



TALENT
MARKETING SCHOOL

COURSE WORKBOOK

**A 6-STEP PROCESS
FOR PLANNING
A SIMPLE YET
EFFECTIVE
CANDIDATE
COMMUNICATION
FRAMEWORK**

WITH SUSANNA RANTANEN



Impacting candidate experiences and employer image with effective candidate communication

Lack of communication and care for candidate experiences during a hiring process continues to be a significant and very general problem in the talent market. Poor candidate experiences have a direct impact on the employer image of the company you work for. Often times those experiences are not staying just between you and the candidate. People talk and share openly both their good and bad experiences on social media. Why not make sure your applicants have nothing but positive words to say about you even if they did not get the job.

I started to track and follow up on candidate experiences already back in 2010 when I began to develop software to match talents with company cultures.

For me, it was a priority from the start to place the applicants at the centre and make sure they felt good about venturing out for new career opportunities.

Hiring is typically an act where the hiring company has a need and that need is being pursued and acted upon very much on the hiring company's terms.

Regardless of whether the recruiting party is a consultant or an in-house recruiter, we tend to treat applicants as a commodity only there to serve our purpose.

Yet all of us can agree, when we are in an applicant's position, we expect the recruiting party to appreciate our input and treat us and our time with the same respect they expect from us.

Good candidate experience does not require a lot of input to achieve, yet it can have a tremendous impact on an individual job seeker.

Furthermore, a business with a reputation of treating their applicants well is a business that is much closer to winning the attention of the best candidates.

If your business struggles with their employer image and attractiveness and has no resources to start employer branding, starting to pursue great candidate experiences systematically in all of your hiring processes will have a huge impact on your employer appeal.

A business that actively hires is more likely to achieve a favourable employer image as a result of an excellent candidate communication than as a result of spending money on making and promoting a recruitment video.



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Often times, I hear an individual working in talent acquisition feeling they lack the control over the employee experiences in a process because there are other people involved as well and what if they don't care.

Trust me, even then the systematic caretaking of your applicants' experiences is likely to overdrive an occasional mishap by for example an individual interviewer.

Adding that transparency to what is going on in the process as well as treating your applicants as individuals who chose to prepare an application and offer their availability for your process should not be looked as if they did not have other options.

Everyone will remember the recruiter who showed empathy and humanity. We can all be that person.

The 6 Step Process for Developing and Implementing Your Candidate Communication Framework



This 6-step-process helps you to create a candidate communication framework for yourself, or for the entire talent acquisition team. Develop your own candidate communication framework following these 6 steps. This is truly a very simple method, but when applied consistently in your recruitment process, it will significantly improve your candidate experiences and increase the likelihood of your best candidates committing to your process instead of exiting it half-way for a competing process.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

- An outline of your typical recruitment process.
- A little bit of time to map out what candidate communication points you already execute during your typical recruitment process.

Then answer these questions:

- How do you currently message and communicate with your applicants and candidates?
- Who all are directly in contact with applicants and candidates during your recruitment processes?
- What tools do you currently use or have available for candidate communication?

Examples of communication tools used or useful in candidate communication:

- Email
- Telephone
- Messaging system within your recruitment system.
- LinkedIn Recruiter -tools
- General social media (company profile, groups, direct mails etc)
- Direct emailing systems such as Mailchimp, Mailerlite, Hubspot etc.

THE GENERAL IDEA EXPLAINED

Think of each of your recruitment processes as an opportunity to apply at least three different types of communication to create positive candidate experiences, influence what your applicants think and say about you and the company you work for, as well as increase your likelihood to successfully finalize this recruitment process.

Let's take a closer look at each of these opportunities.



The 3-5 Types of Communication Opportunities During A Recruitment Process



TYPES OF COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES DURING A RECRUITMENT PROCESS

I like to look at a recruitment process split into a total of five phases giving me a total of five different types of communication opportunities.

If you really want to tie in candidate communication with developing an employer image or even employer branding, then the phases where you wove these together are the "PRE" and the "AFTER".

However, with this simple candidate communication framework, we will focus on the three types of communication taking place at the START, DURING and at the END of an active recruitment process.

START - THE APPLICATION PHASE

The application period is a fantastic phase to kick off your candidate communication. This phase starts when you publish your job post and ends on the day when you stop accepting applications to this process.

Candidate communication during this phase goes parallel to any recruitment marketing, advertising and promotion of the job post.

Duration: Until the end of the application period, parallel with the official recruitment campaign.

Purpose: To open a conversation loop between yourself as the recruiter and the relevant job seekers, and position yourself as the "career counsellor" for this audience.

Target audience: Prospective applicants for this particular role and process.

Channel: LinkedIn, on the recruiter's own profile is likely to be the most useful channel.

Types of messages: Public conversations about what you are working with right now, tips and advice likely to be insightful for your active job seeker audience as well as personal candidate communication and process communication with those who apply already before the deadline.

Value: Puts a more personal touch and adds transparency for the process. This is also a great way to start building your own stand as a recruiter growing trust between yourself and your personal talent followers and contacts.

This can also turn out to be very helpful and valuable for your talent acquisition career.

Message ideas:

- Your thoughts and sentiments about kicking off a new recruitment process.
- Addressing or asking about typical fears, worries, questions and concerns job seekers tend to have, and how you could help.
- Sharing how you work as a recruiter, what you personally pay attention to and what advice you might want to give to those considering to participate in your recruitment process.
- Posts introducing the hiring manager and team members for a particular role.
- FAQ's about the role and the company.

