



MCQUAIG PRESENTS

# THE QUICK GUIDE TO REMOTE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE





## Introduction

Talent acquisition is all about finding the right people for the right roles, but to do that you need the right candidates engaging with you throughout the process. That's where candidate experience comes into play. How your candidates view your employer brand and how they experience your hiring process can inform whether they'll accept a position or pass you by. Given you always want to be attracting quality candidates to your open roles, your approach to candidate experience can make or break your recruiting process.

With a positive candidate experience, your job seekers are more likely to stay in your hiring funnel instead of dropping out of the process. They're also more likely to speak positively about your company with their networks, both in-person and online. Not to mention a strong candidate experience is correlated with higher offer acceptance rates and increased employee satisfaction when a candidate lands in a role. In a remote world, however, providing the same sort of great experience you would have in the office becomes a new talent challenge. How can you make your candidates feel welcome when you can't be together? The purpose of the eBook is to answer that question and give you strategies to leverage with candidates in a virtual environment.

### Did you know?

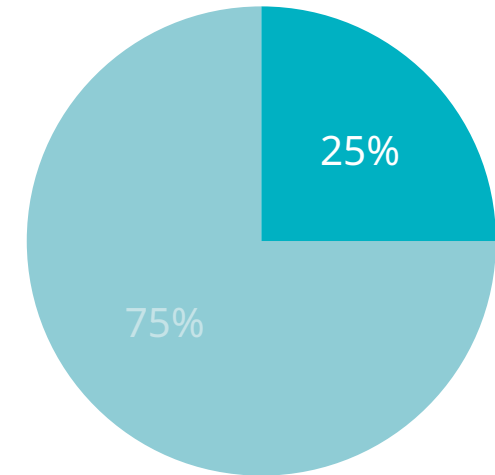
Companies that invest in a strong candidate experience improve their quality of hire by 70%.<sup>1</sup>



## What do the numbers say?

Let's start by looking at some of the stats about candidate experience to see what we can learn from what's already happening.

- A positive candidate experience makes candidates 38% more likely to accept a job offer<sup>2</sup>
- Only 39% of hiring teams receive formal interview training<sup>3</sup>
- 60% of job seekers quit in the middle of an application because of its length and complexity<sup>4</sup>
- 79% of candidates report using social media to research companies and jobs<sup>5</sup>
- 69% of candidates say a negative candidate experience will turn them off a company forever<sup>6</sup>



Only **25%** of candidates rate their candidate experience as great<sup>7</sup>

We can see job seekers take candidate experience seriously and when they aren't provided with a positive experience, there are consequences for employers. Strong candidates met with a poor experience might walk away from the company forever, even if they'd be great for another role later on. These unhappy candidates are also highly likely to talk about their experience, damaging a company's employer brand and making it harder to attract quality candidates in the future. With so much riding on what type of experience you can provide, what can you do to improve your approach?



## Candidate experience starts before the interview

Let's start exploring some strategies you can use to improve your remote candidate experience before you even have candidates to meet. How you set up your recruitment search will impact your candidates so consider them right from the start.

### *Know what you're looking for*

The secret to a successful remote hiring and a great candidate experience is to plan in advance. Hiring and interviewing through a screen is a different kind of experience so you need to make sure you understand every aspect of your hiring process and have a clear vision of what kind of candidate you want to find. One way to do this is by creating an ideal candidate benchmark before you start sourcing to help guide your efforts. This can improve your chances of finding candidates who are a better match to your desired criteria and will fit into your existing culture, rather than trying to hire without a clear direction.

### *Change your job descriptions*

Based on the benchmarks you create, take another look at your job descriptions. Candidate experience doesn't just happen in the interview. From the moment a candidate is exposed to your brand, their experiences will shape their opinion of an employer. Take a look at your job ads and make sure they aren't inadvertently turning candidates away. Ads that use gender-charged language, for example, might be sorting out strong potential hires just because of how they're written. Try to make your job descriptions accessible and inclusive to any candidate and where possible, try to mention the company's approach to culture or DE&I initiatives to paint a more complete picture of what working there might look like.<sup>8</sup>





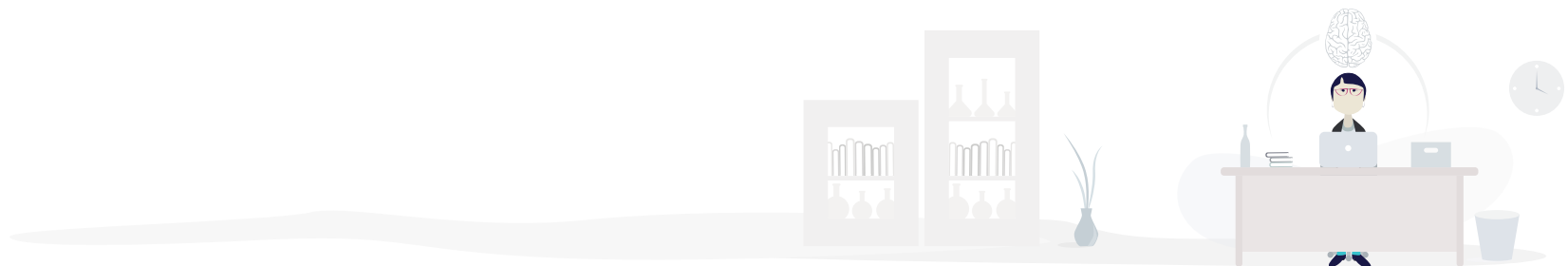
## Candidate experience starts before the interview

