



2020

North American Candidate Experience Research Report



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

After measuring candidate experience in nothing but a growth market in the nine years since Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards (CandEs) was founded — then came COVID-19 and our 10th anniversary year.

However, regardless of what the world looks like, our mission has always focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience with industry benchmarks that highlight accountability, fairness and business impact.

Every year we work with hundreds of employers big and small across industries around the world. We help employers collect their own candidate experience feedback and sentiment and then compare them against all the other employers in our annual benchmark research program. This in turn helps reiterate to HR and recruiting teams that treating every person well who expresses an interest in working for them is not only the right thing to do but a compelling business necessity.

Each year, uncovering and publishing the insights that employers need in order to raise the bar on their own candidate experience is a continuing labor of love for us that has now expanded to four regions: North America, EMEA, APAC and Latin America. Overall, we've now worked with more than 1,000 employers, and over 1,000,000 of their candidates have participated in our confidential and anonymous benchmark research since 2011. We then publish the names of those employers that have the highest positive candidate ratings and their best practices so companies everywhere can benefit.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the participating HR and talent acquisition leaders and their teams, a Talent Board dedicated staff, supportive volunteers and industry evangelists, and an extraordinary group of supportive sponsors who share our vision and mission.

This year was a year like no other, and while many companies across industries have been severely impacted by the global pandemic, there are still many companies that prioritize a quality candidate experience no matter what the world looks like. The level of empathic communication this year was higher than ever, and more employers ensured consistent communication and feedback loops with both external and internal candidates.

This year was a year like no other, and while many companies across industries have been severely impacted by the global pandemic, there are still many companies that prioritize a quality candidate experience no matter what the world looks like.

What Talent Board and the CandEs strive to promote with evidence and insight is that every candidate who expresses an interest in a workplace, regardless of whether they move forward to be selected, are still considered customers, potential customers, or at the very least job and brand-related influencers. Understanding this is a business necessity and central to 21st century recruiting practices as we get beyond the global pandemic.

As you can readily see from scanning our latest annual North American benchmark research report that follows, we continue to refine the benchmarks necessary to develop a solid foundation employers can use to define a high-quality candidate experience.

EXECUTIVE BRIEF:

The 2020 North American Talent Board Candidate Experience (CandE) Benchmark Research Report

We've withstood wave after wave of unexpected changes and transformations this year. But in a year of unprecedented change, it's comforting to know that the components of a great candidate experience haven't changed. Positive trends in candidate experience have moved, however – and not only moved but climbed.

Measuring the experiences of 152,000 candidates across 133 companies in North America, the 2020 Talent Board Research Report found that great candidate experience increased from 25% to 31% since last year, an increase of 24% from 2019. Interestingly, the resentment rate fell from 14% to 8%. So what caused positive associations to climb in 2020 while negative impressions plummeted?

Here at Talent Board, we began tracking candidate experience in 2011, following the 2008 recession. Since then, we've only tracked candidate experience in a growth market. The pandemic-driven recession and social and racial inequity have changed how candidates and employers interact, and those changes have had a positive impact on the candidate experience.

When the COVID-19 shutdown occurred, organizations across the United States came to a full stop almost overnight. With hiring on hold, employers were forced to adopt a much higher level of transparency than under normal circumstances. Employers had to inform candidates in their pipeline that hiring was on hold, or communicate new protocols for virtual hiring. Many organizations posted more empathetic language than usual on their career sites to the same effect, as well as ongoing candidate communications. The overall impact of this transparency? Candidates appreciated the empathetic communication and adopted a more forgiving attitude than we've seen in recent years.

We studied this phenomenon and distilled all the moving parts of the last several months into our 2020 Talent Board Research Report. Here's what you need to know.

Home in On Candidate Expectations

Time and again, we have found five consistent hallmarks of an excellent candidate experience. Organizations that provide an excellent candidate experience are differentiated by these practices:

- **Communicate consistently:** Communication should be consistent across your hiring process, from pre-application to onboarding. You can use a mix of automated tools (usually on the front end) and human interaction (especially in later stages). Communication is the primary differentiator of a good candidate experience.
- **Set expectations:** Don't leave candidates hanging at any stage. Set expectations for when they can expect to hear back from you and what's coming next in the process. Following through on what you tell them is crucial, so set expectations that are realistic on your end.
- **Ask for and provide feedback:** Incorporating feedback opportunities makes the process more engaging and personal. The feedback candidates give you may be negative, but the fact that you ask for it increases their positive impressions. On the flip side, providing feedback to final-stage candidates is essential, too: Let them know why you aren't going to pursue them any further.
- **Embrace transparency and accountability:** The more transparent and accountable you are with candidates, the better their experience will be. They'd rather hear you say that you've put hiring on hold than not hear back at all.
- **Ensure a fair process:** Candidates don't have to feel happy with your decision and won't (after all, most won't land a job at your organization). But they should leave feeling like they were treated fairly in your decision-making process.

If you prioritize these five elements, then you can provide a good candidate experience no matter how the economy is trending.

“Our end game is that, whether they get the job or don't get the job, they walk away feeling like they mattered.”

— Stacy Van Meter, VP of Talent Acquisition, Deluxe Corporation
(Eight-time CandE Award recipient)

Measure the Impact of Automation

Automation plays a pivotal role in your candidate experience strategy. After all, most candidate journeys end after the research and application stages, so most candidates' communication with your brand is almost exclusively automated. The bulk of your candidates, in fact, probably won't speak with an actual person. It's imperative that the automated tools we use enhance the candidate experience.

That's been top-of-mind for HR leaders in 2020. According to [PwC's 2020 HR Technology Survey](#), nearly 60% of HR leaders cited finding, attracting and retaining talent as a primary issue driving their HR technology decisions. But according to [Deloitte's 2020 Global Human Capital Trends Report](#), employers aren't adopting machine-learning tools to replace human recruiters: They see automation as a means to augment and optimize human performance. Intentional use of automation can support a better candidate experience through increased communication, and our research confirms that.

There are several opportunities to use automation to augment candidate experiences throughout your recruiting and hiring processes. Here's where we've measured the most impact.



CHATBOTS

The use of chatbots has increased by **15% since 2019**.

The number of candidates who are "Extremely likely to refer others" increased by:

- **25%** when a chatbot answered questions on the career site
- **29%** when a chatbot answered questions during the application process

When there is more communication and engagement, candidate satisfaction rates go up. Before chatbots, there was no communication at this level.



MOBILE TEXT CAMPAIGNS

The use of mobile text campaigns has jumped by **50% since 2019**.

The number of candidates reporting a positive experience increased by:

- **32%** when candidates can launch a job application directly from a text message alert
- **35%** when candidates receive text message reminders about their next steps



VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Not surprisingly, the use of video interviews climbed by **129%** since 2019.

The number of candidates reporting a positive experience increased by:

- **51%** when they were provided with a video preparing them for the digital interview process

Candidates want to know what to expect from the digital interview process, so the more preparation you offer, the more likely candidates are to have a favorable impression.



JOB SIMULATION ASSESSMENTS

The use of job simulation assessments has increased by **26%** since 2019.

"I'm excited about how we're using technology and process improvements to drive transparency."

— **Melissa Corwin, VP of Employee Experience, AT&T (Eight-time CandE Award recipient)**

Ultimately, candidates don't care what your tech stack looks like, only how it impacts their experience. Technology and automation make it possible for you to augment your human recruiters to provide the best possible candidate experience.

Highlight the Benefits of Feedback

We have consistently seen that two-way feedback is a key differentiator of a good candidate experience. But the input you offer candidates shouldn't be confined to telling candidates why they aren't qualified. Give late-stage candidates feedback on what they should do to improve their career path or match their job role.

The number of candidates reporting a positive experience increased by:

- 15% when candidates are given specific feedback on their job fit
- 20% when they're given feedback on an assessment they were asked to take

Candidates know that you're making a decision based on their assessment results. Being transparent about what the assessment reveals increases their perceptions of fairness. Follow up the feedback with some tactical advice based on the assessment results that they can implement moving forward.

Personally communicating with candidates and setting their expectations in the late stages of the hiring process signals that they are a priority.

The number of candidates reporting a positive experience increased by:

- 52% when recruiters or HR professionals inform candidates of the post-interview steps and follow up in the stated time frame
- 51% when the hiring manager informs candidates of the post-interview steps and follows up in the stated time frame

Engagement before the start date drives better experiences and lays the groundwork for retention.

The number of candidates reporting a positive experience increased by:

- 76% when the hiring manager calls a selected candidate prior to their start date
- 83% when candidates are given the opportunity to communicate their goals, meet fellow team members and get their questions answered before their start date

Feedback, continued communication through the late stages and engagement prior to onboarding result in candidates feeling valued and appreciated.

“We use a continuous feedback loop to see what we can do better.”

— Jonathan Liepe, HR Supervisor,
Colorado Springs Utilities
(Eight-time CandE Award recipient)

Illuminate a Path Forward

We've experienced a lifetime of change in 2020, but our objectives moving forward remain crystal clear. The components of an excellent candidate experience haven't changed, but now we have better tools and insights to continue on our forward trajectory. By integrating new technology and implementing meaningful feedback, your organization can curate an experience that leaves candidates with positive impressions.

“We really looked at all the touch points a candidate could experience.”

— Bill Meeboer, Senior Leader of Early Career
Pipelines & TA Programs, Lockheed Martin
(Eight-time CandE Award recipient)

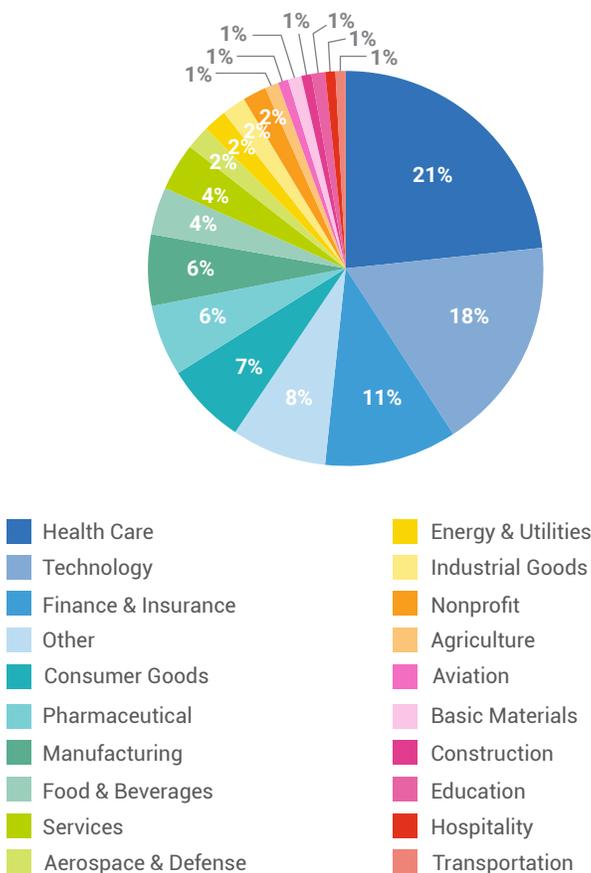
2020 North American CandE Benchmark Research Overview

Over the past 10 years, Talent Board has identified some clear competitive differences between CandE Award winners (the top-ranked benchmark companies big and small across industries) and all other participating companies. Even in a year like 2020, this still held true.

