

**● Candidate
experience:**

**identifying
the risks and
opportunities
that directly
affect quality
of hire**



Changeboard
in partnership
with Cielo



Measuring candidate experience. Increasing quality of hire.

THE DISCONNECT

FORTY TWO %

Percentage of HR professionals that do not evaluate candidate experience



Meanwhile...

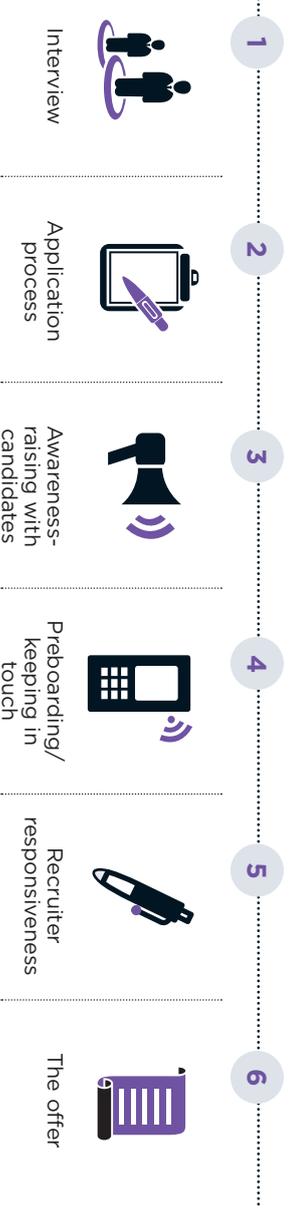
91% of HR leaders say candidate experience has a direct impact on quality of hire

LESS THAN
4% DISAGREE



WHEN TO MEASURE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

58% of organisations evaluate candidate experience



CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE IMPACT

- Improved communications & responsiveness
- Enhanced application process
- Shorter cycle times

HOW TO MEASURE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

76% of organisations collect a mix of qualitative & quantitative data

Qualitative Methods

38% Candidate feedback

23% Communications audit

Quantitative Methods

27% Process analysis

25% Advert tracking

25% Social media analytics

22% Web analytics

17% Web search findings

21% Digital/social media audit

MAPPING THE CANDIDATE JOURNEY

Mapping the candidate journey has helped **70%** of employers reduce risks & increase engagement with potential quality hires

55% have no evidence that mapping has or has not increased engagement with potential hires

Yet **27%** are unsure how helpful mapping is



Source: Changeboard research conducted in partnership with Cielo, 2016

About Cielo

Cielo is the world's leading strategic recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) partner. Under its 'WE BECOME YOU™' philosophy, Cielo's dedicated recruitment teams primarily serve clients in the financial and business services, consumer brands, technology and media, engineering, life sciences and healthcare industries. Cielo's global presence includes 1,400 employees serving 130 clients across 69 countries in 32 languages. The industry has verified Cielo's reputation for executing innovative solutions that provide business impact through numerous awards and recognitions, including its annual top three leadership position on the HRO Today RPO Baker's Dozen listing, Peak Matrix Leader placement by Everest Group, and Industry Leader designation by NelsonHall.

Cielo's integrated brand, digital and communications practice is home to switched-on brand consultants, content strategists, insight generators, storytellers, designers, writers, digital and social media experts and project and campaign managers – all of whom have experience of collaborating with employer branding and marketing experts client-side to deliver outstanding results.

Cielo knows talent is rising – and with it, an organisation's opportunity to rise above. For more information, visit cielotalent.com

About Changeboard

Changeboard's mission is to inspire and inform HR professionals by delivering relevant decision-support material, packaged in bite-sized formats, to help busy professionals in a convenient way.

Since our launch in 2004, Changeboard has become the biggest provider of specialist HR jobs in the world. Our magazine for your global career is read by more than 85,000 professionals in print and online and our dedicated events – from our flagship Future Talent conference to smaller, more intimate, roundtables – bring together our senior HR community to share their knowledge and experiences.

We are focused on career development from an organisational and individual level – both globally and locally. Our expansion into the Middle East four years ago means we now publish a bespoke magazine dedicated to HR leaders operating in this region. www.changeboard.com



Abstract

The battle for global talent continues, and in a shrinking talent pool, candidates hold the power, particularly in specialist areas such as technology. To gain competitive advantage in recruitment, employers must deliver an interactive and personalised candidate experience. Only organisations that make a lasting, positive impression on potential hires will win the best people, while retaining the respect of unsuccessful applicants – who could become influential promoters or detractors of your brand.

Every touch point you have with a candidate shapes their perception of your offer and, in some instances, a single experience can make or break their decision to apply to or join your organisation.

To what extent can employers identify critical risk factors, and opportunities for increasing engagement, in order to guide target hires through the candidate journey successfully?

