

The Candidate Experience

Part I

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Attracting, hiring and retaining highly talented employees is the goal of not only every Human Resources team, but of every successful company. But too few really understand the crucial role that a truly differentiated *Candidate Experience (CE)* program plays for candidates of all positions from the Mailroom to the Boardroom in determining the power and impact of their employment brand.

Why am I calling it a **CE** program ? Because there are a number of integrated, inter-dependent and complex components to this effort that should be managed, maintained and updated as an ongoing program, instead of a start to finish special project or HR initiative.

In the design and construction of a first class **CE** program, the guiding dictate is that everything incorporated must be looked at through the eyes of a candidate. This should be done at the beginning without exception and without excuses. While there are five main components of a first class **CE** program (detailed in *The Candidate Experience, Part II*), the preliminary steps should be identifying the questions a candidate will ask about joining your organization, as well as, gaining a clear and accurate understanding of what the current **CE** state of your organization really is. This can be accomplished in large part, with two simultaneous activities.

First, survey several new hires and runner-ups for positions at a two to three different levels. Make sure the survey is done in a very timely manner right after your new hire starts; in fact, make it part of your On-Boarding process. What's that? You don't have an On-Boarding process? Okay, we'll cover that in a subsequent article.

Second, utilize "mystery shoppers" or in this case mystery candidates. Have two to three professionals apply for open positions through various channels and track their feedback throughout a "staged" interview process. This may sound too challenging to accomplish, but there are definitely ways to make this happen without letting the cat out of the bag in all but the smallest of organizations.

Once you have gathered and assessed the feedback and comments provided by both your real and "mystery" candidates, most of you will almost certainly be surprised and likely even a little shocked by what you learn.

A full-featured, first class **CE** program is not an easy undertaking. It requires buy-in, endorsement and top-down support from senior management across your organization, in addition to your HR leadership team (and that means more than just your Talent Acquisition group). But just ask MicroSoft, Google, GE, Pepsico and Capital One, to name but a few, what the long-term ROI (Return on Initiative) and ROE (Return on Effort) is for a game-changing **CE** program in the increasingly competitive national talent acquisition arena. Or, better yet, consider the risks for not believing in the need to have one to begin with.

Please be on the lookout for ***The Candidate Experience, Part II***, which will be posted here soon.

To learn more about the topics covered in this article, please contact me directly.