CandE Award winners are more often shown to:

- Consistently acknowledge initial job-seeker interest and provide definitive closure when no longer pursuing candidates
- Deliver consistent candidate communication from pre-application to onboarding
- Ask for candidate feedback and provide feedback more often with rejected candidates as well as new hires
- Set better expectations about the recruiting process for candidates from application to offer
- Hold themselves more accountable for the overall recruiting process and resulting candidate experience while measuring it regularly and consistently

Figure 1. Participating Employers by Industry



Participating Employers by Industry, Revenue & Employee Size

Just over 50% of this year's employer research participants were from the health care, technology, finance & insurance and consumer goods industries. These results are slightly different from 2019 due to the impact of COVID-19 on certain industries. Also, nearly 70% of employers said they generated over \$1 billion in revenue annually, and 82% of companies that participated in the 2020 North America benchmark research had over 2,500 total employees (see Figures 1, 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Participating Employers by Revenue

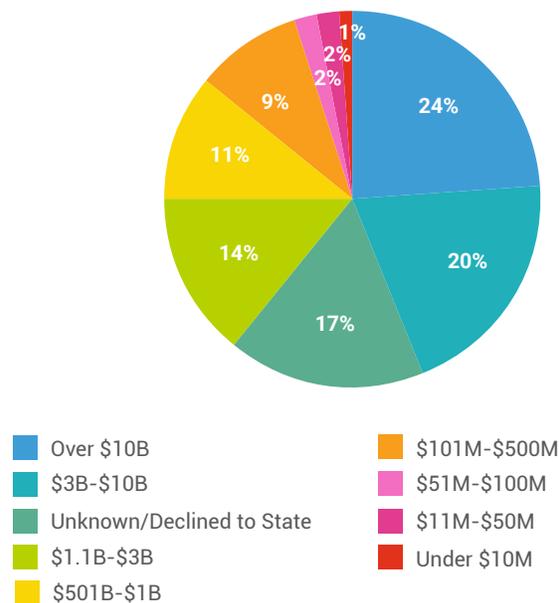
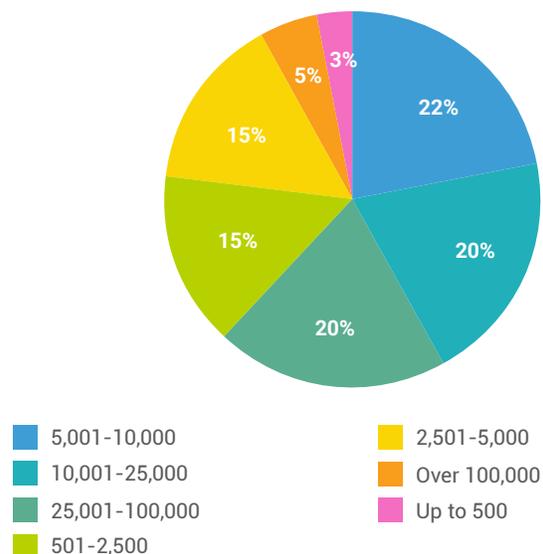


Figure 3. Participating Employers by Number of Employees



Participating Employers' Operating Models

Employers can and do vary how their talent acquisition operational models are set up. Usually the majority of the models fall into these three types: centralized (central recruiting team that ensures consistent hiring processes across the organization), decentralized (separate recruiting teams not necessarily following consistent hiring processes across the organization) and outsourced (where large portions of talent acquisition are handled by third-party vendors like recruitment process outsourcing firms). Some companies can move from one model to another every few years depending on how the business evolves — or because of disruptive impacts like COVID-19. The centralized model increased from 2019 by 8%, and the decentralized model decreased by 26%. Outsourced recruiting decreased in 2020 by 31% (see Table 1).

A company's overall candidate experience has a definitive potential impact on the business, and that impact is definitely improving incrementally, from talent attraction through to onboarding. The majority of North American employers in 2020 (74%) described their overall candidate experience as leading or competing, while nearly 27% described it as improving and none described it as lagging (see Table 2). This year CandE Awards winners that identified as "competing" increased by 24% over 2019, versus an 18% decrease of winners that said they identified as "leading" this year compared to last (see Table 2).

Table 1. Talent Acquisition Operational Model

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Centralized (dedicated recruiters, recruiting org structure and budget)	68%	63%	63%	72%	66%
Decentralized (division/line of business dedicated recruiters, org structure and budget)	14%	19%	18%	13%	12%
Outsourced (RPO, HRO, third-party vendor)	11%	16%	13%	8%	6%
Other	7%	2%	6%	7%	16%

Table 2. How Employers Describe Their Own Overall Candidate Experience

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Lagging	0%	2%	1%	2%	4%	3%	5%
Lagging - Winners	0%	2%	2%	0%	2%	2%	4%
Improving	27%	22%	25%	33%	30%	30%	20%
Improving - Winner	3%	13%	12%	22%	12%	20%	18%
Competing	61%	63%	60%	30%	43%	43%	49%
Competing - Winners	85%	68%	67%	42%	44%	35%	48%
Leading	13%	13%	14%	25%	23%	23%	27%
Leading - Winners	14%	17%	18%	36%	42%	44%	30%

Perception Gaps

For the past two years, Talent Board has started to look more closely at candidate experience perception gaps – the differences between how employers self-assess their candidate experience journey and how candidates actually rate their experiences. Although we use primarily 4-point and 5-point scale ratings throughout our surveys, these are all easily converted to Net Promoter Scale (NPS).

When converting a 4-point scale to NPS, you subtract the 1 score (lowest) from the 4 score (highest). For example, when we ask candidates how likely they are to refer others, the scale looks like this:

4 – Extremely Likely

3 – Likely

2 – Unlikely

1 – Definitely Not

The resulting score is then NPS. For a 5-point scale, you subtract the 1 and 2 scores from the 4 and 5 scores and that's NPS.

Respondents are then grouped as follows, based on their responses:

- **PROMOTERS** (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep buying and refer others, fueling growth.
- **PASSIVES** (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic customers who are vulnerable to competitive offerings.
- **DETRACTORS** (score 0-6) are unhappy customers who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters yields the Net Promoter Score, which can range from a low of -100 (if every customer is a detractor) to a high of 100 (if every customer is a promoter).

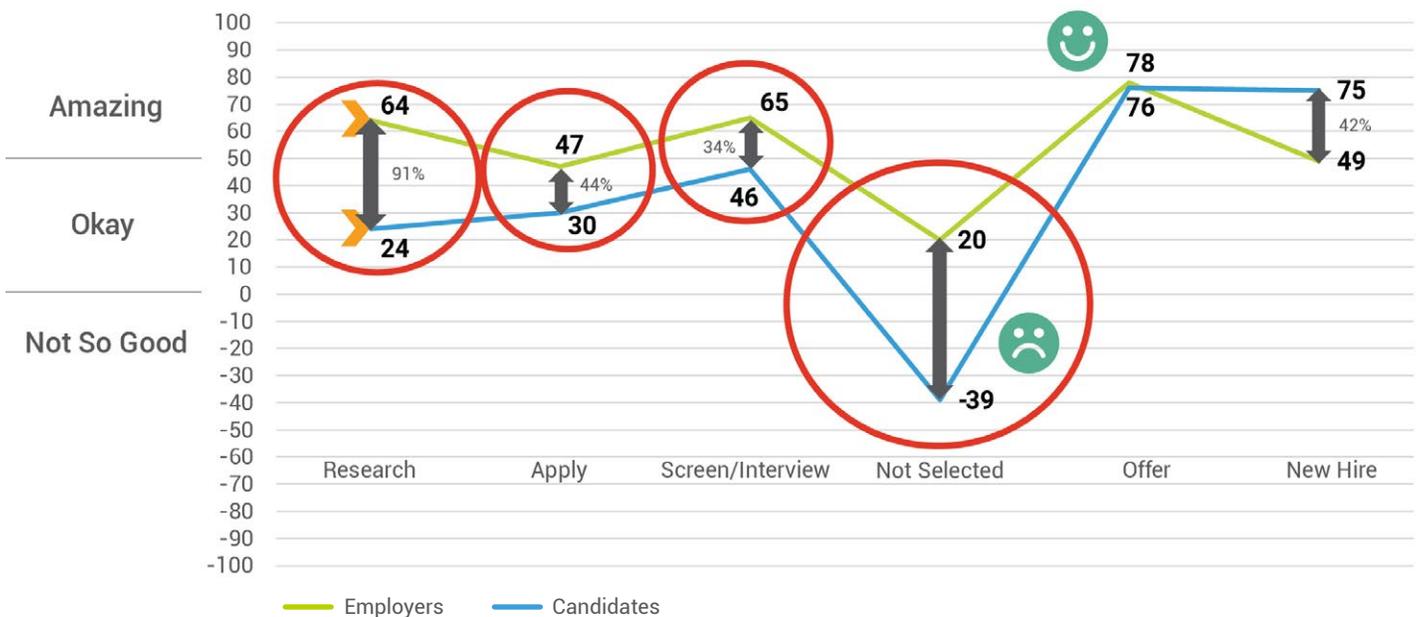
We simplify it even further for our CandE Benchmark Research and group results as follows:

- **AMAZING** (scores above 50) are loyal candidates who will most likely keep referring others based on their experience.
- **OKAY** (scores between 0-50) are candidates who are satisfied but may or may not be too enthusiastic about referring others based on their experience.
- **NOT SO GOOD** (negative scores) are unhappy candidates who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Any NPS score above 0 can be considered OK. The global management company Bain & Co., the source of the NPS system, suggests that anything above 50 is amazing, and above 80 is world class.

When we look at the candidate journey NPS ratings from 2019 (see Figure 4), it's clear that there were significant negative perception gaps from the Research stage through candidates being Not Selected. This means employers rated themselves higher than their candidates did. Then, when we look at Offer and New Hire (onboarding) ratings, the gaps level out and flip positive.

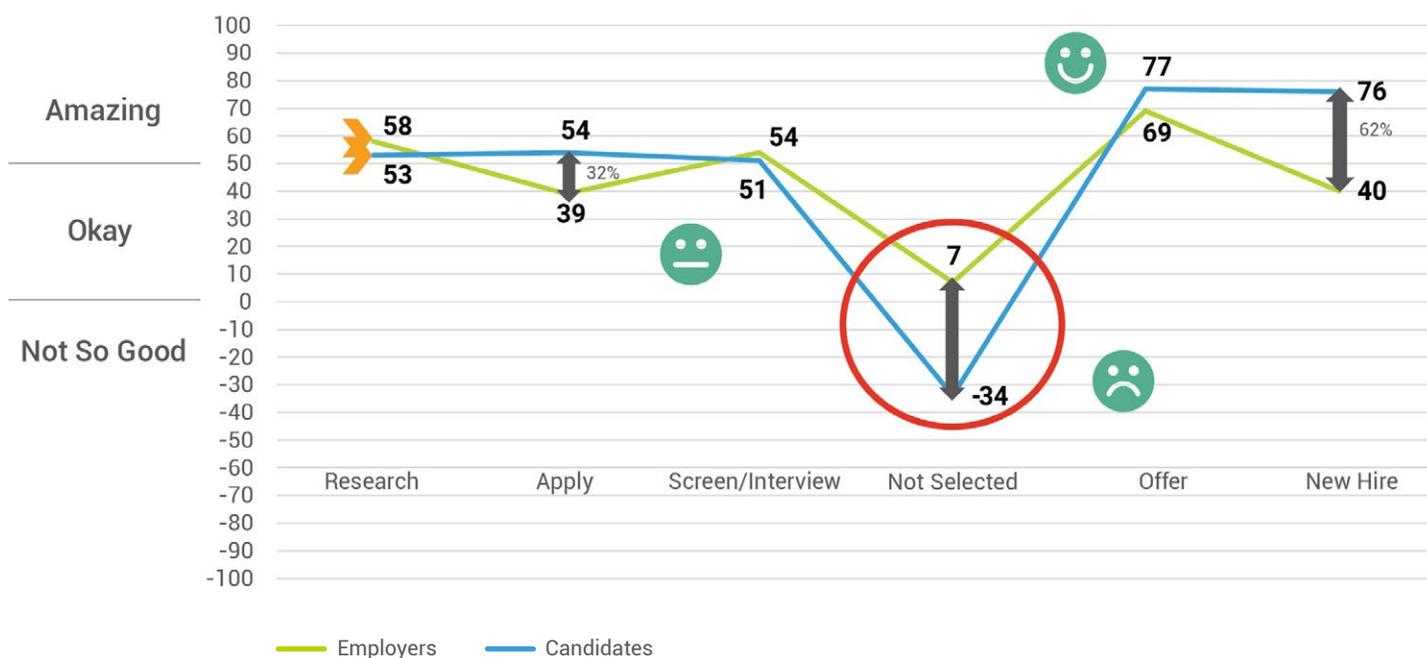
Figure 4. 2019 North American Candidate Experience Journey Rating Perception Gaps



Based on what we know about how 2020 is different, with employers exhibiting a great level of empathetic communication and candidates being more forgiving, the negative perception gaps all but vanished, except for when candidates are rejected (see Figure 5), which there is usually always a gap. Again, we see the same pattern in the Offer and New Hire (onboarding) ratings, where the gaps level out and flip positive. We have also noticed the past few years that employers feel they have work to do at the onboarding stage, and with the continuing virtualization of onboarding, that will mostly likely extend well into 2021.

Based on what we know about how 2020 is different, the negative perception gaps all but vanished, except for when candidates are rejected.

Figure 5. 2020 North American Candidate Experience Journey Rating Perception Gaps



Asking for Candidate Feedback

Year after year, Talent Board benchmark research shows that communication and feedback loops are ongoing differentiators of a more positive candidate experience.

This year, 34% of participating employers said they ask for feedback after a candidate is hired, which is down 15% from 2019.

The good news is that the proportion of employers asking for feedback after applying and interviewing has increased 80% and 21%, respectively, from 2019. The percentage of companies that don't survey candidates didn't change (see Table 3).

Recruiter and Hiring Manager Accountability

Fifty percent of the 55 2020 North American CandE Award winners measure candidate experience regularly and incorporate it into their recruiter dashboards (with or without performance incentives), which is up 11% from 2019 (see Table 4). Also, monetary performance incentives among all companies are up 100% in 2020.