The survey – what did we want to find out?

The impact of candidate experience: What is the perceived impact, among employers, of candidate experience on the quality of hire?

Evaluation priorities: What are the key areas of focus and which data is acted upon?

Evaluation approaches: Is candidate experience analysed and are findings robustly evaluated – and via which qualitative and quantitative methodologies?

Mapping: Does mapping the candidate experience reduce risk and increase engagement with potential hires?

Measurement: What is considered the most important measurement of candidate experience?

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Executive summary

In a competitive and applicant-driven recruitment marketplace, 'candidate experience' - which relates to how organisations treat their candidates during recruitment - has become integral to the hiring process and is only set to grow in importance as the talent pool shrinks. But are employers focusing on candidate experience in practice, analysing it effectively, and making changes accordingly?

To find out, Changeboard, on behalf of Cielo, surveyed employers (largely senior HR professionals) to ascertain the extent to which they believe that quality of candidate experience impacts directly on quality of hire; the key measures of candidate experience; and methods used to evaluate current processes. The research also aims to gain insight into organisations' priorities for improving candidate experience.

Supporting the current emphasis on candidate experience, our survey found that the vast majority of participants (91.4%) believe it to have "a direct impact on quality of hire" with less than 4% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. They overwhelmingly concur that the way recruits are treated during the hiring process is directly relevant to successful talent acquisition.

However, almost half of respondents (42.2%) admit their organisations do not evaluate their current candidate experience. This means their faith is built on anecdotal findings or assumption rather than firm evidence - despite the global business focus on exploiting 'big data' to inform decision making.

“ Employers view the candidate interview as the single most important aspect of the hiring process ”

This finding was echoed in the mapping of the overall candidate journey with more than two-thirds of employers (70.3%) strongly agreeing that this process has enabled them to reduce the risks of losing top candidates to competitors and to increase engagement with potential quality hires, but more than half (53.1%) acknowledging that they have no actual evidence that this is the case. Only 26.6% of respondents openly admit they are "not sure" whether mapping has been beneficial.

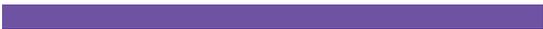
It is notable that even those who do evaluate candidate experience are not confident that their evaluation is robust, with less than a fifth of participants (18.8%) describing their evaluation process as "very robust". This may relate to the fact that 85.9% conduct evaluation themselves, in-house, rather than using a third party with professional expertise in this area. It may also refer to frequency: only a fifth (21.9%) undertake evaluation "regularly", and although 53.1% say they carry out evaluation on "an ongoing basis", for exactly a quarter, it is an "ad hoc" activity.

When it comes to evaluation priorities for candidate experience, the interview is ranked most important by more than a third (34.4%) of respondents, followed by the application process, awareness-raising with candidates, pre-boarding/keeping in touch, recruiter efficiency, the offer, and supporting candidate investigations. This indicates that employers view the candidate interview as the single most important aspect of the hiring process and also the best place to obtain feedback from applicants.

More than three-quarters (76.6%) of employers who do evaluate candidate experience believe qualitative and quantitative data to be of equal importance when it comes to acting on the results. A fifth (20.3%) are more likely to act on the results of qualitative data with only 3.1% setting greater store by quantitative data.

Feedback from candidates is the method of qualitative evaluation most used by 38.7% of respondents, followed by communications audit; digital auditing of website and social media platforms; and search findings (testing what candidates see when they Google working with the organisation and evaluating third-party commentary).

This broadly aligns with the 'best measures of candidate experience' highlighted by participants in response to the penultimate survey question, many of whom highlight "feedback from all candidates" (both successful and unsuccessful applicants) as the most important measure. Gaining feedback is also cited by some as a current priority for improving candidate experience. Speed of 'offer to acceptance' is another significant measure highlighted by respondents, along with numbers of reapplications and referrals.



“ Priorities for improving candidate experience revolve around improving communication and responsiveness during the recruitment process ”

For quantitative evaluation, there is a more even split between process analytics (tracking drop off/drop out points); advert tracking; social media analytics; and web analytics.

The survey findings therefore indicate that despite a strong belief in the value of mapping the candidate journey, and in the correlation between candidate experience and quality of hire, there is a lack of robust, insightful evaluation to demonstrate the benefits of either.

Stated priorities for improving candidate experience revolve around improving communication and responsiveness during the recruitment process and include enhancing initial application procedures plus showcasing workplaces to candidates in an holistic way, rather than focusing purely on roles, pay and benefits. However, careful evaluation should be undertaken to pinpoint the precise areas in which candidate experience needs improvement and to demonstrate that changes implemented have a positive impact.

