



How to craft a world-class candidate experience

Lessons from Ericsson,
Salesforce, and T-Mobile

Google

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A world-class candidate experience is the most powerful tool in your hiring toolkit. It differentiates your company from hundreds of competitors. It turns rejected candidates into brand allies. It transforms the entire hiring process, something with the potential to be complicated and intimidating, into a rewarding and valuable experience—regardless of whether candidates get the job.

To help you create a stand-out candidate experience, we're sharing **five principles** followed by companies such as **Zendesk, Ericsson, Salesforce, T-Mobile, and Facebook.** We'll show you the real-world impact of their strategies and help you emulate their success for your own hiring process.

The value of world-class candidate experiences

Your candidate experience encompasses all of the interactions that candidates have with your brand, from the moment they see your job ad to the final interview stage—whether it results in an offer or a rejection.

The way you handle these interactions impacts the success of your entire hiring process. The strongest candidates receive offers from multiple employers, and your candidate experience can be the deciding factor that influences them to accept your offer. Throughout the hiring process, expose the reasons **why your company is the best place to work** to stand out from competitors.

Ensuring timely follow-ups and personalized communication is a good start. To create a standout experience, customize your recruitment process with special touches that reflect your company's culture. Adding this authenticity to your experience attracts candidates who are a great fit because they understand what it's like to work at your company. According to research from IBM, candidates are 38% more likely to accept your job offer if you create a great candidate experience for them.

Even for “silver medal” applicants, time spent turning a good candidate experience into a great one is time well-spent. Focus on providing a world-class experience to every candidate, and you'll improve virtually every metric that matters: acceptance rates, application rates, and even revenue.

Creating exceptional candidate experiences results in:

A positive employer reputation

Candidates have dozens of public outlets to talk about their interview process, from social media to employer review sites. If you treat every candidate well—following up quickly, giving meaningful feedback—they're more likely to leave positive feedback online.

Increased reapplication rates

According to research from Future Workplace and Career Arc, 80% percent of job seekers said they wouldn't reapply to a company that failed to notify them of their application progress. Better communication means higher reapplication rates.

More customers

According to research from IBM, only 25% of dissatisfied candidates are likely to become new customers. For satisfied candidates that number more than doubles to 53%. Candidate experience doesn't just influence hiring: it impacts your bottom line too.



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Principle 1

Treat candidates like customers

When you deliver a consumer-grade candidate experience, you treat your applicants as if they were your customers (they often are!).

This isn't just about treating candidates well—it's about acknowledging that your business' success depends on them. That means learning from the habits of marketers and salespeople:

- segmenting customers into different persona types
- researching their pain points, likes, and dislikes
- building tailored messaging and marketing campaigns to drive awareness and conversion

...and applying the same core principles to your recruiting process:

- Treating candidates and roles as unique and personalizing the hiring process for different types of candidates
- Digging deep into your candidate experience, finding out which parts of the process inspire, and which frustrate

- Crafting tailored messages for every candidate, not just successful ones

Like a good marketer or sales person takes a customer-obsessed mindset, become candidate-obsessed as you build out your recruiting process.

This empowers you to build a positive relationship with candidates that will amplify your employer brand and help you organically grow your candidate pipeline over time. If you do this, candidates will be more likely to reapply for future openings, connect with your brand as a consumer, and encourage their friends and family to do the same.

Here's how companies like Amplitude and CH2M create their own consumer-grade candidate experience.

Principle 1

Reduce friction in your application process

As a business, it's tempting to ask for a lot of data from users when they sign up for your product—their demographics, interests, location, and more. With this information, you learn more about your customer and can build better products for them.

However, asking for too much data up front can hurt the growth of your business. Providing information takes work, so if you ask for too much right away before providing any value in return, you risk losing a prospect's business before they've become invested in your process. You can also end up with so much data that it's hard to separate the useful from the irrelevant.

The same is true for job candidates. If the application process is too onerous, they'll never make it through in the first place, and you'll close promising doors before you've even had a chance to open them.

The global engineering company [CH2M](#) solved the problem by [simplifying their application process](#)—eliminating two full pages of application data, allowing candidates to answer a select few questions instead of submitting a full application.

ch2m.

Here's what happens when you simplify your job application:

- Candidates have less up-front work, so they're more likely to see the application process through.
- You'll have more opportunities to engage with candidates once you have them in your pipeline.
- You'll have a greater capacity to make a clear and accurate assessment of each person since you won't be overloaded with candidate information.

