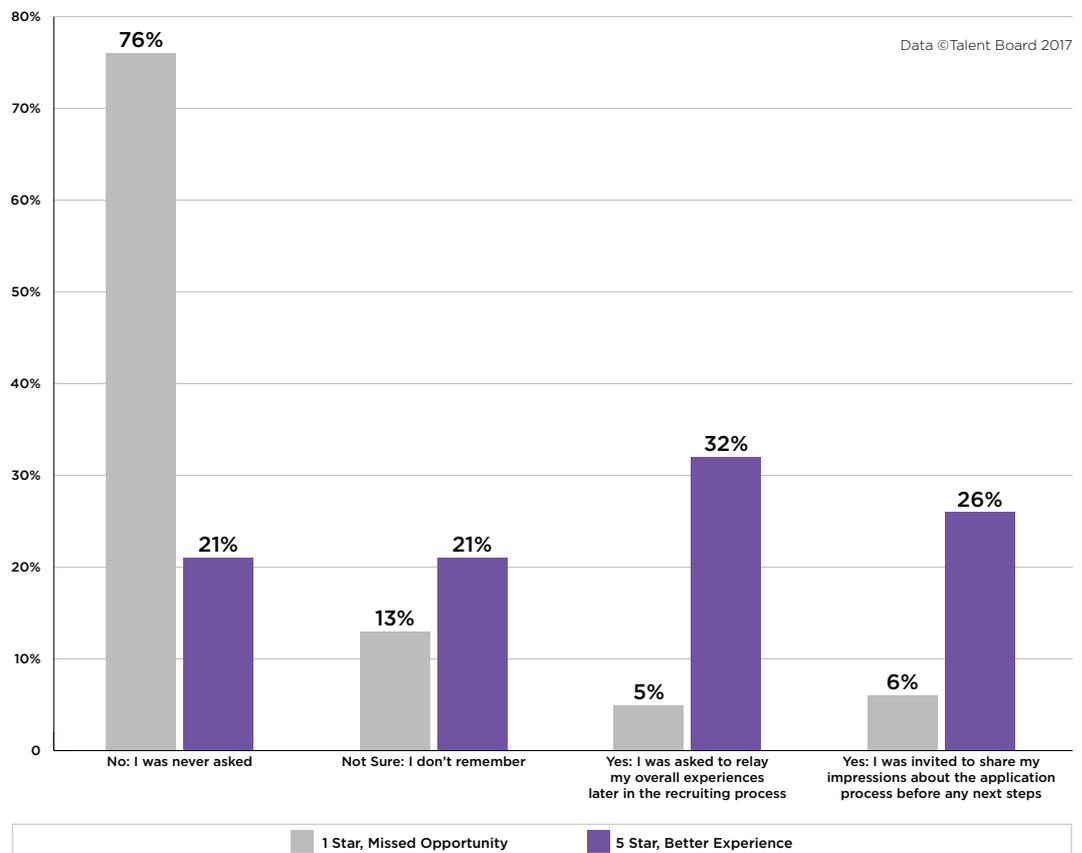Source: Poll of 20 talent acquisition leaders during Cielo's Executive Panel Discussion

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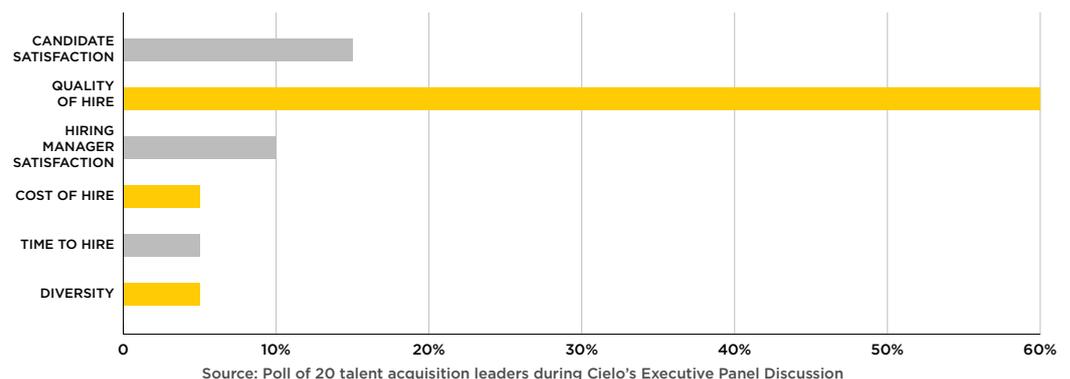
7) Listen.

Sometimes we miss simple opportunities for feedback. Today's empowered and connected candidates are used to having a voice in their lives, so why not for their job search, too? There are so many chances to learn from candidates how we can improve their experience – Was our website helpful? Did you have all the information you needed to prepare you for the interview? Was our assessment easy to navigate? – and we are not taking advantage. This presents a terrific opportunity to report findings back to leadership and maintain that internal engagement.

Contact with Candidates

The following chart from Talent Board shows how often organizations missed opportunities to engage with candidates during the application process. A "1 Star" rating is poor, and a "5 Star" rating means excellent.

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	1 Star, Missed Opportunity	5 Star, Better Experience
No: I was never asked	76%	21%
Not Sure: I don't remember	13%	21%
Yes: I was asked to relay my overall experiences later in the recruiting process	5%	32%
Yes: I was invited to share my impressions about the application process before any next steps	6%	26%

8) Be ready for a long-term commitment.

Truly elevating your candidate experience means going beyond short-term wins, quick fixes or one-off projects. It is a commitment that can sometimes take years, and even then there should always be an openness to learning and trying new things. Candidate expectations will change, and organizations must be ready, willing and able to adapt.

9) Leverage your employer brand.

Each stage of the candidate experience is an opportunity to bring your employer brand to life. Make sure you articulate an Employer Value Proposition that is clear, consistent, authentic and differentiated from the competition.

Candidate experience is critical in an organization's approach to talent attraction and conversion. The internet has made it easier than ever to uncover talent, but it is candidate experience that will determine an organization's ability to win them over. Whatever recruitment obstacle your organization is facing, hopefully these tips help you think about what you can do to overcome it.

About Cielo

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