Table 3. When Employers Ask for Candidate Experience Feedback

	2020	2019
Before candidates apply	1%	1%
After candidates apply, but before the interview	9%	5%
After candidates are interviewed but before they're hired	23%	19%
After candidates are hired	34%	40%
All of the above	17%	18%
We don't survey candidates about their experience	17%	17%

Table 4. How Candidate Experience Is Aligned to Recruiter Performance

	All Employers 2020	CandE Winners 2020	All Employers 2019	CandE Winners 2019
It isn't discussed unless there is a problem that is brought to our attention.	14%	0%	13%	7%
It is regularly discussed in informal performance reviews with every recruiter.	21%	18%	20%	15%
It is regularly discussed in formal reviews but the measure is subjective and not formalized. There are no (performance) incentives.	28%	32%	27%	32%
It is regularly discussed in formal reviews. Candidate experience is measured and incorporated into the recruiter dashboard. There are no (performance) incentives.	23%	34%	27%	35%
It is regularly discussed in formal reviews. Candidate experience is measured and incorporated into the recruiter dashboard. There are non-monetary (performance) incentives (gift cards, trips, etc.).	2%	3%	6%	7%
It is regularly discussed in formal reviews. Candidate experience is measured and incorporated into the recruiter dashboard. There are monetary (performance) incentives (salary increase, bonus, etc.).	10%	13%	5%	3%

While we don't ask employers about hiring manager performance and candidate experience per se, we do ask if they give feedback to the candidates who have interviewed as finalists and who have not been selected, as well as whether hiring managers are required to do so.

Three-quarters of the 2020 participating North American employers responded that their hiring managers give feedback to internal candidates, but less than 20% give feedback to external or referral candidates (see Table 5).

Also, 41% of companies have no standard follow-up for finalists. However, 54% of companies establish a follow-up date with finalists, keep the date and establish additional follow-ups as necessary until the position is filled.

Three-quarters of the 2020 participating North American employers responded that their hiring managers give feedback to internal candidates.

Table 5. Hiring Managers and Candidate Feedback

	Internal	External	Referral
Yes, hiring managers are required to make a phone call and provide limited feedback.	78%	10%	12%
Yes, hiring managers provide approved detailed feedback.	73%	16%	12%

10 Key Takeaways From the 2020 North American Candidate Experience Research Report:

1 INCREASED EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION

When the COVID-19 shutdown occurred, organizations across the United States came to a full stop almost overnight. With hiring on hold, employers were forced to adopt a much higher level of transparency than under normal circumstances. Employers had to inform candidates in their pipeline that hiring was on hold, or communicate new protocols for virtual hiring. Many organizations posted more empathetic language than usual on their career sites to the same effect, and did the same for ongoing candidate communications. The overall impact of this transparency? Candidates appreciated the empathetic communication and adopted a more forgiving attitude than we've seen in recent years.

2 SUSTAINING CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ISN'T EASY

Over 1,000 companies have participated in the Talent Board Candidate Experience Benchmark Research Program to date, but only five companies have won CandE Awards 8-9 times out of the 10 years since the program was founded — four companies in North America (AT&T, Colorado Springs Utilities, Deluxe and Lockheed Martin), and one in EMEA (Intel). It's one thing to identify recruiting process improvements and make them, but with constant change hitting business all the time, sustaining a quality candidate experience isn't easy. In 2020 alone, employers had to navigate a series of external challenges including COVID-19, social and racial inequity and injustice, political upheaval and economic turmoil, while also dealing with a cascade of resulting internal hurdles (budget cuts, reduced recruiting plans and talent investments, and shifts in business plans and priorities).

3 RECRUITING AUTOMATION CONTINUES TO INCREASE

While not new to recruiting or to 2020, automating processes with technologies continued to increase this year in light of leaner recruiting teams and increased applications, especially with machine learning and other smart technologies. The reality is that most candidates who are interested in any job at any company will research and apply — and then that's the end of the road for them. Most will have little to no human interaction and will be dispositioned automatically. However, candidates don't care about a company's tech stack — they care only about getting a job, which most won't get. So instead, they want clear acknowledgment of their interest, consistent communication throughout their experience and definitive closure when they aren't going to be pursued any further. Recruiting technology will continue to become a bigger part of this ongoing candidate engagement.

4 MAKE RESEARCHING YOUR COMPANY EASY FOR CANDIDATES

Two-thirds of candidates from all companies gave a 4- or 5-star rating for the information they found on employers while doing research. That figure jumps to 74% for CandE winners — a 10% difference. CandE winners also implement career sites in multiple languages 6% more often for candidates compared with all participating companies, share awards received for employee experience 11% more often on their career sites, and post answers to why people want to work there 5% more often. And CandE-winning employers said they make employee testimonials available 11% more often compared with all other companies. CandE winners are also utilizing chatbots to answer questions on their career sites 15% more often compared with all participating companies. They're also using career newsletters to communicate with potential candidates 40% more often compared with all participating companies.

5 LET CANDIDATES KNOW WHERE THEY STAND

Candidates want to understand their progress and know how much of an application is left, and they are getting this information often with CandE Award winners, although more companies continue to catch up. CandE-winning employers still have small margins when it comes to how long the application process will take, providing a process indicator as to how much they're completed and notifying candidates about next steps post-application. CandE-winning employers said they explain why they're using a specific assessment during the application process 45% of the time versus 41% for all employers combined, a 9% difference. CandE-winning employers also said they tell candidates how to learn about their application status 68% of the time versus 64% for all employers, a 6% difference.

6 INTERVIEW FAIRNESS AND STRUCTURE

At this point in the recruiting process, most employers are engaging candidate semifinalists and finalists more consistently and fairly. But on average, CandE winners have a competitive edge when it comes to candidates' perception of satisfaction about being able to present their skills and experience (5% difference) and feeling that the job interview process was fair (8% difference). CandE-winning companies conduct structured interviews 23% more often compared with other companies. This is important, as it relates directly to the candidates' overall perception of fairness in the process and ensures more consistency from the interviewers and the selection criteria. By contrast, CandE-winning companies conduct unstructured interviews 64% less often compared with all other companies.

7 FEEDBACK LOOPS ARE CRITICAL

Candidates for CandE-winning companies who were asked for feedback at every stage of the recruiting process indicated they were more likely to increase their relationship with the employer. And while all stages are important, those candidates who make it to the screening and interviewing phase are most likely to be encouraged to apply again in the future. When asked for feedback after the interview process, there was little difference between CandE-winning companies and all other companies, most likely due to going virtual, but these candidates overall were still 64% more likely to increase their relationship with the employer compared with those who weren't asked for feedback. For those candidates receiving general feedback after the interview, CandE-winning companies had an 80% higher great experience (willingness to increase their relationship) than those who didn't get feedback. And for those who received specific feedback, CandE-winning companies had a 105% higher great experience than those who didn't get feedback.

8 OFFER TIME AND ONBOARDING ENGAGEMENT

Time is always a crucial factor in recruiting, especially for those candidates who get the offers. If employers make the offer within one week of the final interview, the candidates' great experience and willingness to increase their relationship with the employer increased 67% for all employers. For CandE-winning companies, it increased 69%. More employers, whether they've won a CandE Award or not, are investing more in communication and engagement with new hires before their start date. The more engagement prior to their start date, the better a retention starter it becomes. For those candidates who get multiple options to communicate goals, meet team members and get questions answered prior to their start date, their great experience increased 83%. When they completed all their new-hire forms online in an onboarding system, their great experience increased 68%. And if they get a call from the hiring manager, their great experience and willingness to increase their relationship with the employer increased 68%.

PERCEPTION GAPS

For the past two years, Talent Board has started to look more closely at candidate experience perception gaps – the differences between how employers self-assess their candidate experience journey and how candidates actually rate their experiences. When we look at the candidate journey ratings from 2019, it's clear that there were significant negative perception gaps from the Research stage through candidates being rejected. Meaning, the employers rated themselves higher than their candidates did. Then, when we look at Offer and New Hire (onboarding) ratings, the gaps level out and flip positive. Based on what we know about how 2020 is different, with employers exhibiting a great level of empathetic communication and candidates being more forgiving, the negative perception gaps all but vanished, except for when candidates are rejected, which there is usually always a negative gap. Again, we see the same pattern in the Offer and New Hire (onboarding) ratings, where the gaps level out and flip positive.

THE BUSINESS IMPACT OF CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

COVID-19 wasn't the only disrupter in 2020. Social and racial injustice and inequity, political divisions, and just overall upheaval everywhere made 2020 a year like none other. What we weren't expecting was to see such a surge in a positive candidate experience globally. But that's exactly what our data showed this year. For the relationship question we ask candidates, "What kind of relationship will you have with the employer going forward based on your experience?" Those who answered they had a great experience, and were willing to increase their relationship (apply again, refer others and, for consumer-based companies, make purchases) increased 24% from 2019. Conversely, those North American candidates who said they had a poor experience in 2020 and were no longer willing to associate with an employer actually decreased 43% from 2019. Again, we saw a greater level of empathetic communication between employers, candidates and employees like never before. And while there are still millions out of work at this writing, candidates were more forgiving and more likely to apply again, refer others, have brand affinity and, for consumer-based companies, many of which have struggled, be more willing to make and/or influence purchases.

About Talent Board

Founded in 2011, Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards is the first non-profit research organization focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience. Talent Board delivers annual recruiting and hiring industry benchmark research that highlights accountability, fairness and the business impact of candidate experience. More information can be found at <https://www.thetalentboard.org>.

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EXECUTIVE BRIEF:

The 2020 North American Business Impact of Candidate Experience

Before COVID-19, we were in nothing but a growth market globally and the lowest unemployment rate in decades. It was a candidate market, as well. In fact, Talent Board had only been measuring candidate experience since 2011, and at that point we were already well on our way out of the Great Recession.

What's interesting is that, even in a growth market, candidate resentment was increasing globally, especially in North America. Employers big and small across industries were poised for a banner year. Until the global pandemic happened.

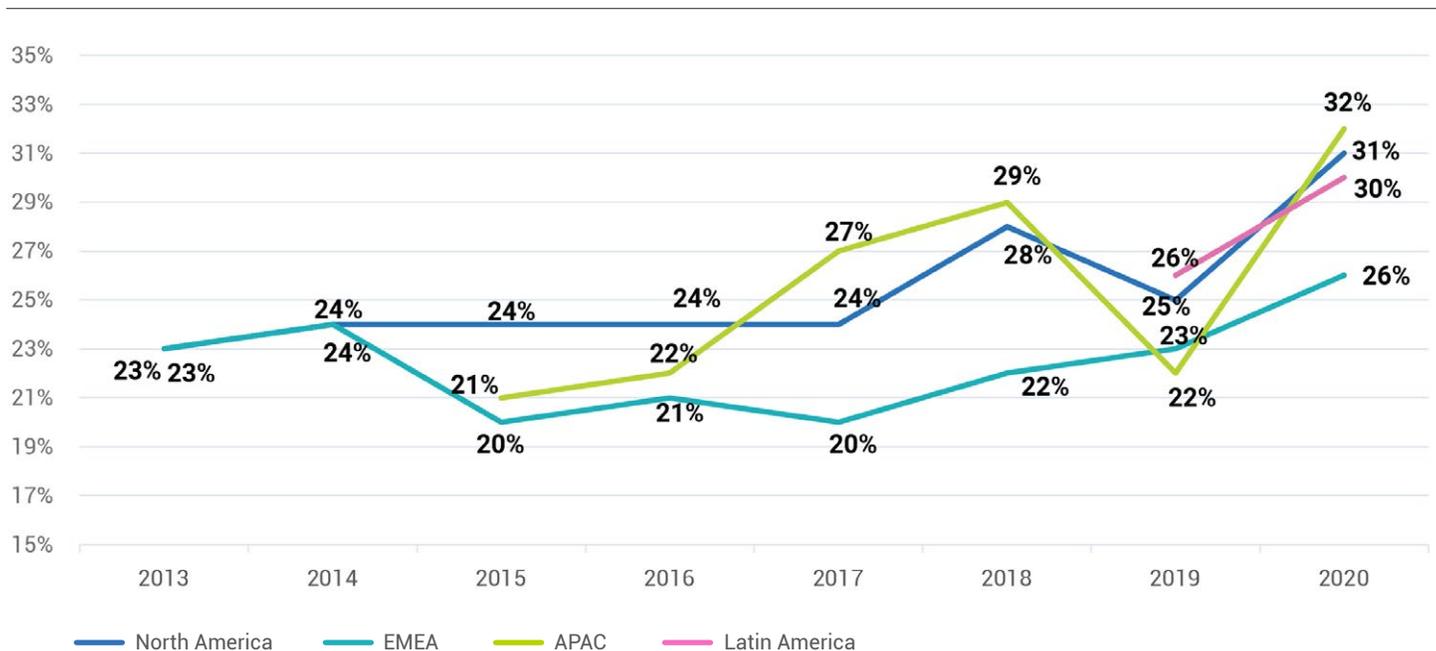
Businesses were locked down. Candidates prepping to be interviewed were put on hold. New hires ready to start were put on hold. Companies had to quickly triage and flip to a virtual world – if they could – and figure out how to keep the business moving forward. Industries like travel and leisure, consumer goods, restaurants, food and beverage, some services sectors and others were hit pretty hard very fast (and continue to be at the time of this writing).

COVID-19 wasn't the only disrupter in 2020. Social and racial injustice and inequity, political divisions and just overall upheaval everywhere made 2020 a year like no other.