For companies like CH2M, asking for less data is worth the trade-off for a more seamless, simple candidate experience that brings more candidates into their pipeline.

If the application process is too onerous, they'll never make it through in the first place...

Principle 1

Craft candidate interactions that build rapport

A retail company does everything possible to put customers at ease when they walk into their store—their employees smile, say hello, and ask customers if they would like assistance. These small gestures make shoppers feel welcome, so they're more likely to purchase something in the store.

If a great candidate bombs their interview because they're nervous, **you both lose out...**

As a recruiter, it's important to facilitate these moments where you can build rapport with candidates. Someone might be a perfect fit for your team, but they won't make it very far if they don't feel comfortable throughout the recruitment process. If a great candidate bombs their interview because they're nervous, you both lose out—they miss out on the perfect job, and you miss out on a great employee.

Instead of letting those great candidates slip through your process, find ways to put them at ease during the recruiting process. Building rapport with candidates benefits your hiring process in a few key ways:



You'll have enough information to evaluate candidates' abilities and experience, since they'll feel relaxed enough to think clearly and answer questions fully.

Candidates will be more confident and excited to accept your offer if they feel connected to the hiring team and invested in the relationships built during the interview process.

Candidates will speak highly of your company and consider reapplying in the future, even if they're rejected.

Take the product analytics platform [Amplitude](#) as an example. The company knows that there are strong candidates who get nervous before interviews, so they host a casual, relaxing event for candidates—a [lunch](#) with employees who aren't on the interviewing team.

Without interviewers at the lunch, candidates can let their guard down and feel more comfortable asking questions about the company and the role.

Maintaining this kind of awareness of the candidate's well being throughout the hiring process helps your team build deeper relationships with candidates. When candidates feel appreciated during the hiring process, they'll be more likely to accept your offer if one is made; if not, they'll still speak highly of your employer brand and consider reapplying if rejected.

Principle 1

Turn rejected candidates into allies

The best companies know that the way they treat every customer matters including those who don't buy immediately. Zappos—the first online retailer to offer free shipping and returns at scale—is a great example. It set the standard in the internet era for putting the customer first—“delivering happiness” is even one of the founder's mottos.

When other companies did everything possible to minimize refunds and returns, Zappos made it hassle-free for customers to send back their shoes. This decision seemed counterintuitive at the time, but it engendered such deep brand loyalty and word of mouth, that it gave Zappos a powerful edge over competitors. So much so, that most online retailers now offer free shipping and returns.

Likewise, helping rejected candidates improve their job search and find roles with other companies might sound counterintuitive: you're increasing your hiring costs to nurture candidates that weren't a good fit. In the long-run though, it's proven to be a valuable strategy:

You help the candidate become a better fit for your company, all while increasing the chance they will reapply. Perhaps a candidate lacks enough experience for the role you're hiring for now, but two years from now, they'll be a perfect fit, or 3 months



from now they'll be just the candidate you need for a junior role. Nurturing rejected candidates is an investment in future pipeline.

You boost your employer reputation. Even if they go on to work at another company, treating rejected candidates well means they'll share their positive experience with their network, potentially creating referrals for future roles. They may even leave positive reviews for your company on job boards, such as Glassdoor and Indeed.

The Swedish communications company [Ericsson](#) goes above and beyond to nurture rejected candidates. They've created a [branded job placement portal](#) that offers candidates job-matching technology, skills assessments, video interviewing practice, and more. When a candidate is rejected they send them an invitation to join the portal. So far, the tool has been well-received by rejected candidates—[98% have signed up](#).

Ericsson believes their recruitment process should be a valuable experience for every candidate. If you can provide something truly helpful—interview feedback, network connections, job resources—there's a good chance you'll benefit in kind.

Principle 2

Craft “high-touch” experiences to keep candidates constantly engaged

A “high-touch” candidate experience is one in which you actively communicate with candidates consistently and regularly. You build open dialogue into every single step of the recruiting process.

Many companies don’t offer this type of experience; others intentionally avoid it:

- **They update candidates infrequently or, worse, “ghost” them by never responding.** It takes time and effort to respond to every candidate, so skipping certain notifications—like rejection—can feel like a time-saving measure.
- **They keep the candidate on the hook.** In some cases, companies don’t respond due to indecision: the hiring team just isn’t sure whether they want to move forward with a candidate. Instead of updating the candidate on their decision process, they wait to have a more definite answer before they get back to the applicant.

Communicating consistently with candidates throughout the recruitment process is worth the extra effort. Proactively reaching out with updates, even if there isn’t any new information to share, and responding promptly, helps each candidate feel acknowledged and valued. When you respect your candidates’ time, you’ll earn their trust, accruing positive equity for your brand in return.