Introduction

Within the next decade, the ratio of workers to retirees is predicted to fall from 3:1 to 1:1, meaning that employers will have to work harder to attract and retain top talent.

There will be strong need for organisations to display their brand and culture to the best advantage from the very start of the recruitment process – and to treat their candidates well.

This will be particularly important in specialist sectors such as technology and life sciences, in which candidates often receive multiple job offers.

The concept of ‘candidate experience’ is a hot topic within the HR sector and equates to basic principles of understanding people, their behaviour and what drives and influences them. Improving candidate experience involves listening to, and acting on, candidate feedback, and understanding what ‘good’ looks like from an applicant’s perspective.

Common areas of focus include initial application processes, communication, timelines and personalisation. Some organisations are even developing ‘recruitment charters’ and concierge services (including dedicated apps and presentations about company culture).

In our increasingly-connected world, dominated by social media, the line between employees and consumers is blurred, and candidate experience is not just about beating competitors to the top talent. A poor candidate experience can affect their perception of your brand, their willingness to re-apply in future or to recommend your organisation; ultimately it could affect your bottom line.

Every touch point you have with a candidate shapes their perception of your offer and, in some instances, a single experience can make or break their decision to apply to or join your organisation.

So to what extent can employers identify critical risk factors, and opportunities for increasing engagement, in order to guide target hires through the candidate journey successfully?

As this survey indicates, most HR professionals have grasped the need to focus on candidate experience and to map their journey through the recruitment process, but evaluation remains patchy. Investment in robust evaluation and a lean towards evidence-based practice would help ensure that efforts to improve candidate experience pay off.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE:

Identifying the risks and opportunities that directly affect quality of hire

Impact of candidate experience

In a competitive global marketplace, where candidates drive the hiring process, candidate experience is an acknowledged element in attracting and winning top talent.

The vast majority (91.4%) of employers who took part in our survey concur that ‘the quality of candidate experience has a direct impact on quality of hire’: 42.2% of respondents agree with this statement, while 49.2% strongly agree with it. Less than 4% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that the quality of candidate experience affects quality of hires. (See figure 1)

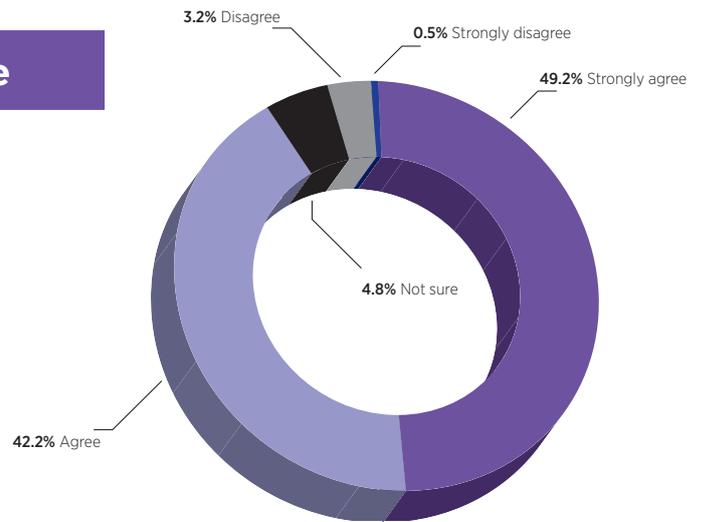


Figure 1: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “The quality of candidate experience has a direct impact on our quality of hire.”

Evaluating candidate experience

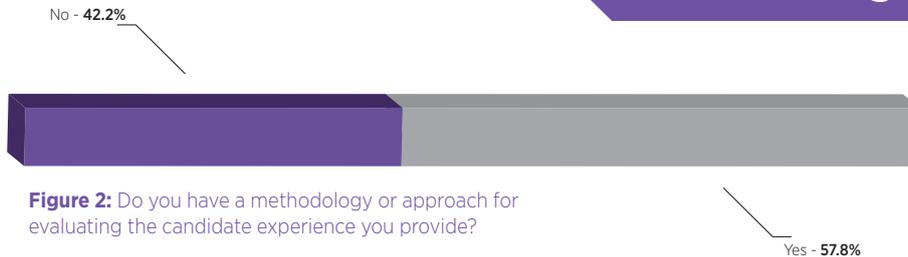
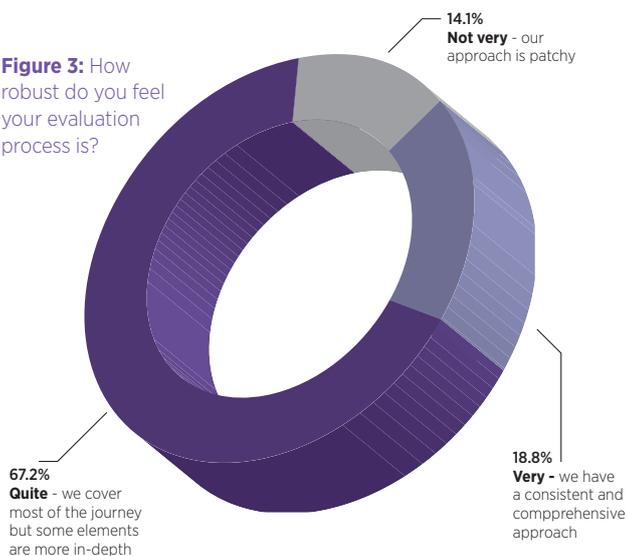