What we weren't expecting was to see such a surge in a positive candidate experience globally. But that's exactly what our data showed this year. We ask candidates, "What kind of relationship will you have with the employer going forward based on your experience?" In North America, those who answered they had a great experience and were willing to increase their relationship (apply again, refer others and, for consumer-based companies, make purchases) increased 24% from 2019 (see Figure 1).

COVID-19 wasn't the only disrupter in 2020. Social and racial injustice and inequity, political divisions and just overall upheaval everywhere made 2020 a year like no other.

Figure 1. Great Candidate Experience Globally



Conversely, those North American candidates who said they had a poor experience in 2020 and were no longer willing to associate with an employer actually decreased 43% from 2019 (see Figure 2).

What we know now is that this tumultuous year brought out a greater level of empathetic communication between employers, candidates and employees like never before. And while there are still millions out of work, candidates also became more forgiving this year. Our hope is that a viable vaccine makes it safe once again to get everyone back to work, back to school and the world functioning again.

And what will 2021 bring? No matter what the world looks like today and tomorrow, we at the Talent Board continue to focus our research on the business impact of candidate experience, from pre-application to onboarding. And every time we share the potential impact we find each year, we get more and more nods of acknowledgment – this is quite real.

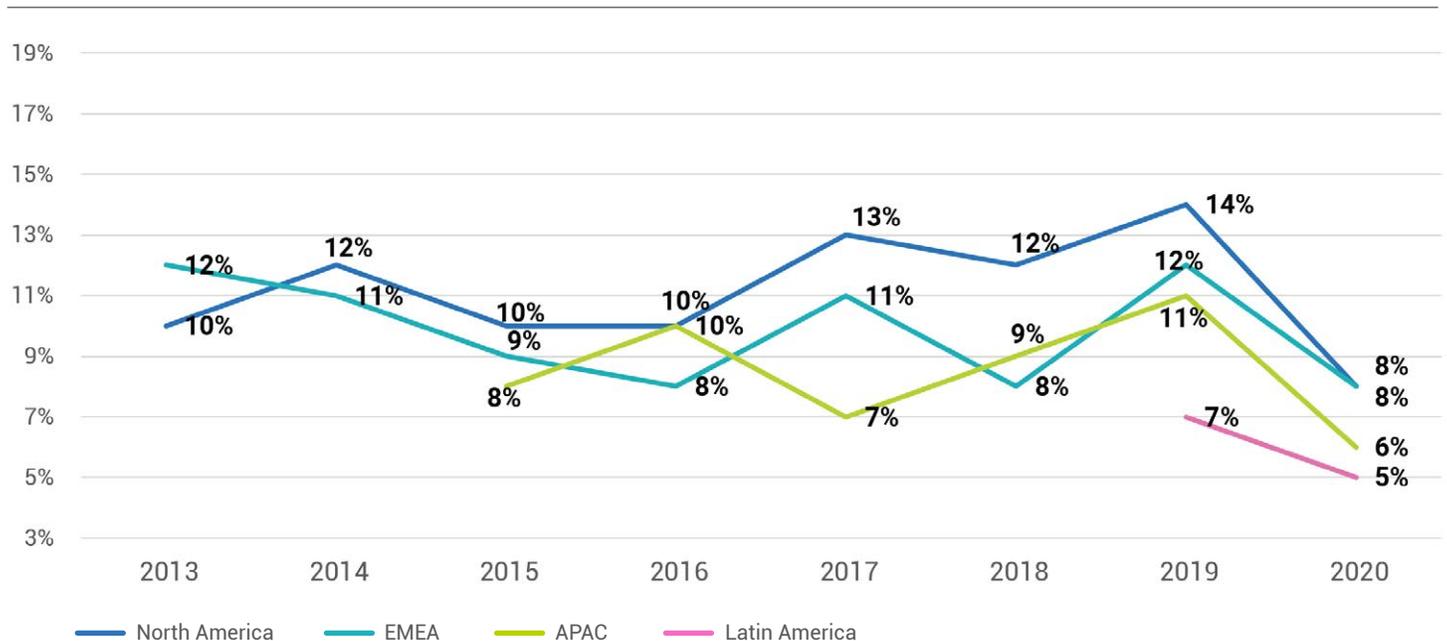
As mentioned above, candidates who believe they have had a “negative” overall experience tell us every year they will take their alliances, product purchases and business relationships somewhere else. This means a potential loss of revenue for

consumer-based businesses while hurting referral networks for all companies and impacting which future-fit and silver-medalist candidates will apply again.

However, the good news is that those who had a “great” overall experience say they’ll definitely increase their employer relationships – they’ll apply again, refer others and make purchases and/or influence purchases when applicable. These aren’t just the job finalists or those hired. The majority are individuals who research and apply for jobs but who aren’t hired.

What’s important to keep in mind is that the sheer number of candidates who employers reject during the recruiting process can quickly impact the business and the brand (whatever the world looks like), in both positive and negative ways. That’s not to say that those hired aren’t important to the business. Of course they are – they’re the individuals who help grow and sustain the business. And while all candidates, hired or not, can impact how the business is perceived by other potential candidates, it’s simply that those candidates that are not hired that need more attention paid to their perceived overall experience.

Figure 2. Poor Candidate Experience Globally (Resentment Rate)



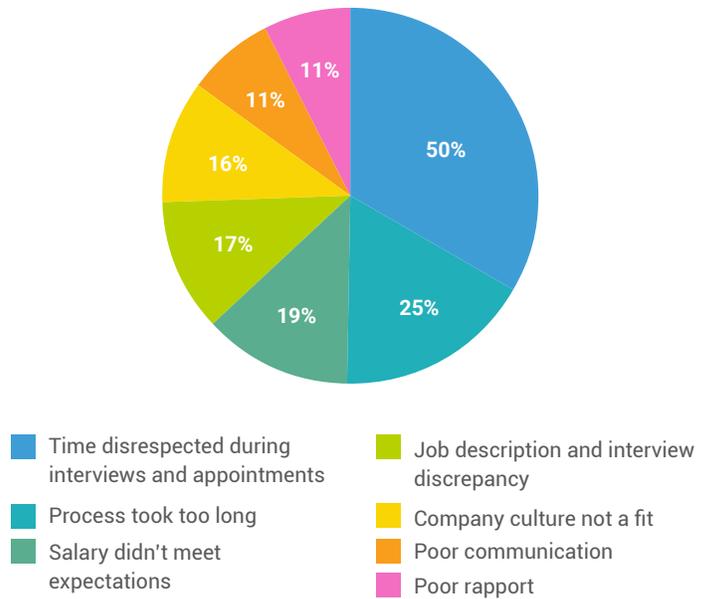
Candidates Who Withdraw from the Recruiting Process

When it comes to candidates withdrawing themselves from the recruiting process, there are many reasons as to why. But when we look at the Talent Board North American data, for those candidates who have an overall poor (1-star) experience on a 1-5 Likert Scale, the three most negative reasons candidates withdrew in 2020 were:

1. Their time was disrespected during interviews and appointments
2. The recruiting process just took too long
3. Salary didn't meet expectations

Although it's not the same pool of candidates year to year, what's interesting is how consistent year after year these reasons are in North America, even considering the impact of COVID-19 (see Figure 3). Because of a tight job market where more qualified candidates were in the driver's seat than in previous years, a disparity between salary expectations and reality is not a surprise.

Figure 3. Most Negative Reasons Why Candidates Withdraw



Candidates Share With Their Inner Circles and Publicly Online

The fact is, people will still talk to one another about their good and bad candidate experiences, especially when we consider their inner circles (i.e., significant others, close friends, colleagues, peers, etc.). When we look at how many candidates share their positive and negative experiences with their inner circle, the trend year after year is clear. This year, 77% of candidates said they shared their positive experiences, and 52% shared their negative experiences (see Table 1).

Sharing of the negative experience is down 27% from 2019, which isn't surprising based on what we discussed earlier. Regardless, these trends have remained fairly consistent year after year with different populations of companies and their candidates.

This year, 77% of candidates said they shared their positive experiences.

Table 1. Candidates Sharing Positive and Negative Experiences With Their Inner Circles

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Positive Experience	77%	76%	78%	77%	81%	80%	81%
Negative Experience	52%	71%	65%	61%	67%	66%	66%

The percentages drop when we look at how many candidates share their positive and negative experiences publicly online (i.e., social media posts, Glassdoor reviews, Indeed reviews, etc.), but there are still significant populations willing to share their experiences publicly (see Table 2). The consistency of this data reveals that employers cannot afford to ignore the impact of candidates sharing their experiences online.

The positive experience here went up 14% from 2019. Also, in 2020, 43% of North American candidates that had a negative experience answered that “this information is private and I don’t share publicly.” That’s because most candidates don’t want to shout from the rooftops when they didn’t get the job, only when they get it.

Another interesting difference we found this year was that men said they would share positive experiences 9% more often with their inner circle than women, but there was no difference in sharing negative experiences. The results shift with sharing publicly, with women sharing positive experiences 11% more often than men. And, again, there was little difference in sharing negative experiences.

The past few years, we hadn’t seen much difference between men and women and candidate experience. In fact, in 2020, women said they had a 25% better candidate experience than men overall, the first time we’ve seen such a dramatic difference. We’ll have to explore that one further.

Table 2. Candidates Sharing Positive and Negative Experiences Publicly Online

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Positive Experience	57%	50%	50%	51%	50%	49%	51%
Negative Experience	31%	35%	35%	35%	34%	33%	34%

How Likely Candidates Are to Refer Others

When we look at how likely candidates are to refer others based on their experience, the good news is that 66% of North American candidates said they were likely to extremely likely to refer others based on their experience. For CandE winners it’s over 23% higher, at 83%, and both figures are up from 2019 (see Table 3).

66% of North American candidates said they were likely to extremely likely to refer others based on their experience.

Table 3. How Likely Candidates Are to Refer Others

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
All Employers – Candidates Likely to Refer	66%	62%	67%	67%	70%
CandE Winners – Candidates Likely to Refer	83%	73%	74%	77%	78%

Calculate Costs

For consumer-based businesses, where candidates are customers and vice versa, the potential revenue impact looms large. A commonly referenced [case study conducted by Virgin Media and Ph.Creative](#) a few years ago showed that Virgin Media was losing more than \$6 million annually in sales revenues due to poor candidate experiences, which they were then able to turn into a \$7 million revenue stream.

Most companies, particularly publicly traded companies, aren't willing to share this kind of quantitative data publicly, and for good reason. But many today are internally quantifying the cost of a poor candidate experience, which can be in the millions of dollars per year, and incremental improvements to recruiting processes and candidate experience can go a long way to increasing revenue and referral networks.

We created an [online candidate resentment calculator](#) for HR and talent acquisition professionals that generates potential lost annual revenue by plugging in some simple numbers. According to the 2020 Talent Board benchmark research, the overall candidate resentment rate — those candidates willing to sever the relationship with a prospective employer based on their experience — is at about 7% globally (North America, EMEA, APAC and Latin America), which is down 36% from 2019.

While the resentment calculator only produces a rough estimate based on the hiring numbers used, it helps to make the business case that improving recruiting process benefits companies' bottom lines. Even business-to-business (B2B) companies can use it as a conversation starter because, ultimately, if they don't have the candidates they need to grow and sustain their businesses, they will potentially feel an impact to their revenue.

Future Fit Matters

Even with all the potential business impact highlighted above, whether or not candidates will apply again and/or refer others based on their overall candidate experience is a vitally important outcome of the candidate experience. And while most companies would argue that they don't want all the candidates applying again, they do want those deemed future fit to apply again. They most certainly want their final interview silver medalists to apply again and to refer others who may also be the right candidates for future roles.

Ultimately, making improvement investments in recruiting and candidate experience today can ensure a greater return on employment brand and quality of candidate tomorrow, no matter what the future brings.

About Talent Board

Founded in 2011, Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards is the first non-profit research organization focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience. Talent Board delivers annual recruiting and hiring industry benchmark research that highlights accountability, fairness and the business impact of candidate experience. More information can be found at <https://www.thetalentboard.org>.

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ATTRACT

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What It Is

The pre-application stage of identifying and engaging with candidates before they apply for a position.

The candidate experience begins during talent attraction and sourcing, well before a potential candidate applies for a job. In fact, Talent Board believes that the candidate experience is a 24/7 interactive experience, whether it's for passive candidates or those actively looking for a job.

Overall candidate experience, diversity and inclusion, and employer branding are the top recruiting initiatives or activities employers tell us they're planning for in 2021. And attracting candidates is one area of talent acquisition that has been given more and more attention and investment due to such a strong job market in the past few years, at least until the impact of COVID-19, with many more employers big and small across industries understanding just how competitive attracting and sourcing quality candidates truly is. In fact, diversity, equity and inclusion, along with redeploying people to retain them, have become some of the most important initiatives of recruiting during 2020.