In practice, you’ll need to:

- **Automate communication** at the beginning of the hiring process so you can respond to first-stage applications at scale.
- **Track communication metrics** to identify when your recruitment team isn’t being responsive and help you define a plan to offer a truly high-touch experience.

Principle 2

Automate communication to become incredibly responsive

Automation is a simple way to create a high-touch candidate experience at the first stage of screening resumes and cover letters.

As a recruiter, you might worry that automation is impersonal, but this early phase doesn't require a human touch. In fact, your communication will be more valuable to candidates at this stage if it's automated.

- **Candidates won't be offended.** At this stage, they haven't invested a lot of effort in your hiring process and understand that you're dealing with a large number of candidates.
- **Candidates will trust your brand.** By using automation to respond quickly and consistently to everyone, you'll alleviate the discomfort and uncertainty that results from the fear of being "ghosted." This will free up the candidates' mental energy to focus on the rest of your hiring process, or job hunting if they're rejected—and create positive associations with your brand.

Leverage



The outsourcing platform, [Leverage](#), successfully uses automation to keep their candidates in the loop. The [company uses the automation tool Zapier](#) to trigger emails to good fit candidates inviting them to fill out personality and skills assessments. If the candidate scores 60% or better on these tests, Zapier sends them another automatic response with a link to schedule an interview with a Leverage team member.

You can even make automated communication fun and personable for candidates...

You can even make automated communication fun and personable for candidates as the project management platform [Trello](#) did. Every person who applies for a Trello job receives a light-hearted message from their "[Recruiting Robot](#)." While the bot admits that the message is "sent by a mindless robot," it assures the candidate that the message is "not the usual blah blah, so please read on!"

Besides being funny, the email is genuinely helpful to candidates—it lets them know that they will receive a response, how long they can expect to wait, and which email address is the best for replies.

Principle 2

Track key communication metrics

You won't know how well you're delivering a "high-touch" candidate experience unless you track key communication metrics. Here are a few we recommend:

- **Recruiter response rate:** The percentage of candidates who get a final response from a hiring team member
- **Average recruiter response time:** The average amount of time it takes for a recruiter to respond to a candidate
- **Rescheduling interview rates:** The percentage of candidate interviews that a recruiter reschedules

To guarantee that you're delivering a high-touch experience, it's important to turn communication metrics into actionable insights



As with all metrics, tracking alone isn't enough to improve the candidate experience. To guarantee that you're delivering a high-touch experience, it's important to turn communication metrics into actionable insights:

- **Use an ATS that measures communication metrics.** Using an ATS to measure how well your team communicates with candidates ensures consistent tracking, reliable definitions for metrics, and transparency with the whole team accessing the data.
- **Set targets based on your metrics.** Knowing exactly how well your team is communicating, you'll be able to set goals for each metric to respond more quickly and avoid overlooking candidates.

[Salesforce](#), for example, [tracks "ghosting"](#)—or not responding to candidates—on a per-recruiter basis each and every quarter. The company closely measures this metric to meet their goal of closing the loop for every candidate through email and phone communication.

By tracking your communication, like Salesforce, you have quantitative insights to help your recruiting team become responsive and deliver a high-touch candidate experience.

Principle 3

Connect with your candidates through video

For most companies, written communication is the dominant tool (with the exception of the in-person interviews) for communicating with candidates. Text is used to create your job ads, emails, and more.

While text is invaluable, video is a missed opportunity for most talent acquisition teams. Video—like this [example](#) from the [Life at Google](#) YouTube channel—is a powerful way to show rather than tell candidates why the role they’re applying for is exciting.

Job description and recruitment videos introduce a new angle to your communication:

Candidates can visualize your opportunity.

After seeing actual people from your company talk about working there, it’s easier for candidates to imagine themselves in the role, working shoulder-to-shoulder with the people they’ve just heard from first-hand.

Candidates get excited.

Job description and recruitment videos give candidates a snapshot of what life in that role could be like—the cool offices, the smart coworkers, and hints about company culture—that leave candidates feeling inspired about the opportunity.

Principle 3

Create a job description video

Watching an employee talk about the purpose of the job role on their team is much more compelling than reading the “Responsibilities” section of your job ad. A human face in a sea of generic application forms and dull copy-and-paste job descriptions stands out. Not to mention, it adds an emotional, personal quality that helps candidates connect directly with your company culture.