Figure 2: Do you have a methodology or approach for evaluating the candidate experience you provide?

Figure 3: How robust do you feel your evaluation process is?



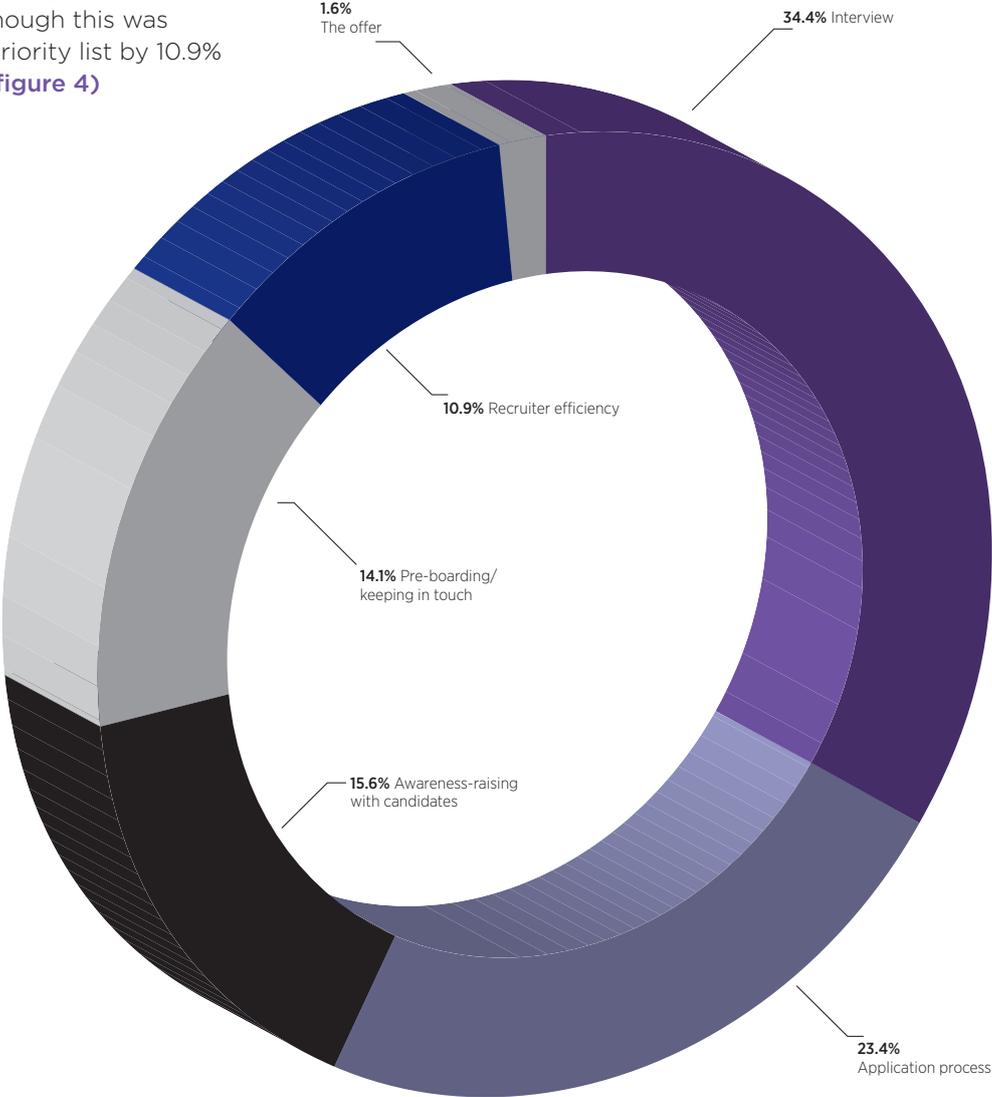
While most HR professionals polled believe candidate experience has a direct impact of quality of hires, not all organisations evaluate the candidate experience they provide. A total of 57.8% of respondents say they do have a methodology or approach for evaluating their current candidate experience but just under half (42.2%) admit there is no such methodology in place. (▲ See figure 2)