Employer branding is a critical component of talent attraction. The employer brand is a big part of the reason why someone wants to work for an organization. It encompasses the culture and the employee value proposition. A strong, descriptive and transparent brand will help companies attract talent and alleviate some of the challenges that recruiting the right candidates can create, and in 2020, transparency was critical. A weak brand, on the other hand, can deter talent or misrepresent the employee experience, which can lead to new hire turnover and low performance once onboard.

Organizations have to think like traditional marketers more than ever. Just as consumers have evolved, candidates have become savvier in their job search and are now more likely to have some kind of previous relationships with employers (58%) and conduct their own research (74%). Candidates are also diving deeper into career sites, social media and sites like Glassdoor to get a clear picture of an organization before making a connection (24% of candidates in 2020 used review sites like Glassdoor, Indeed, Fairy Godboss and others).

Candidates today are doing their research. They want to be prepared and take ownership of their journey, and organizations need to be prepared as well. With millions still

Attraction Highlights

- Over 115,000 candidates replied to this section.
- 74% of the candidates conducted their own research, a trend that's held steady for the past few years.
- Career sites available in multiple languages are now the most important marketing content for 35% candidates.
- 40% of referred candidates said they were much more likely to increase their relationship with a potential employer (apply again, refer others, make purchases if and when applicable).
- When candidates are asked for research feedback before they apply, there's a 45% increase in a great candidate experience and willingness to increase the relationship.
- The number of employers that say they implemented mobile text-messaging campaigns increased 50% in 2020.
- The number of employers that used chatbot technology in 2020 increased 16%.
- Video job descriptions are again the top recruiting technology investment for employers in 2021.

Candidate experience, diversity and inclusion and employer branding are the top recruiting initiatives or activities employers tell us they're planning for in 2021.

out of work, companies need to provide clear and consistent information so candidates can self-select based on their interests and needs.

The following section highlights what candidates are looking for in the Attract stage, how employers are responding and what companies can learn from the CandE Award winners.

What Candidates Want

Candidates want three things during the pre-application stage: a clear understanding of the company culture, insight into the employee experience and a sense of connection with the overall brand. Essentially, they want to know that the information and content they receive will reflect not only the work they will be doing but the company and the environment in which they will work.

Nearly 35% of candidates said they wanted career sites in multiple languages, nearly 32% said they wanted even more information about culture and nearly 32% wanted more information on why employees want to work for an employer.

Candidates are looking for multi-language career sites and for more content from existing employees and peers about the company culture. In 2020, nearly 35% of North American candidates said they wanted career sites in multiple languages, nearly 32% said they wanted even more information about culture and nearly 32% wanted more information on why employees want to work for an employer – and why they stay.

This is why the employee voice is a strong one and should not be ignored during the attraction stage. In the candidate survey, candidates were asked to identify what research channels are

most valuable, what marketing information is most valuable and what content is most valuable. A summary of the 2020 responses follows.

Research Channels

Year after year, career sites prove to be the most valuable channel for candidates when researching an employer, and they're still the first destination once a candidate has identified an employer and a job, although it's down 13% from 2019 with just 46% of candidates citing career sites as the most valuable research channel.

LinkedIn career page(s) are back up in second place, with 30% of candidates using them to research jobs, up slightly from 2019. LinkedIn career pages had 28% of candidates using them as well. And 29% of candidates, up 15% from 2019, cited online groups such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Yahoo as a valuable channel.

LinkedIn career page(s) are back up in second place, with 30% of candidates using them to research jobs, up slightly from 2019.

Candidates are less likely to want to go directly to the source to discover information about a company and its jobs. They want to hear from existing employees and peers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Candidate Research Channels (Partial List)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Company career site	46%	53%	60%	58%	57%	64%
LinkedIn career page(s)	30%	28%	31%	34%	30%	30%
Job boards	30%	28%	26%	30%	N/A	N/A
Online groups (LinkedIn, Facebook, Yahoo, Other)	29%	25%	18%	24%	24%	26%
Mobile career site or app	25%	17%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employer reviews (Glassdoor, Indeed, kununu, Comparably, Great Rated!)	24%	27%	22%	29%	23%	24%
Employee, candidate or customer referral	21%	25%	30%	36%	33%	19%
Third party job notifications or agents	21%	18%	32%	28%	28%	35%
Career fair/job fair (multiple companies)	16%	13%	3%	10%	9%	18%
Facebook career page(s)	14%	8%	5%	N/A	N/A	N/A

We also collect research on which social media and career services sites candidates leverage globally for their job search. These questions allow candidates to reflect on their overall job search and iterate the various sites they use.

Based on the candidate responses in 2020, it's unanimous yet again: LinkedIn and Indeed are still the most leveraged social media and career services sites by candidates during their job search globally. And in North America, Indeed is the top site candidates use.

LinkedIn and Indeed are still the most leveraged social media and career services sites by candidates during their job search globally.

According to the latest Talent Board Candidate Experience Benchmark Research, there are other regional sites candidates leverage in North America, EMEA, APAC and Latin America, but Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter, CareerBuilder and straight internet searches on Google and other search engines complete the top six for North America. That's where Glassdoor beats out internet job searches (see Table 2 on the following page). Over 100,000 North American candidates, 5,000 EMEA candidates, 7,000 APAC candidates and 4,000 Latin American candidates responded to this specific question.

Some other interesting data points about candidate social media and internet usage include:

- Facebook as a job search site is stronger in APAC and Latin America.
- Glassdoor, ZipRecruiter and CareerBuilder are the most leveraged in North America.
- Internet searches are consistent globally.
- YouTube and Instagram are leveraged more than Twitter.
- Xing, Superjob, Headhunter, Telegram, VK, and Habrahabr are other sites leveraged in EMEA and APAC.

What's clear is that there are more resources available than ever for candidates to research employers and the jobs they're interested in. This includes more transparency as well with sites like Glassdoor and Indeed.

Table 2. Social Media and Career Services Sites That Candidates Leverage Globally for Their Job Search

Social Media & Career Services Sites	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Indeed	69%	47%	64%	35%
LinkedIn	50%	66%	30%	81%
Glassdoor	30%	17%	18%	16%
ZipRecruiter	23%	2%	1%	2%
Internet search (Google, Yahoo, Bing, Seek, etc.)	23%	2%	1%	2%
CareerBuilder	21%	5%	5%	5%
Facebook	15%	20%	22%	24%
Monster	13%	12%	9%	3%
Instagram	6%	11%	7%	7%
Youtube	5%	6%	6%	5%
Other	4%	5%	9%	4%
Simply Hired	4%	0.9%	1%	1%
Dice	3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Niche Job Boards	3%	4%	1%	3%
Snapchat	3%	2%	1%	0.5%
Twitter	3%	4%	4%	4%
Jobstreet	2%	3%	24%	3%
Seek	2%	2%	13%	3%
Pinterest	1%	1%	0.9%	1%
Github	0.7%	1%	2%	1%
Great Rated!	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%
The Muse	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Stack Overflow	0.4%	0.8%	1%	0.4%
Kununu	0.3%	2%	0.2%	0.2%
WeChat	0.3%	0.3%	2%	0.4%
Xing	N/A	4%	N/A	N/A
Superjob	N/A	2%	N/A	N/A
Headhunter	N/A	2%	N/A	N/A
Telegram	N/A	2%	N/A	N/A
VK	N/A	0.5%	N/A	N/A
Habrahabr	N/A	0.2%	N/A	N/A

Job candidates may also have an existing relationship with the companies they're interested in when they said they began their job search. Some of these relationships may impact their final key candidate experience ratings (see Table 3 – referring others and relationship ratings). It's clear that those who were a current employee of the company and those who were actual customers of the company have the highest key ratings overall, and are much higher overall than in 2019.

The refer rating NPS from current employees of the company increased 10% from 2019, and the relationship rating NPS increased 54% from 2019. Likewise, the refer rating NPS from those who were customers of the company increased 130% from 2019, and the relationship rating NPS increased 106% from 2019. Existing relationships and brand affinity definitely impacted candidate experience for the better in 2020. This in turn can impact quality of referrals, and North American candidates told us in 2020 that referrals were the top way they heard about the job opportunity.

Table 3. Final Refer and Relationship NPS Scores of Candidates Based on Their Relationship with the Company When the Job Search Began

Refer Others Rating	2020	2019
I am a current employee of the company	43	39
I followed the company as a result of thought leadership or company innovation	34	31
I was a customer of the company using their products/services	46	20
I have/had friends/family that work for the company	28	27
I was a past employee of the company	25	N/A
I have/had no relationship with the company	16	8

Relationship Change Rating	2020	2019
I am a current employee of the company	37	24
I followed the company as a result of thought leadership or company innovation	30	27
I was a customer of the company using their products/services	37	18
I have/had friends/family that work for the company	24	21
I was a past employee of the company	19	N/A
I have/had no relationship with the company	11	1

As mentioned in the executive brief, for the past two years, Talent Board has been converting our primary 4-point and 5-point scale ratings throughout our surveys into Net Promoter Scale (NPS) scores.

For example, when converting a 4-point scale to NPS, you subtract the 1 score (lowest) from the 4 score (highest). When we ask candidates how likely they are to refer others, the scale looks like this:

- 4 – Extremely Likely**
- 3 – Likely
- 2 – Unlikely
- 1 – Definitely Not**

If a company had 35% of its candidates respond that they were extremely likely to apply again, and 15% said they would definitely not, giving that company an NPS score of 20.

We simplify it even further for our CandE Benchmark Research and group results as follows:

- **AMAZING** (scores above 50) are loyal candidates who will most likely keep referring others based on their experience.
- **OKAY** (scores between 0-50) are candidates who are satisfied but may or may not be too enthusiastic about referring others based on their experience.
- **NOT SO GOOD** (negative scores) are unhappy candidates who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Marketing Content

When asked to identify the most valuable marketing content, career sites in multiple languages jumped to No. 1, with 35% of candidates citing it as most important, up 22% from 2019. Company values continue to be lower than before, while information on the company culture dropped almost 18% from 2019. As noted above, employee-generated and employee-based content was increasingly important to candidates compared to 2018 while the numbers for 2019 and 2020 are almost identical, as employee testimonials dropped slightly and answers to “why people want to work here” were again more valuable than product/services information in 2020, up from 2019 (see Table 4). Also, candidates consuming more diversity and inclusion information increased 8% this year.

What’s clear in Table 4 is that candidates want a high level of transparency regarding the organizations in which they are interested — especially on how companies have responded to COVID-19 and its impact on recruiting and hiring. This insight also helps when candidates refer others to the same organizations.

Candidates want a high level of transparency regarding the organizations in which they are interested — especially on how those organizations have responded to COVID-19 and its impact on recruiting and hiring.

Table 4. Preferred Marketing Content for Candidates (Partial List)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Career sites in multiple languages	35%	28%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information on the culture within the company	32%	39%	37%	42%	N/A	N/A
Answers to “why” people want to work here	32%	29%	33%	36%	30%	31%
Answers to “why” people stay here	27%	26%	22%	29%	24%	24%
Product/services information	27%	24%	30%	38%	35%	37%
Diversity and inclusion	25%	24%	20%	23%	21%	20%
Employee testimonials	24%	26%	37%	41%	36%	35%
Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	22%	20%	16%	23%	19%	20%
Financial information	22%	19%	21%	26%	23%	22%
Values	22%	24%	44%	49%	42%	51%

Job-Related Content

When conducting research, 50% of candidates find knowing more about the details of the application and next steps to be valuable, representing a 19% increase from the 42% of candidates in 2019. Although both candidates and employers have for years questioned the value of job descriptions as an effective recruitment tool, they're still the currency exchanged between employers and candidates about what the nature of the job is.

What's interesting in 2020 is that the choice of "details of application and next steps," added in 2019, is still the second choice of candidates (see Table 5). This is something we see the highest-rated CandE winners communicate before candidates apply.

50% of candidates find knowing more about the details of the application and next steps to be valuable, representing a 19% increase from the 42% of candidates in 2019.

Table 5. Preferred Job Content for Candidates (Partial List)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Job descriptions	66%	64%	50%	55%	63%	74%
Details of application and next steps	50%	42%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Jobs currently open	46%	42%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Benefit details	27%	28%	35%	32%	31%	33%
Salary ranges and compensation structure	26%	24%	29%	34%	35%	39%
Career path examples	18%	17%	28%	22%	21%	23%
Employee day in the life (job overview)	16%	15%	14%	17%	16%	16%
Frequently asked questions about recruiting/ applicant process	16%	13%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employee testimonials	13%	15%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Successful candidate profile for the job	9%	10%	22%	22%	21%	25%

What Employers Are Doing

The gap between what employers are doing and what candidates want perpetually persists, although it tightened much more in 2020 compared to 2019 (see perception gaps in the business impact executive brief). Overall, employers must consider how the attitudes, expectations and behaviors of increasingly sophisticated candidates continue to shift, even when it's no longer a candidate market.

When asked where employers are engaging with candidates in the attraction stages, career sites remain No. 1 for the sixth consecutive year, and the figure is up 13% from 2019. Seventy-six percent of companies consider these sites to be critical to recruiting success. In addition, LinkedIn outreach, SEO/SEM paid advertising and video usage have increased in criticality. Employers recognize that their career site is the first stop for

candidates researching their organization, so the content they provide must be compelling, including using more videos (see Table 6).