### *Think about your application process*

As we've already seen, if your application process is too long it can cost you candidates.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true for high quality job seekers who can afford to be picky as they look for their next role. If they know they'll have companies vying for them, they are less likely to waste their time with cumbersome applications. One common pet peeve for candidates is being asked to upload a resume and then type it all out on the next page. It's a useful setup for employers but a big time waster for candidates. If your process has these sorts of redundancies in them, think about what you can do to remove them and streamline your approach. Much in the same way you want to make it easy for customers to make a purchase, you also want to make it simple for candidates to drop off an application.

### *Pick your tech*

Successful hiring requires time and preparation and that is equally true for candidate experience. We're living in a remote world and odds are, you'll be interviewing online. So prepare for that before a candidate lands in front of you and make sure you feel comfortable with your technology. Choose what sort of platforms or tools you need to leverage through the application process and during the interview. Make sure you are well-versed in how to use your tech and how to troubleshoot if a candidate can't log on or runs into issues. What's your back-up plan if you can't connect the day of your interview? Putting a candidate on hold while you sort through technical issues doesn't provide a great experience so prepare in advance and always have a Plan B.





## Prioritizing candidates when you interview

Once you have the basics set up and applications are flowing in, it's time to actually meet with your job seekers. Let's examine a few strategies you can use during your interviews to show candidates you care, even if that has to happen remotely.

### *Be clear about the process*

Conducting an interview online can feel a little weird at first which is why it's a good rule of thumb to over communicate with candidates and be incredibly clear about what they can expect to happen throughout the hiring process.<sup>10</sup> If there are going to be multiple stages, or candidates are meeting multiple people remotely, let them know in advance so they can prepare accordingly. If there are tasks or tests they'll be asked to do, make sure you explain the reasoning and any deadlines. Also make sure candidates have multiple ways to get in touch such as via both email and phone if they run into any issues during the hiring process and need to get in touch.

### *Remote tour*

If it's possible, consider taking a video of the office for prospective candidates. It can be hard for job seekers to envision what life might be like at the company once life goes back to normal and having a video aid can help them gain a better sense of what they're signing on for.<sup>11</sup> Taking a video of the company can show candidates where they'll be working, amenities of the office, and common areas. You might even want to walk around the neighbourhood to show a candidate where they will one day get lunch. It's a nice way to paint a picture of what onsite work will be like without anyone needing to come in for an in-person tour. Plus it communicates to candidates that you're willing to go the extra mile to help them get a better understanding of your company.



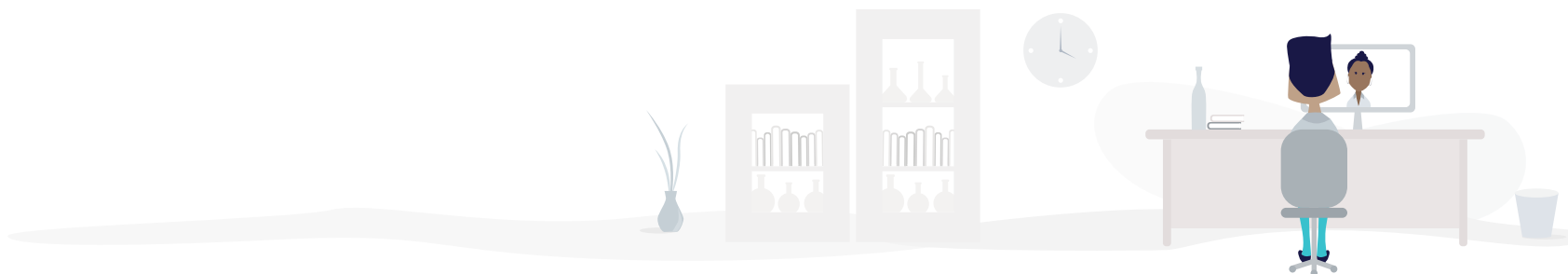
# Prioritizing candidates when you interview

## *Make a candidate information package*

Think about all the information new hires receive on their first day of a job. You probably already have some version of a welcome package created for your onboarding program so why not leverage some of that information with candidates?<sup>12</sup> Providing your candidate with information upfront about the process and the company gives you a better chance at seeing your job seeker perform at their best.