It is also notable that less than a fifth of respondents (18.8%) believe their evaluation process to be “very robust”, achieving a “consistent and comprehensive approach”. The majority (67.2%) view their evaluation process as “quite robust”, agreeing that it “covers most of the journey, but some elements are more in-depth than others”. A significant 14.1% admit that their evaluation is “not very robust” and that their approach is “patchy and ad hoc”. (◀ See figure 3)

Evaluation priorities

To discover evaluation priorities, respondents who said their organisation does have a methodology or approach for evaluating their current candidate experience were asked to rank their evaluation priorities, in order. 'The interview' is ranked most important by more than a third of respondents (34.4%), followed by the application process (23.4%), awareness-raising with candidates (15.6%), pre-boarding/keeping in touch (14.1%), recruiter efficiency (10.9%), the offer (1.6%), and supporting candidate investigation (0% - although this was ranked second in the priority list by 10.9% of respondents). (See figure 4)

Figure 4: If you have a method or approach for evaluating the candidate experience you provide, which of the following areas do you prioritise for evaluation?



Evaluation methods

Employers who evaluate candidate experience do so using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. Gaining feedback from candidates (“we actively seek their views on the experience we offer”) is the most popular qualitative method used – undertaken by 38.7% of respondents – while 23.2% use communications audit (“review of all written comms as seen through the eyes of the candidate”).

A digital audit of the organisation’s website and social media platforms (“as seen through the eyes of the candidate”) is conducted by just over a fifth of respondents (21.1%). Only 16.9% of HR professionals use search findings, “testing what candidates see when they Google working with us and evaluating third-party commentary”). (See figure 5)

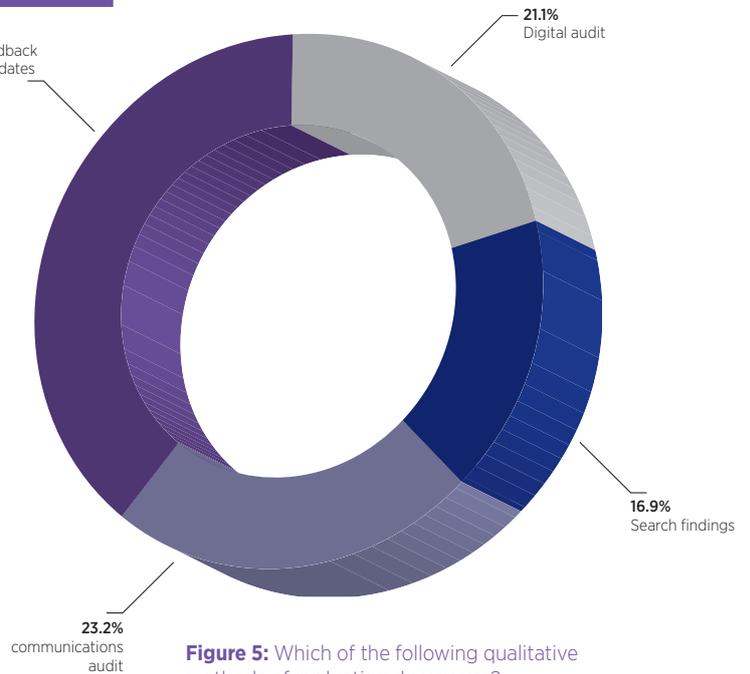
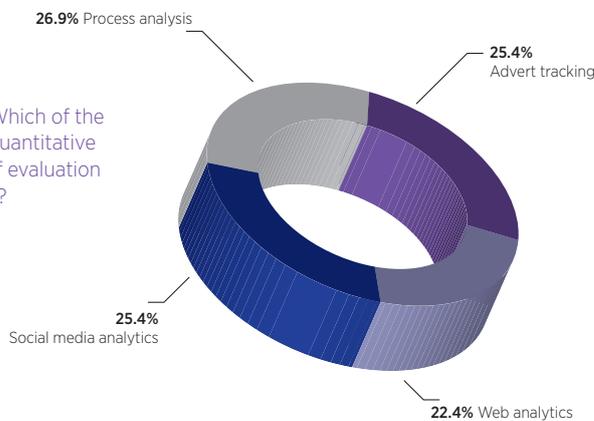


Figure 5: Which of the following qualitative methods of evaluation do you use?

Figure 6: Which of the following quantitative methods of evaluation do you use?