Candidates are turning more to employer review sites and employee testimonials, as indicated above, and employers continued to increase their differentiating engagement with internship programs and career fairs in 2020 (see Table 7). Interestingly, employee referral programs actually increased in importance for the first time 2017.

Employers recognize that their career site is the first stop for candidates researching their organization, so the content they provide must be compelling, including using more videos.

Table 6. Critical Online/Interactive Ways Employers Engage with Candidates Who Have Not Yet Applied (Partial List)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Career site (primary)	76%	68%	77%	72%	75%	74%
LinkedIn outreach	63%	58%	62%	62%	61%	56%
Job board/other site company pages (job/career specific)	52%	53%	52%	47%	48%	45%
Career site (micro-sites)	32%	29%	33%	33%	26%	31%
SEO/SEM paid advertising (social and search)	32%	27%	31%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Videos (across websites and social channels)	31%	26%	21%	20%	27%	24%
Talent community	30%	31%	26%	24%	27%	30%
Mobile career/job apps	29%	26%	30%	27%	28%	24%
Facebook pages	26%	23%	29%	29%	25%	24%
Mobile text messaging campaigns	17%	12%	5%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 7. Critical Program/Direct Contact Ways Companies Engage with Potential Candidates Who Have Not Yet Applied (Partial List)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
University/college intern/co-op programs	56%	54%	56%	53%	52%	55%
Employee referral programs	51%	48%	52%	57%	56%	55%
Career fairs (in person)	40%	41%	36%	35%	31%	36%
University college campus information sessions	37%	34%	40%	39%	42%	42%
Diversity conferences and trade shows	25%	19%	28%	N/A	N/A	N/A

As in previous years, companies remained heavily focused on social media to attract candidates in 2020, but candidates are leveraging social channels like Twitter and Facebook continually with much less frequency (see Table 8). In particular, the disparity between employers and candidates using Facebook for their job search decreased slightly.

Technology can be a powerful ally when it comes to communicating with candidates pre-application, and texting is one form of communication that is definitely on the rise. The number of employers that said they implemented mobile text-messaging campaigns increased 50% in 2020.

It's also important to note here how artificial intelligence and other smart technologies are helping employers improve recruiting. We saw a 16% increase in utilizing chatbots on career sites in 2020. More employers are realizing that it's a competitive differentiator to communicate earlier with candidates, even before they apply.

Chatbots are being used to answer general employment questions, and this frees up the recruiting teams to have more hands-on time with potential candidates already in play. The use of smart technologies to source and assess candidates is also on the rise, with a 79% increase in sourcing candidates from an existing candidate database with a virtual assistant, and a 12% increase in video interviewing with assessments (see Table 9).

More employers are realizing that it's a competitive differentiator to communicate earlier with candidates, even before they apply.

As organizations look to close this gap and become more aligned with the talent they want to attract, the following section contains recommendations and lessons learned from the 2020 CandE Award winners.

Table 8. How Employers and Candidates Differ in Using Facebook and Twitter for Job Search

	Employers 2020	Candidates 2020	Employers 2019	Candidates 2019	Employers 2018	Candidates 2018
Facebook	75%	14%	82%	12%	81%	17%
Twitter	72%	3%	72%	2%	78%	4%

Table 9. Enhancing Recruiting Efforts with AI Technologies

	2020	2019
Sourcing candidates from external sources with a virtual assistant	40%	37%
Sourcing existing candidate database with a virtual assistant	34%	19%
Pre-qualifying candidates from collective candidate databases	46%	41%
Chatbot recruiting automation (Q&A "customer-service" on career site)	39%	30%
Video interviewing with assessments	48%	43%
Measuring and predicting employee job changing behavior	33%	35%
Assessing candidates to identify team personality and culture fit	66%	54%
Assessing candidates with job simulations for job performance prediction	53%	46%
Sentiment analysis of candidate open-ended feedback	36%	25%

Key Recommendations: What CandE Award Winners Do Better

Companies that improve the candidate experience and provide more value to candidates in the attraction stage have a competitive advantage. This is also where we see some of the biggest gaps in ratings between CandE winners and all other employers when we convert to Net Promoter Score (NPS) (see Table 10). Also, there are several examples below that help differentiate the 2020 CandE Award winners and provide guidance to organizations looking to improve the candidate experience during the attraction stage (see Figures 1, 2 and 3).

CANDIDATE RESEARCH

Sixty-seven percent of candidates from all companies gave a 4- or 5-star rating for the information they found on employers while doing research. That figure jumps to 74% for CandE winners – a 10% difference. CandE winners also emphasize career sites in multiple languages 6% more often for candidates compared with all participating companies, awards received for employee experience 11% more often, and answers to why people want to work there 5% more often. And CandE-winning employers said they make employee testimonials available 11% more often compared with all other companies.

CANDIDATE REFERRALS AND EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS

While 21% of candidates in 2020 still cited employee referrals as a valuable channel, down 21% from 2019, 40% of referred candidates were much more likely to increase their relationship with a potential employer (apply again, refer others, make

purchases if and when applicable), compared with those who conducted their own search or those who received unsolicited outreach from a recruiter. And 25% more CandE winners found employee brand ambassador or advocacy programs critical compared with all participating companies in 2019.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Candidates for CandE-winning companies had a 5% higher NPS for the likelihood to increase their relationship with the employer when asked for feedback pre-application compared with all other participating companies. CandE winners are also utilizing chatbots to answer questions on their career sites 15% more often compared with all participating companies and using career newsletters to communicate with potential candidates 40% more often compared with all participating companies.

Table 10. CandE Winners vs. All Employers Asking for Feedback Pre-Application by Key Rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)

	CandE Winners	All Employers
Overall Rating	80	74
Apply Again Rating	44	42
Refer Others Rating	43	41
Relationship Change	44	42

Figure 1. The CandE Attraction Cycle: CandE Winner Best Practices



Figure 2. The Candidate Journey CandE Winner Best Practices

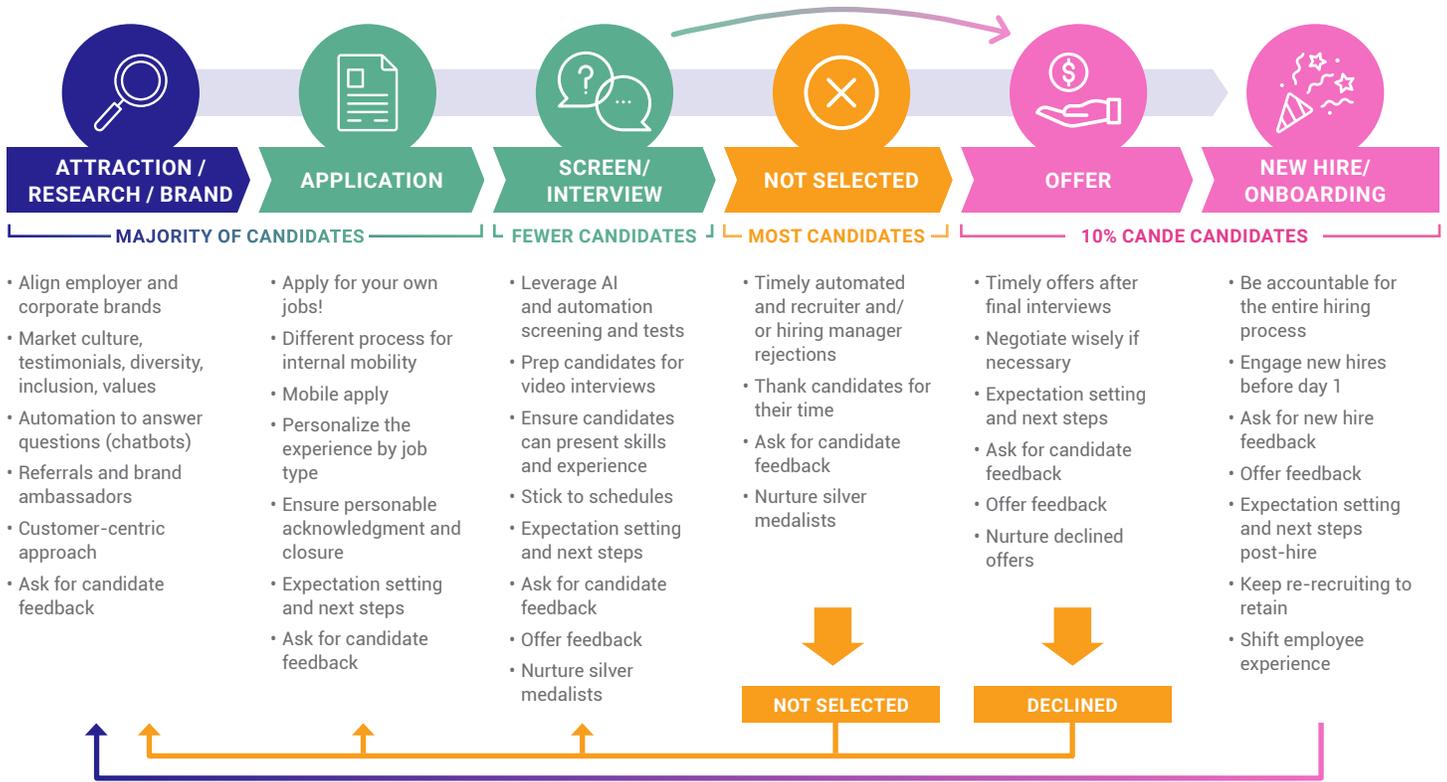
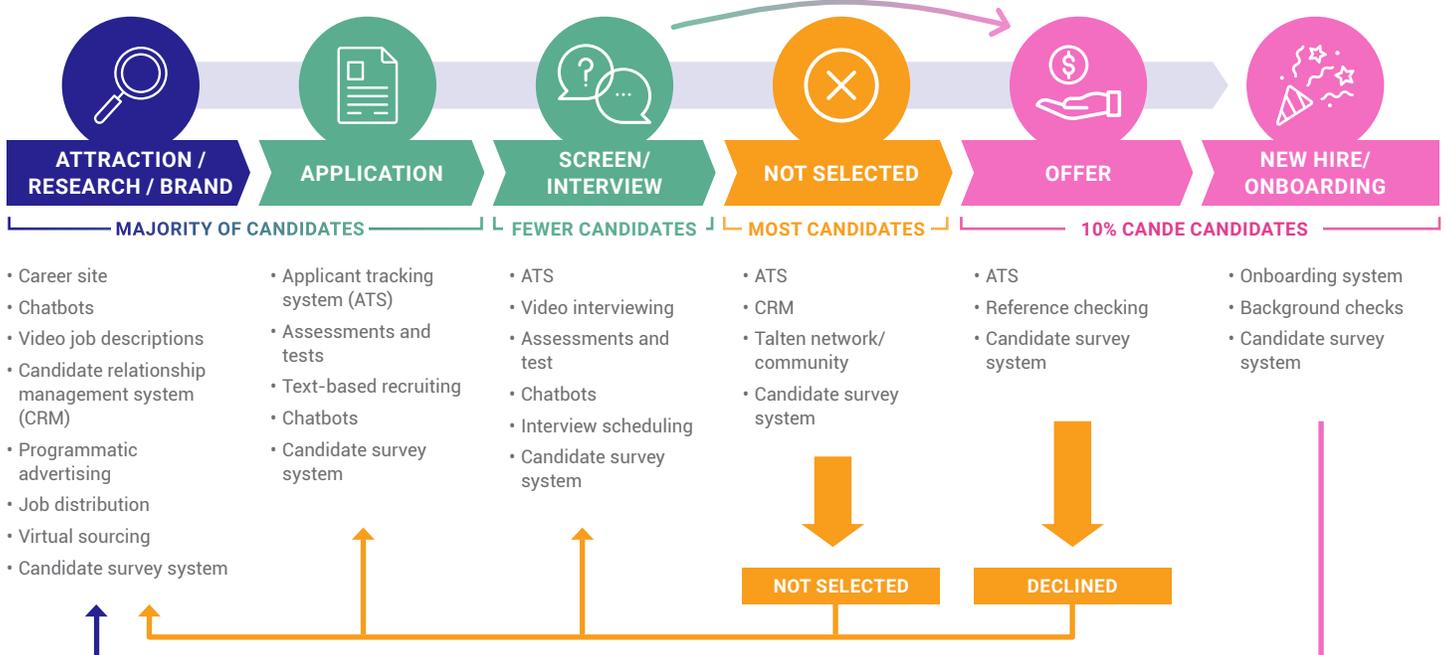


Figure 3. The Candidate Journey Technology Considerations

Talent acquisition technology interacts with candidates at every stage. Here are some examples:



RECRUIT

Application

The recruit stage involves activities that help identify the right fit, converting interest into hires as candidates move from application to final interview. What sets successful companies apart from the competition is their ability to create a consistent and transparent candidate experience throughout the following processes:

- **APPLY:** The process candidates go through when filling out and submitting a job application.
- **SCREEN AND INTERVIEW:** The evaluation stages that help recruiters and hiring managers determine the best candidates to hire for the organization.