[Research also shows](#) that people enjoy job description videos in their candidate experience, with their popularity expected to grow in future years as more employers embrace the medium.

[According to The Talent Board](#), views for job description videos increased from 5% in 2015 to 8% in 2017

The printer company [Deluxe](#) uses job description videos to create a more personal connection with candidates. They film their [hiring managers talking about the details of a role](#)—responsibilities, the team they would work on, and so on—and share the videos on social media and via email with candidates.

With these videos, Deluxe has seen high response rates by email—sometimes as high as 100%—and higher reach and click rates on LinkedIn and Facebook.



We're Hiring - Senior Accountant
A manager gives a brief overview of the open Senior Accountant role.

Principle 3

Create a recruitment video

A recruitment video is a compelling way to teach candidates about your mission, values, and culture. The combination of so many sensory details—music, footage, narration—is a better way to hook candidates and get them more excited than words alone can.

Watching an employee is an authentic experience for candidates. They can see expressions and hear tone to assess how they feel about their role and company.

The customer service software platform, [Zendesk](#), created a recruitment video that doesn't just tell candidates that their workplace culture and values are great—they show candidates what it's like to work at their company with important, honest details. Their videos:

Answer pressing questions.

The [company's video](#) covers everything candidates might be curious about, from big picture information about the company size and team structure to small everyday details, like footage of the receptionist and the company's favorite lunch spots.

Inject a sense of fun into the hiring process.

It also gets a laugh out of candidates with the company poking fun at themselves about their decorations at 2:37.

zendesk



This is Zendesk
Watch Zendesk's recruitment video to see how they bring the experience of working at Zendesk to life

The video has proven to be successful— it has over 200K views and gets a lot of shout-outs online in discussions around recruitment videos. Potential candidates seem to love it too. The comments for the video are overwhelmingly positive, including “makes me want to work for you guys!” and “now that is a mindset I could work for.”

The Zendesk video is a reminder that words can only get you so far when teaching candidates about your company mission, values, and culture. These ideas are abstract, and companies often use the same buzzwords to describe them to candidates.

Principle 4

Create a culture of internal career mobility

To build a wide, strong hiring pool, nurture your internal candidates just as you do with external candidates.

Internal candidates are worth cultivating for a host of reasons:

They save your company money.

According to SHRM, external hiring is more expensive than internal promotions. Investment banks, for example, pay about [18-20% more](#) for new external hires than internal promotions.

It drives employee engagement and retention.

If you already have an employee who produces great work for your company, you'll motivate them to work even harder by giving them an internal promotion. Plus, an internal promotion encourages the employee to stay, which saves your company money. A resignation would add the extra cost of filling their role with a new hire. According to the [Center for American Progress](#), the cost of turnover is typically 21% of the employee's salary.

Considering this value, it's a good investment to treat internal candidate recruitment like its own fully fledged hiring process. Create processes for improving internal candidates' career development and make it easy for them to apply internally.

By making significant improvements to their candidate experience, you'll encourage employees to go after internal roles.

Principle 4

Help employees improve their job search skills

Without support, employees may feel uncomfortable asking about improving their resume for an internal role. They might think that their manager and company leadership would see that as a red flag that the employee doesn't like their job or that they are gearing up to find a new employer.

However, when you create a culture of internal mobility by actively helping employees identify internal roles and prepare their application materials, you strengthen your internal hiring process. Many employees can be a great fit for internal roles but need help presenting their experience and skills to showcase themselves for the role they want.

There are a few key ways you can help employees improve their internal job applications:

- **Host webinars or in-office tutorials** to offer tips on resume and cover letter writing and interviewing for internal mobility.
- **Create templates of resumes and cover letters** for different types of positions at your company.
- **Build an internal careers website** that offers employees readings and videos about improving their job search skills.

For example, the humanitarian aid organization [Compassion](#) holds a regular career class to show employees that they are fully supported in exploring internal roles. It's offered four times per year for Compassion employees to build their job search skills, offering tutorials covering skills like interviewing and resume and cover letter writing.

when you create a culture of internal mobility... **you strengthen your internal hiring process**

Proactively help your employees [improve their job search skills](#), and they'll not only feel more comfortable going after internal roles—they'll also be equipped to go through the interview process and secure the position if they're the right fit.

Principle 4

Show internal candidates other career options

Actively connecting employees with other positions is important since few people keep regular tabs on their own company's Careers page. Unless they're working in HR, there's a good chance that they'll miss news about your company's current openings.