DURING - THE SELECTION PROCESS

The application period is over and you are longer accepting applications to this process. You are now ready to proceed with all of your available applicants to the actual selection process for the opening.

It would be very easy for you and your talent acquisition team stop all candidate communication and focus on the screening, the interviews and the decision making about your candidates.

How this looks like in the eyes of your applicants is often a very long and very silent period of time. The longer it takes to hear back, the less likely your best candidates are to be still available when your company is ready to be in contact again.

This is in fact, the time in your hiring process during which good candidate communication is likely to have the biggest impact and influence on your employer image.



[The selection phase] in your recruitment process is the time when good candidate communication is likely to have the biggest impact and influence on your employer image.

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Duration: Weekly from the end of the application period until the process ends.

Purpose: To add transparency to your process, keep your applicants content with the way they are being cared for, nurturing them during your lengthy selection process in order to keep them warm and committed to your process.

You do not want your best candidates to all of a sudden to inform you they are no longer available for you because they took a job with your competitor.

Target audience: Every single applicant in the process as long as they are still being considered.

Channel: Direct email or a suitable social media which allows your applicants to follow your messaging without having to publicly reveal they are candidates in your process.

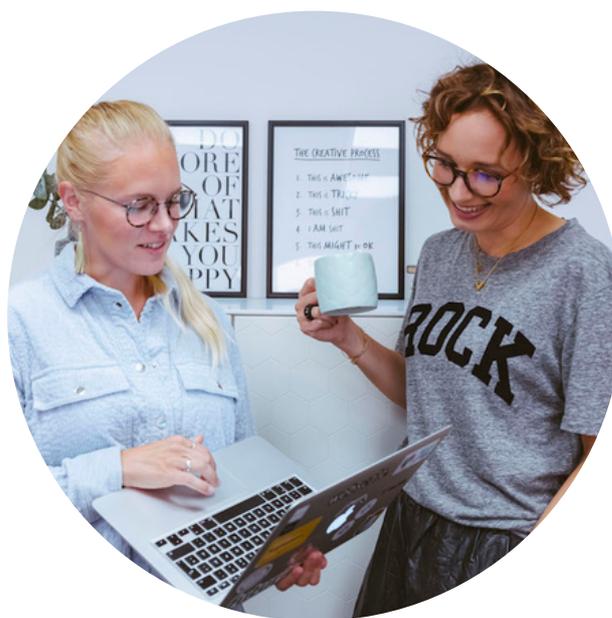
If you use social media for this, you must make sure your applicants are all aware of how to follow your weekly process communication and status updates.

The types of messages during this communication phase:

1. Weekly status updates about what is going on in the process this week and what is happening next week.
2. Helpful tips and advice for applicants to increase their likelihood of success in your various selection procedures.
3. Elegant no thank you -messages; in other words, personal and encouraging messages to inform applicants about their status immediately when you know they are no longer being considered for the role.

Value:

- Keeps your applicants "warm" to your process.
- Builds trust and affinity towards you as a recruiter and the hiring company.
- Increases the likelihood of your best candidates staying available to you and your process almost regardless of how long the selection phase process takes.



What here impact the candidate experiences?

Active, weekly communication in a specific format and in the same media builds a routine of hearing out and being kept informed. I know I will hear again next week at this same time. I don't have to guess or wonder.

Another good idea is also to share a blog post, an article, news or other content to your applicants when the content is directly linked to the role or the team in question.

END - OF THE ENTIRE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Most companies tend to leave all of the no thank you - communication to the end of the recruitment process when it is more convenient for the company to inform the non-successful candidates.

This however will almost certainly lead to negative candidate experiences. That is why I prefer to elegantly care of the "no thank you's" during the selection process as soon as I know I am not going forward with an applicant.

Candidate experiences are the experiences of the candidates. Therefore candidate communication should be planned and executed in a manner that is convenient for the candidates, not for the hiring company.

The End of the process - communication is more about closing what became a more public process and taking the opportunity to announce who (with or without a name) was chosen and when the new person starts in the role.



Duration: The (short) time when you have made your final selection decision and are ready to close down this process.

Purpose: To close the conversation and communication loop with your external audiences, but also give closure and show your appreciation once more to all of your applicants in this process. Also, those whom you have elegantly said no thank you.

Target audience: The general audience who followed your process communication on social media (if that's what you opted for) and all of the applicants in this process.

Channel: If you used social media for status updates, then close it off on the same social media.

If you used email then close the process on email to all of your applicants.

Type of message: The key message is to announce the process is now over, you appreciate everyone's time and input, and then share what you can share about who got the job.

In those cases, when I know I am going to re-open this process periodically, I also mention when this process opens again in the closure message. This is an opportunity to ask the applicants to follow you on social media or to even subscribe to your career newsletter (if you have one) to keep posted on your hiring.

Value: Ends the process in a respectful manner, opens the opportunity to gain new followers and subscribers and leaves applicants with a good note.

Focus on your own relationship with each and every single applicant and candidate that enters or considers entering your process. That is what you can always influence 100%.

The more you pursue excellent experiences for every individual the more impact you will achieve.

I also recommend measuring candidate experiences regularly. This will give you better control of your overall candidate experiences and enable you to track loopholes in your processes resulting in those negative perceptions and ill will.



Making sure every single person offering their availability to your hiring is treated with respect and care is probably the easiest way to impact positively your employer image and reputation.

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