What It Is

The process candidates go through when filling out and submitting a job application.

The application process is driven primarily by whatever applicant tracking system is being utilized and thankfully has improved significantly. Recruiters are able to handle an increased volume of applications and better manage the administrative side of the application process. Plus, automated communications can be triggered at various disposition stages, screening and assessment tools can be integrated throughout the application process, and applicants can be notified of their status and connected with nurturing recruitment marketing systems.

It's still not without its limitations and shortcomings, however. In 2020, 33% of North American candidates reported that they had not heard back from employers two months after they applied. That's slightly higher than in previous years, and amounts to thousands of candidate respondents to our survey, a big missed opportunity for employers.

When we ask the candidates what's the last step they remember completing in the recruiting process, 66% of them said they had applied, and 7% said they had been informed they did not get the job. This means that a good portion of candidates simply don't remember receiving the automated message telling them they weren't going any further, or worse, they didn't actually hear back after they first applied.

Application Highlights

- Over 85,000 candidates replied to this section.
- 74% of those who researched an employer completed an application.
- 36% of candidates applied via mobile device, up from 2019, while 95% of employers said they offered mobile apply, up from 2019.
- 58% of candidates said it took less than 15 minutes to apply and receive a confirmation, up 35% from 2019.
- 33% of candidates said they received a reminder about next steps when they applied, and 42% of candidates said they were able to view a progress indicator showing percentage completed.
- 33% of candidates said they were still waiting to hear about next steps 2 months after they had applied, up from 30% in 2019.
- Those who applied via mobile device had 35% higher willingness to increase their relationship with the employer.
- When asked if they felt the overall assessment process (written tests, simulated job tasks, etc.) was fair, candidates who rated their experience with 5 stars were 100% more likely to say they would increase their relationship with the employer.
- When candidates are asked for application feedback, there's a 33% increase in a great candidate experience and willingness to increase the relationship.

What sets successful companies apart is their ability to create a consistent and transparent candidate experience.

Even with the sheer number of unqualified candidates who apply for jobs every year, if some level of communication isn't provided, it can impact a candidate's perception of that employer. And no matter the level of automation, if it includes definitive closure by letting candidates know they won't be pursued any further, it can help to keep the perception of fairness at least neutral, if not positive.

Of course, not all employers want everyone to apply again – some companies face heavy candidate volume and some serial applicants are nowhere near qualified, a reality that's already occurred in 2020. But most employers do want those candidates who could be deemed as future fit to apply for other jobs.

Thankfully, more employers have collapsed the time it takes to initially apply, with 58% of all candidates saying it took less than 15 minutes. However, that allows for a greater volume of initial applications. In 2020, depending on job level, employers received over 200 resumes per job less often – 24% of the time for hourly positions, down 27% from 2019, and 29% for entry level positions, down 9% from 2019 (see Table 11).

On average, a third to half of the candidates who apply for all position types are not qualified. It's no surprise that high-volume hiring companies can become cynical about the vast number of unqualified candidates, but that doesn't mean that not acknowledging applicant interest and ensuring definitive closure leads to the best outcomes for the employer. Plus, many companies have "banned for life" codes, or something similar, to block those unqualified serial appliers.

On average, a third to half of the candidates who apply for all position types are not qualified.

Table 11. Total Number of Applications Companies Receive Per Job Type

Job Type	Fewer than 50 Applications	200+ Applications
Hourly (non-exempt) applications	25%	24%
Entry level professional applications	26%	29%
Experienced professional (non-technical) applications	39%	11%
Experienced professional (technical) applications	56%	6%
Mid-management applications	52%	7%
Senior management applications	66%	5%
Contract/contingent	58%	13%

What Candidates Want

The majority of candidates in this year's survey (90%) were external. Fifty-one percent of all candidates were applying for hourly positions. And because of this, many are most likely taking time away from their current jobs to pursue this opportunity — if they make it beyond the application stage. In return, candidates do expect a simple and straightforward process with some level of acknowledgment of next steps after they apply.

Eighty-nine percent of North American candidates said the application process was easy.

Sixty-six percent of candidates received an automated thank you message, up slightly from 2019, while only 33% received a reminder about next steps, another slight increase from 2019. And only 33% were told how long the application process would take.

Forty-two percent of candidates said they were able to view a progress indicator showing percentage completed, the same percentage as in 2019. All these things can add perceived fairness to the application process.

Unfortunately, 33% of the candidates told us that they had not heard back from employers two months after they applied, which is up 10% from 2019. A clear and definitive yet personable automated rejection email is all that's needed here.

Candidates want simplicity when they apply for a job. They want to understand the questions they are being asked and

have an opportunity to share their skills and experience. More importantly, they want to be able to do this quickly and easily. As mentioned above, the time it takes to complete an application has been reduced. And while 97% of employers offered mobile apply in 2020, only 36% of candidates said they applied via mobile.

Again, perceived fairness continues to be a differentiator in candidate experience, and the application process is a key crossroad for this issue. This is as far as the majority of applicants make it today in the recruiting process, but the more engagement activities with candidates, the higher the positive ratings go and the higher the level of perceived fairness. Ninety-one percent of all employers' candidates received general screening questions during the application process, and only 9% had to solve games or puzzles (see Table 12). There's also little difference between all employers and CandE winners at the types of screening, except that CandE winners provided behavioral and/or personality assessments 10% more often, as well as simulated job tasks 13% more often.

Candidates want simplicity when they apply for a job. They want to understand the questions they are being asked and have an opportunity to share their skills and experience.

Table 12. Types of Screening and Evaluation During the Application Process

	CandE Winners	All Employers
General screening questions	92%	91%
Behavioral and/or personality assessments	52%	47%
Job-specific questions	67%	64%
Test (reading, match, etc.)	20%	19%
Simulated job tasks	34%	30%
Review and respond to case study	18%	16%
Games or puzzles	10%	9%

Not all positions have the same candidate experiences, and it's clear that some job types have more perceived positive experiences than others. When we look at the job types applied for, the refer NPS rating from hourly candidates is 114% higher than senior leadership in 2020, and increased 20% from 2019 with hourly candidates (see Table 13).

It's even more pronounced for the relationship NPS rating from hourly candidates – it's 177% higher than senior leadership in 2020, and increased 23% from 2019 with hourly candidates.

Obviously the complexity and time-to-hire from senior leadership differs from professional hires to high-volume hourly hiring, but we would still argue that timely communication and feedback could tighten the gap we see in the data.

Table 13. Final Refer and Relationship NPS Scores of Candidates Based on Job Types Applied For

Refer Others Rating	2020	2019
Hourly wage	33	27
I have not applied for a position	31	N/A
Paid or unpaid internship	28	37
Contract position	27	34
Salary-entry position	22	21
Salary technical position	17	20
Salary non-technical position	17	18
Management position	14	11
Senior leadership/executive position	9	8

Relationship Change Rating	2020	2019
Hourly wage	33	23
I have not applied for a position	26	N/A
Paid or unpaid internship	24	28
Contract position	20	26
Salary-entry position	18	15
Salary technical position	10	15
Salary non-technical position	10	11
Management position	8	5
Senior leadership/executive position	2	2

As mentioned in the executive brief, for the past two years, Talent Board has been converting our primary 4-point and 5-point scale ratings throughout our surveys into Net Promoter Scale (NPS) scores.

For example, when converting a 4-point scale to NPS, you subtract the 1 score (lowest) from the 4 score (highest). When we ask candidates how likely they are to refer others, the scale looks like this:

4 – Extremely Likely

3 – Likely

2 – Unlikely

1 – Definitely Not

If a company had 35% of its candidates respond that they were extremely likely to apply again, and 15% said they would definitely not, giving that company an NPS score of 20.

We simplify it even further for our CandE Benchmark Research and group results as follows:

- **AMAZING** (scores above 50) are loyal candidates who will most likely keep referring others based on their experience.
- **OKAY** (scores between 0-50) are candidates who are satisfied but may or may not be too enthusiastic about referring others based on their experience.
- **NOT SO GOOD** (negative scores) are unhappy candidates who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

What Employers Are Doing

Employers are measured on three areas of the application process: communication before the application process, during the application process and after. Employers need to think about an application strategy that keeps candidates informed through a simple process that leverages the right technology. This communication needs to be consistent and frequent. In fact, over-communicating and ensuring fairness through engagement activities are where many CandE winners are investing more of their time throughout the recruiting process. Like the attract stage, however, a gap exists between how companies view the application process and how candidates experience it.

Still, more companies — including CandE Award winners — are differentiating themselves through stronger communication about next steps and enhanced screening throughout the application process. For example, many employers do provide application guides with FAQs and contact information, as well as visual indicators of next steps and application status.

When employers add screening and evaluation during the application process, that increases the ability for candidates to present skills, knowledge and experience. The more opportunities the candidates have to present their skills — i.e., general screening questions, job-specific questions, etc. — the greater their willingness to increase their relationship with the employer (see Table 14). Candidates who experience job simulations had a 30% higher perception of fairness about the assessment process.

Time is always a major factor in the recruiting process, and the application process is no exception. The longer the time between applying and hearing back from the company, the less likely candidates are to apply again or make referrals in the

Table 14. How Screening and Evaluation During the Application Process Increases Positive Sentiment

Refer Others Rating	Willingness to Increase Relationship Goes Up
General screening questions	11%
Behavioral & personality assessments	31%
Job-specific questions	28%
Test (reading, math, etc.)	27%
Simulated job tasks	22%
Review & respond to case study	17%

future. The same goes for how long the application process takes.

This is an uphill battle for many employers of any hiring scale and volume, and the sheer number of unqualified applicants applying for jobs in 2020 increased for many of them. That's why companies need to be willing to take a customer-service approach to the application process, just as they do with their products and services they sell. The true test of a positive candidate experience in the application stage is whether or not a candidate would re-apply. In 2020, 43% of candidates gave the application process a 5-star rating. For these candidates, their likelihood to apply again increased by 62%. This often requires organizations to go through the application process themselves from the candidates' perspective.

CandE-winning organizations had 4% more candidates who were extremely likely to apply again compared with all other companies. Granted, employers don't want everyone to apply again — just those candidates deemed future fit, silver medalists, etc., which is why the experience still matters during the application stage.

Another test of a strong application process involves the technology an organization has in place. It's no surprise once again that nearly all employers participating in the CandE Awards have an applicant tracking system (ATS) in place. Other systems include job distribution, mobile enabled and sourcing/mining (see Table 15).

Table 15. Where Companies Have Contracted with External (3rd-party) Technology Solution Providers to Improve the Application Process

	Implemented
Applicant tracking system	99%
Mobile-enabled system	95%
Job-distribution system	93%
Sourcing/mining system	90%
Reference checking system	83%
Social media distribution system	80%
Onboarding system	79%
Event/interview scheduling/calendar system	79%
Video interviewing system	78%
Assessment/testing system	78%
Talent network/community system	73%

Key Recommendations: What CandE Award Winners Do Better

Companies that want to open communication with candidates, provide greater transparency, and offer a simple and customer-centric application process will need to start by adjusting their application process. This is also where we see some of the gaps in ratings between CandE winners and all other employers when we convert to Net Promoter Score (NPS) (see Table 16), although this year they were tighter than ever. Also, there are several action items that differentiate the 2020 CandE Award winners and that can help organizations looking to improve the candidate experience during the apply stage (see Figure 4, 5 and 6).

GREATER EXPECTATIONS

Candidates want to understand their progress and know how much of an application is left, and they are getting this information often with CandE Award winners, although more and more companies are catching up. CandE-winning employers still have small margins when it comes to how long the application process will take, providing a process indicator as to how much they're completed and notifying candidates about next steps post application. CandE-winning employers said they explain why they're using a specific assessment during the application process 45% of the time versus 41% for all employers combined, a 9% difference. CandE-winning employers also said they tell candidates how to learn about their application status 68% of the time versus 64% for all employers, a 6% difference.

MOBILE APPLY

As mentioned above, 95% of employers offered mobile apply in 2020, and 100% of CandE-winning employers offered mobile apply. Also, 36% of candidates overall said they applied via mobile, and the candidates of CandE winners said they applied via mobile 18% more compared with candidates from all companies, resulting in a 35% increase in candidates' willingness to increase their relationship.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Candidates for CandE-winning employers have a 2% higher NPS for the likelihood to increase their relationship with the employer when asked for feedback about the application process compared with all other participating companies. CandE-winning companies also include a thank you note 4% more often, tell candidates how to learn about their application status 23% more often, and let candidates know how they can check on their application status 14% more often.