When it comes to quantitative evaluation methods, there is a more even split between preferred approaches. Process analysis (tracking drop-off/drop out points) is used by 26.9% of respondents, while 25.4% of respondents use advert tracking (for example, to assess the impact of different adverts and media placings) and the same percentage use social media analytics (such share of voice and sentiment analysis). Meanwhile, 22.4% of HR professionals use web analytics (dwell time, pages viewed, source and analysis and so on). (See figure 6)

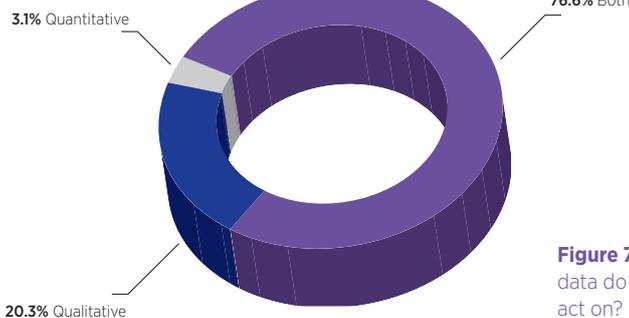


Figure 7: Which data do you most act on?

More than three-quarters of respondents (76.6%) believe qualitative and quantitative data to be of equal importance, while a fifth (20.3%) value qualitative data over quantitative data. Only 3.1% believe quantitative data to be more valuable than qualitative data. (See figure 7)

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE:

Identifying the risks and opportunities that directly affect quality of hire

Most organisations (85.9%) that evaluate candidate experience conduct the research themselves, while the remainder use a third party. (See figure 8) The frequency with which evaluation is undertaken varies. For exactly a quarter of respondents, it is little more than an “ad hoc” process, while more than half (53.1%) conduct evaluation on “an ongoing basis”. Only a fifth of HR professionals (21.9%) say that they conduct evaluation “regularly, for example, once or twice a year”. (See figure 9)

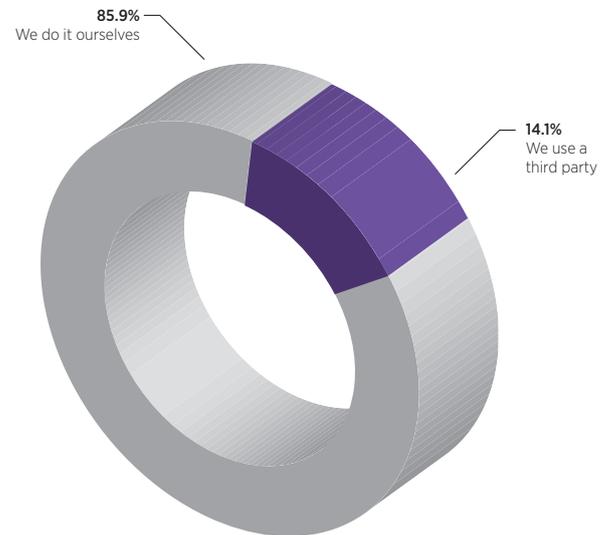


Figure 8: Do you conduct the research yourself or use a third party?

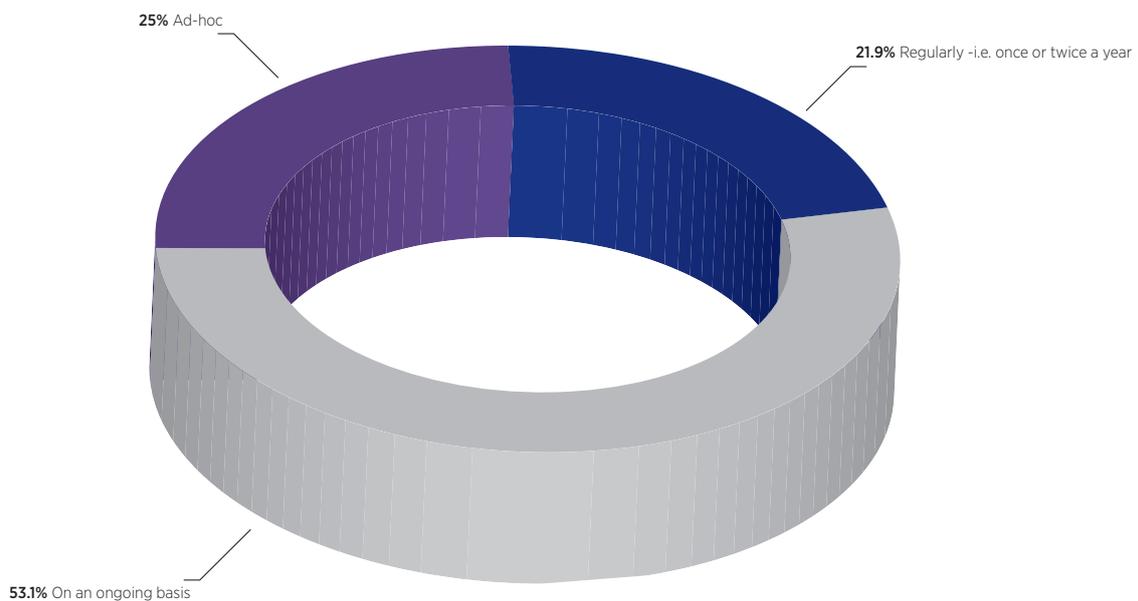


Figure 9: Is this something you do regularly, on an ongoing basis, or ad hoc?