Instead of expecting employees to seek out internal roles, take a proactive approach to their promotion:

- **Send a monthly update.** Your HR team, for example, might send a monthly email to employees to update them on hiring news, including current openings. Even if they're not interested, this communication could increase the rate at which employees refer friends and family for your roles.
- **Create an internal jobs database** that lists the different roles at your company with descriptions. Employees can use this resource to consider whether they might be a good fit for other roles. Or, if they have a friend who is interested in a position, they can use the database to decide if they seem qualified for a referral.

T-Mobile

[T-Mobile](#) keeps employees up to speed on internal roles with a company-wide, virtual career fest. At the event, employees can learn about [different roles](#) in other departments throughout the company. The event also includes a "Career Stage" to provide employees with resources to meet their career goals.

By covering all roles and job searching skills, T-Mobile's career fest empowers employees to discover a position that's a great fit and form a plan for building their experience to successfully apply for it.

Monthly updates can increase the rate at which employees refer friends and family for your roles

Principle 5

Don't obsess over metrics

An obsession with recruitment metrics weakens your candidate experience and leads to bad hires.

While some metrics—like a low time-to-hire rate or a high application rate—can indicate a good candidate experience, an over reliance on quantitative data alone is dangerous. For example:

- Prioritizing a low time-to hire rate hurts your company if you're constantly hiring people who are a terrible fit for your team.
- Generating more applications is only useful if your team has the resources to thoroughly vet them all.

Instead, view metrics holistically to see the positive effects of your hiring process that metrics don't always capture.

You might appreciate a low application rate, for example, if you know that you're targeting a small number of niche job platforms that attract better candidates. With this open perspective, you can understand the full impact of your recruitment processes that you can't always measure.

Principle 5

A low (or high) time-to-hire rate isn't always great

Recruiters often aim for a low time-to hire because they want a more efficient, low-cost hiring process.

But having a high time-to-hire doesn't mean you have a problem:

- A longer hiring process gives both you and the candidate the time you need to evaluate each other and ensure a good fit.
- Many candidates appreciate having an extended timeline to figure out whether your company and role are the right career move for them.

... having a high time-to-hire *doesn't mean* you have a problem



[Red Branch Media](#) takes the time they need to fully assess candidates instead of trying to lower their time-to-hire. They have [four "layers" in their hiring process](#) to fully evaluate candidates. Layer one, for example, is a phone call to assess candidates' technical skills, while layer two is a candidate assignment. By building enough time into their hiring, Red Branch has enough information to find the best candidate.

[Facebook](#) also doesn't focus on having a low time-to-hire. Instead, they [schedule multiple interviews](#) with every candidate, so various team members can evaluate them and the candidate can get a sense of the people who they would be working with.

An important caveat to this.

Depending on the candidate, a high time-to-hire can jeopardize your candidate experience. If a candidate is motivated to find a job quickly or has a competing offer, a long, drawn out hiring process will cause frustration and stress. To create a great experience for all applicants, keep every candidate in the loop about your hiring timeline early on, and accelerate your process for top candidates on a tight timeline.

Your candidate experience matters

Whether a candidate is rejected or hired, their recruiting experience has a far-reaching impact on your company. Every aspect of your hiring process—from your responsiveness to your interviewing style—affect whether a candidate will speak well of your employer brand, reapply if rejected, and engage with your company as a consumer.

By following in the footsteps of companies like Ericsson, Salesforce, and T-Mobile—with timely follow-ups, personalized communication, job search resources, and more—each candidate will walk away with a great impression of your brand whether or not they receive an offer.

Like the companies mentioned in this guide, you can attract top talent by building a reputation as a radically candidate-focused employer. Using the five principles outlined above, you can buck hiring conventions in favor of a standout candidate experience designed to distinguish and strengthen your employer brand.



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How Hire can help

Hire by Google is a recruiting app that keeps every part of your hiring process—from sourcing candidates to scheduling interviews—structured and organized. With Gmail, Google Calendar, and other G Suite integrations, Hire ensures that your organization:

Efficiently communicates with candidates.

By centralizing all communications with the candidate in one place, you can easily tell when the candidate was last in touch with a member of the hiring team and coordinate next steps.

Never ghosts a candidate.

When a role is filled, Hire alerts your team of any candidates remaining in the pipeline. You can then update candidates with a rejection instead of leaving them in the dark.

Rediscovered talent.

Use Hire's Candidate Discovery feature to find those silver medal candidates. With a complete record of all applicants, they'll be easy to rediscover and connect with when the right opportunity arises.

[Request a demo](#) to find out how Hire can make your recruiting process faster and more collaborative.





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