Think about sending them:

- Interview details such as Zoom links or login information
- Video interviewing suggested tips
- Practice questions
- Information about the company history and its views on culture
- Company videos or photos of past events and happy teams
- Product information sheets on top-performing products or services
- Screenshots of online platforms
- A team's recent social calendar if you hold monthly events
- Small messages from future team members about team life





## Prioritizing candidates when you interview

### *Train your interviewers*

Remember that stat about hiring teams not receiving formal interview training? Unfortunately, that's that standard rather than the exception with many companies. It's even more prevalent when it comes to video interview training. If your hiring managers aren't comfortable interviewing through a screen, that will carry through to the candidate and likely lead to an unfocused interview. Instead, spend some time with hiring managers to cover the basics of holding a structured interview with behavioural based interview questions. You should also touch on remote considerations such as lighting, backgrounds, sound, and video quality. By training your interviews in advance, you can ensure a smooth interview process that allows candidates the opportunity to really show off their skills.

### *Send a care package*

Now this tactic is not one you're likely going to use with a crowd. When you get down to your shortlist of candidates, however, you might want to consider trying out a care package if you have a candidate you really want to woo.<sup>13</sup> Think about what a candidate might have been given in the office had they come in for an interview. They may have received a mug or water bottle with your branding on it. Maybe some pens or stationery. Probably a cup of coffee. Those are still things you can provide from a distance, you just have to get a little more creative. Taking the time to send something small to candidates shows how much you want them to take the role and can tip their decision in your favour.





## Prioritizing candidates when you interview

### *Give candidates feedback*

How often do you let candidates know why they didn't get a job? Everyone has had the experience of walking away from an interview feeling great only to hear the company's gone with someone else. It can be frustrating not to know why you weren't picked or what you could do better next time. Ask candidates if they want feedback (some won't) and if they do, try to have a few tips or pointers to share about how the interview went and what they can do to improve. If you use assessments, providing candidates with their results or a feedback report can also help support a positive candidate experience as they are still leaving with something valuable, even if it's not the role they wanted. We recommend our *McQuaig Candidate Feedback* Report to help with this step. It provides candidates with a high-level overview of their assessment results without needing hiring managers to do a full debrief.

### *Ask candidates to evaluate you*

While we're on the subject of feedback, it's not just about the candidate. One of the best ways to see if something is wrong with your hiring process is to ask the people actually going through it to share their opinions. It can be uncomfortable to ask for candid feedback, particularly if candidates didn't get the job, but you can't fix what you're not aware of.<sup>14</sup> Maybe there are unintended barriers in your hiring strategy holding candidates back or maybe your application process is sorting out certain job seekers. Candidates are often eager to tell you the truth about their experience and that information can be invaluable in updating your hiring process to be more candidate friendly. When you take the time to improve and adjust your hiring process as you go, you'll eventually end up with a finely tuned approach that candidates can truly appreciate.





## Think about candidates after the interview

Once the interview is over, you're still not finished with the last few steps of your candidate experience. What should you do to wrap up your time with a candidate?

### *Follow up with candidates*

The candidate blackhole is, unfortunately, alive and well and especially now with everyone living wired in, it sends a terrible message to candidates. It takes mere minutes to follow up with unsuccessful candidates to let them know the outcome of your recruiting search and the benefits are undeniable.<sup>15</sup> Most importantly, it's kind and lets the candidate know they should move on instead of stringing them along while they check their email for months. Following up also improves your employer brand as candidates leave feeling seen by your company. Plus it helps your future talent pools if you can maintain positive relationships with candidates and invite them to apply again. Interviewees put a lot of time and effort into participating in your hiring process. Treat them with the respect they deserve and let them know your hiring outcomes.

### *Build a database*

Speaking of talent pools, if you meet great candidates who are simply not right for the role in question, don't say goodbye forever. Start building a database of their resumes so when roles open, you already have a pool of good candidates to draw from. This helps companies manage turnover is a more sustainable way and helps candidates walk away from an unsuccessful interview feeling better about the process. Everyone likes to feel seen and valued, so while they might not have landed one role, it's always nice to know another chance might be on the horizon. It also keeps the door open for candidates to apply again in the future if they see a position come up they think they'd be a good fit for. If you can consistently provide a positive candidate experience, you never know who might return to you one day.



## Conclusion

Just because we are hiring and interviewing in a remote world, doesn't mean candidate experience needs to suffer. There are a lot of ways you can still show candidates you care from the effort you put into setting up a smooth application process to how you handle video interviews to the way you let them know the end result. Taking the time to consider candidate experience before you start hiring can help you attract a different quality of candidate and keep them engaged with you as you make your decisions. When your job seekers are happy, it can be the secret weapon your hiring process was missing and keep you ahead of the competition.

Of course, good candidate experience is about more than just managing first impressions or providing an organized interview. It's about showing candidates that they will be valued once they become employees and that your company is the one they should want to work for. Show your candidates what their future could look like with you and you'll find you have a much more engaged talent pool to work with. So next time you need to recruit, don't forget about candidate experience. Even at a distance, it should still be a cornerstone of your talent acquisition strategy.

"We see our [candidates] as invited guests to a party, and we are the hosts. It's our job every day to make every important aspect of the [candidate] experience a little bit better."

Jeff Bezos<sup>16</sup>



## Notes

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