Mapping the candidate journey

Candidate experience mapping – from initial introduction to offer/rejection and beyond – allows organisations to scrutinise the journey taken by candidates through the recruitment process, in order to understand motivating or demotivating factors. It can be likened to mapping the customer journey in marketing and involves adopting the candidate’s perspective and putting them first.

More than two-thirds of HR professionals (70.3%) surveyed agree that mapping the candidate journey has enabled them to reduce risks (of not being perceived as an employer of choice and of losing top candidates to competitors) and increase engagement with potential quality hires. Only 3.1% say that it has not helped them in this way, though 26.6% of respondents are ‘not sure’ whether mapping has been beneficial. (See figure 10)

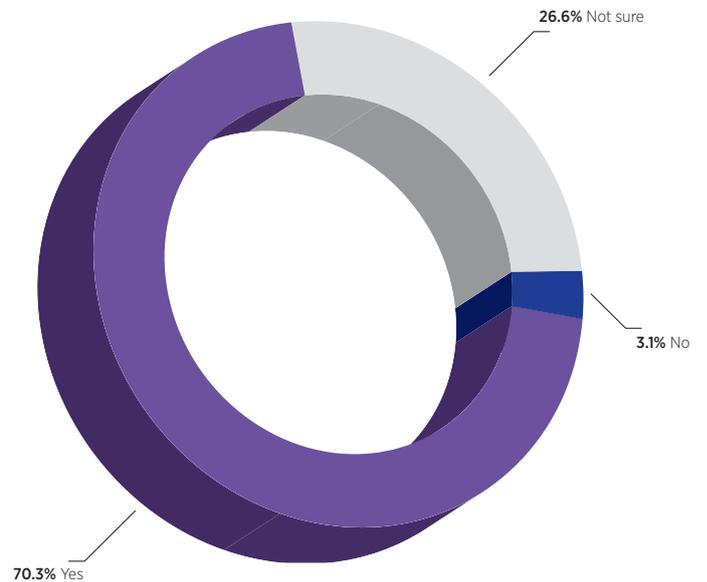
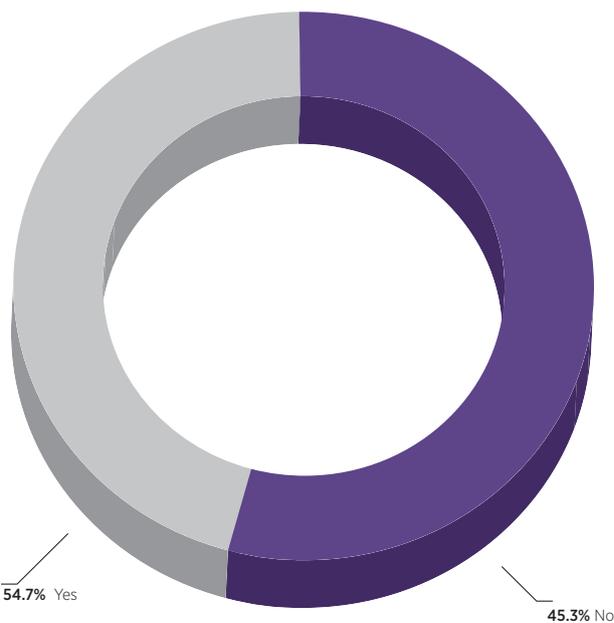


Figure 10: Do you believe that mapping your candidate journey has enabled you to reduce risks and increase engagement with potential quality hires?



Despite the positive response to mapping by the majority of respondents, more than half of HR professionals (54.7%) have no evidence that mapping has – or has not – enabled them to reduce risks and increase engagement with potential hires.

(See figure 11)

Figure 11: Do you have any evidence that mapping your candidate journey has enabled you to reduce risks and increase engagement with potential quality hires?

Best measures of candidate experience

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to state what they believe to be the most important measure of candidate experience.

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK

Participants cited 'feedback from applicants' as an important measure of candidate experience, stating that it should be collected from all individuals taking part in the process, not purely from those reaching interview stage or receiving a job offer. The need for feedback to be timely, transparent and open was emphasised by many.

"We survey every candidate who has interviewed with our organisation, even if they are not offered a role," summed up one participant.

Feedback collection methods vary. While some respondents referenced use of formal satisfaction surveys, provided to all candidates, others said they gather anecdotal feedback about the process and applicants' overall experience of it, along the way and at the end of the process. Ratings on social media were also mentioned.

TIMELINES

The speed of offer to acceptance is viewed by employers as a direct reflection of candidate experience. Candidates passing probation and fulfilling their roles, plus low rates of new hire turnover, are also taken as signs that the candidate experience has been generally positive.

Top candidates may receive multiple job offers, particularly in technology or life sciences, so the acceptance of an offer does not guarantee that the successful applicant will take up the position.

As one HR professional commented: "In our industry, the true test is whether they actually start, as there is so much competition in the marketplace." Another stated that a positive candidate experience is demonstrated by hires starting jobs "understanding their role and the organisation", enabling them to hit the ground running.

RE-APPLICATIONS AND REFERRALS

When unsuccessful candidates choose to reapply to the organisation or recommend it to others, it is deemed a sign that a good impression was made on them during the recruitment process. "Even if a candidate isn't successful, we want them to have a positive image of the firm," commented one HR professional.

A measure of success is a candidate "leaving the process, whether successful or not, with a positive message about the organisation and a better understanding of who we are and what we look for in individuals," concluded another respondent.

“ Even if a candidate isn't successful, we want them to have a positive image of the firm ”

Priorities for improving candidate experience

Respondents were also asked about their priorities for enhancing candidate experience. Their comments reveal an emphasis on improving communication and responsiveness and on gaining insightful feedback from all candidates throughout the recruitment process.

We're "making sure candidates are kept informed of progress throughout their journey" commented one employer, while another highlighted the importance of consistency and human contact during the recruitment process (in an era of growing automation), stating: "We have a dedicated single point of contact and are looking at our performance in this area in terms of managing and meeting expectations."

An employer from a multi-national organisation added: "We are providing feedback to all candidates and ensuring the level of this is the same in all countries where we operate."

Other priorities for HR range from improving initial application forms and processes (for example "integrating video into the process and making it easier and quicker to apply") to shortening the time between applications and interviews, and interviews and offers, plus improving the on-boarding process.

“ There is a growing trend towards considering candidates in a more holistic way and seeking out people with the right values, traits and motivations ”

There is a growing trend towards employers embracing 'investment recruiting', considering candidates in a more holistic way and seeking out people with the right values, traits and motivations (rather than simply skills and qualifications) who can be trained on-the-job for particular roles.

This is reflected in respondents' approaches to developing candidate experience. The priority for one employer was summed up as "understanding whether the candidate shares the same values/beliefs as the organisation as early as possible; if they are unlikely to 'fit in' with the culture, this needs to be identified as soon as possible."

Another aims to "offer a realistic job preview so that the candidate has the chance to opt out."

Since millennials are not motivated purely by pay and benefits, but want to work with purpose, for organisations whose values align with their own, this must also be reflected in candidate experience. Consequently, one respondent describes their priority as "showcasing our places of work to show what it is like to actually work here". Another says their organisation is "ensuring the offer is more than financial".

“ It is important for employers to invest in robust, regular evaluation of their current processes and to monitor the impact of changes made to enhance candidate experience ”

Conclusion

Most employers believe in the correlation between candidate experience and quality of hire; however, not all are conducting regular, robust evaluation of current candidate experience. Much of the evaluation conducted by organisations remains in-house, ad hoc and irregular.

Similarly, the majority of employers concur that mapping the candidate journey has enabled them to reduce risks and increase engagement with potential quality hires, but half have no evidence to demonstrate this.

To ensure time spent mapping candidate journeys is worthwhile and that focus is placed on the right areas of candidate experience, it is important for employers to invest in robust, regular evaluation of their current processes and to monitor the impact of changes made to enhance candidate experience.

About the survey

A global online survey, conducted by Changeboard on behalf of Cielo, sought to establish the extent to which organisations believe candidate experience impacts on quality of hires; the value placed on mapping the candidate journey; whether they evaluate current candidate experience and their evaluation methods and priorities. The survey ran between April and June 2016.

It draws on responses from 197 HR professionals from around the world. Although the majority of respondents are from the UK, individuals from the US and India, the UAE and Europe also contributed. Participants' level of seniority is high, with managing directors, heads of HR, senior recruitment managers and HR consultants taking part.

Respondents represent organisations from the public and private sector and industries ranging from financial services to pharmaceuticals and charities to technology; many of the organisations they represent have an international presence.

The highest response rate was from individuals from organisations with one to 50 employees (32.3%), closely followed by those from organisations with more than 5,000 staff members (30.21%).

A total of 9.4% of respondents represented organisations with 151-500 employees and the same percentage came from organisations with 2001-5000 employees. Additionally, 7.8% came from companies employing 501-1000 staff members and 6.8% from organisations with 51-150 employees. The lowest response rate was from businesses with 1001-2000 employees (4.2%).