Table 16. CandE Winners vs. All Employers Asking for Feedback After Application by Key Rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)

	CandE Winners	All Employers
Overall Rating	80	74
Apply Again Rating	44	43
Refer Others Rating	41	40
Relationship Change	43	42

Figure 4. The CandE Applying Cycle: CandE Winner Best Practices

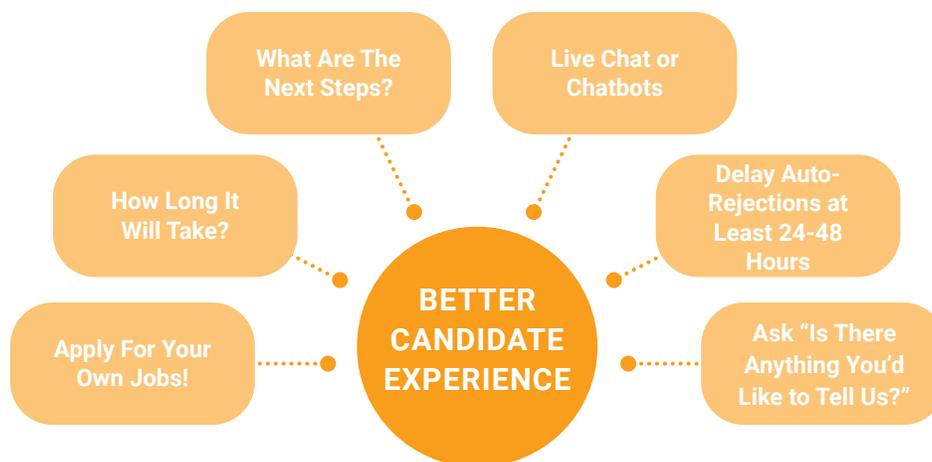


Figure 5. The Candidate Journey CandE Winner Best Practices

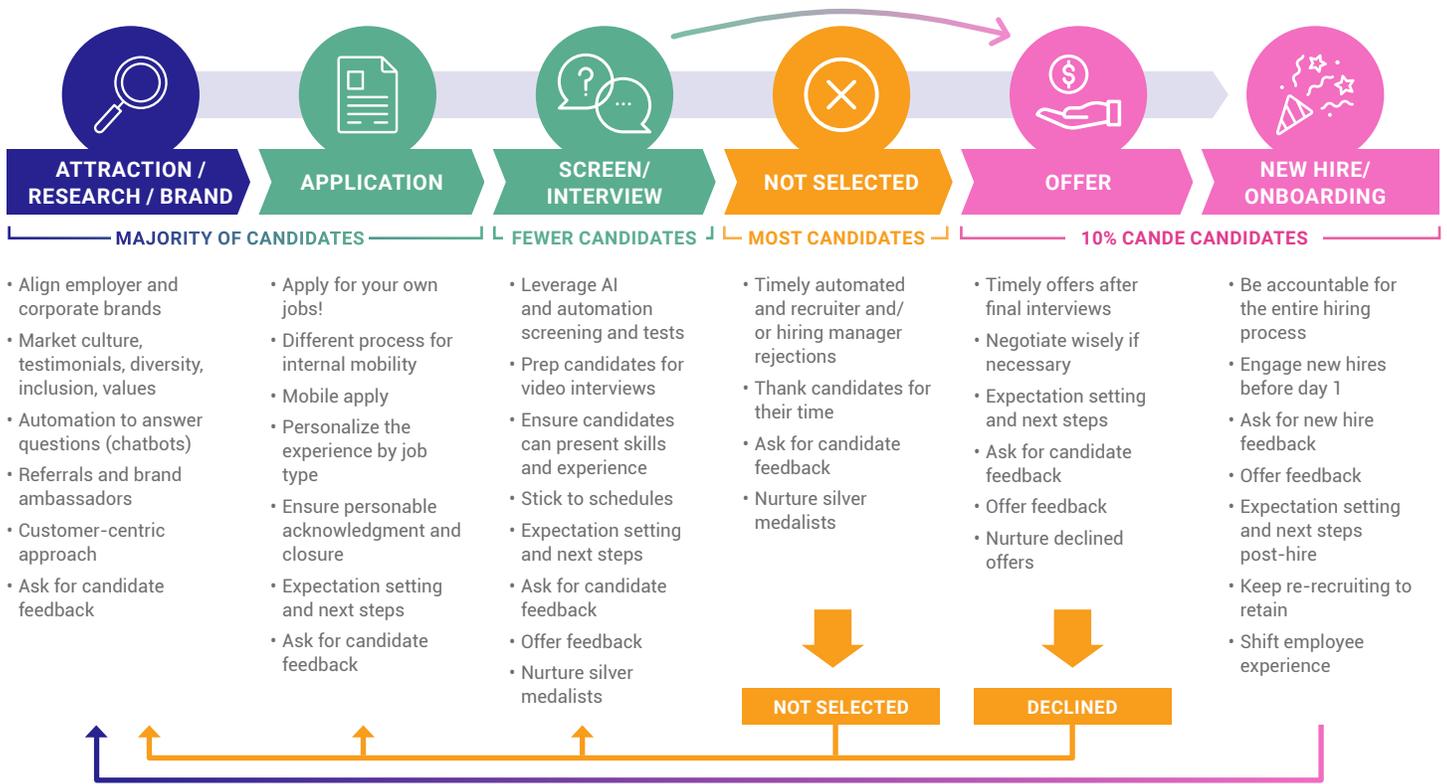
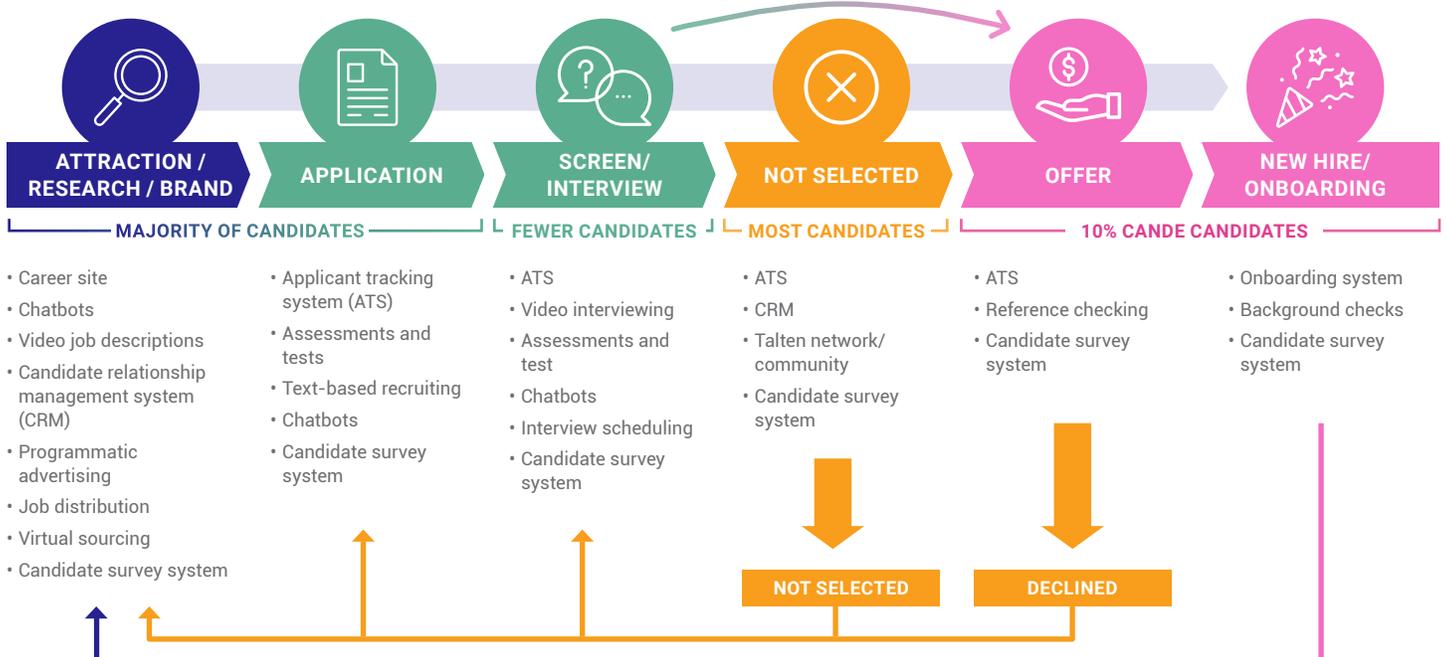


Figure 6. The Candidate Journey Technology Considerations

Talent acquisition technology interacts with candidates at every stage. Here are some examples:



RECRUIT

Screen and Interview

What It Is

The evaluation stages that help recruiters and hiring managers determine the best candidates to hire for the organization and disposition the rest.

A strong connection exists between how candidates are treated during the screening and interviewing stage and whether or not they'll continue to associate with the business and the brand. By the time potential candidates make it through general screening, and perhaps an assessment or two, to get to the interview stage, positive ratings tend to increase, even if it's not the best experience. This is because when there is more communication and opportunities for engagement because candidates are "in the running," they tend to rate their experience higher.

A strong connection exists between how candidates are treated during the screening and interviewing stage and whether or not they'll continue to associate with the business and brand.

That's not to say they won't rate employers lower if their experience is bad, because they will. It's just that this is where companies can win or lose with candidates they definitely want to apply again and refer others.

Through strategic recruiting, organizations can make sound investments in applicable tools, assessments and tactics, expand their local and global reach, improve the candidate experience and strengthen their overall quality of hires. In 2020, over 67% of organizations said they used pre-employment assessment and selection tests during the interview stage, similar to 2019.

Screen and Interview Highlights

- Over 14,000 candidates replied to this section.
- 31% of candidates were asked about their salary expectations during the interview process and 17% were told of the salary without requesting it.
- 62% of recruiters said that they were required to call every rejected internal candidate and provided limited feedback post-interview.
- 32% of candidates said they had a video interview, up more than 100% from 2019.
- Over 67% of employers used pre-employment assessments and selection tests during the interview stage.
- When recruiters and HR explain what would happen next after the screening/interview and followed up as indicated, 53% of candidates were more likely to increase their relationship with the employer.
- 84% of candidates said they were satisfied to extremely satisfied with their ability to present their skills, knowledge and experience during the screening and interview process.
- When asked whether they felt the overall interview process was fair, the candidates who rated their overall experience very high (5 stars) were 129% more likely to increase their relationship with their employer.
- When candidates were asked for screen/interview feedback, there was a 93% increase in a great candidate experience and willingness to increase the relationship.
- When employers communicated that the candidate had not been selected and the experience was rated 5 stars, there was a 111% increase in a great candidate experience and willingness to increase the relationship.

Screening and interviewing are often the deciding factors in hiring a candidate. After screening all the applications and early assessments and conducting early phone screenings and/or video interviews, this is where the final list of candidates is evaluated by the recruiters, hiring managers, potential colleagues and other leaders and individuals in the organization. When recruiters and managers have the right tools and use best practices, interviewing can be a powerful process that determines the best fit for the organization.

However, few organizations have a standard approach for how interviewing is conducted. A broken, disconnected interview process has a negative impact on both the quality of hires and the candidate experience, especially when recruiters and hiring managers don't prepare ahead of time.

And this year most employers had to completely transition to virtual environments for interviewing and hiring. Some employers fared better than others in doing this. Plus, the number one negative reason candidates withdraw themselves from the recruiting process is because their time was disrespected during interviews and appointments.

A broken, disconnected interview process has a negative impact on both the quality of hires and the candidate experience.

This is why whether it's in person or virtual, when companies help candidates prepare, ask relevant questions and communicate with candidates throughout the interview process — while adhering to schedules overall — the candidate experience skews positive.

What Candidates Want

Ten years of Talent Board candidate experience research reveals candidates still have one basic expectation of employers when it comes to screening and interviewing: feedback. They don't get enough of it, and they aren't asked for much of it. Candidates want to understand what is involved in the hiring process and whether or not they will be moving forward — and why. According to our 2020 survey results, 69% of candidates received no feedback after being rejected during the screening and interviewing stage. And yet, the top 10 CandE winners this year all provide feedback to candidates (see appendix).

Of those candidates who said they received feedback after being rejected, 76% indicated the feedback wasn't useful, which will always be highly subjective. But 53% said they were encouraged to apply again for another job.

Candidates want to understand what is involved in the hiring process and whether or not they will be moving forward — and why.

However, there are more employers giving feedback at the interview stage, and here's why giving feedback can pay off:

When specific feedback was given, their willingness to increase their relationship with the employer increased by 16%.

When we look at whether or not candidates were invited to provide feedback after the interview, we see the same patterns, where those invited to provide feedback were 93% more likely to increase their relationship with that organization.

How candidates are notified that they're being rejected after the interview stage is also critical. In 2020, about 62% of candidates received an email from a "do-not-reply" address notifying them that they were no longer considered after the interview stage. Only 19% received a personal email from the recruiter or hiring manager, and only 6% received a phone call, similar to 2019. But what's more striking are the interview experience ratings for each type of communication above. When candidates received a phone call, they gave a 10% higher positive candidate rating. That could make the difference between getting the referral, or not.

Besides feedback, consistent communication and interview prep from employers is just as important. Candidates want to feel confident about the interview process, and without the proper communication and preparation, they are left feeling confused and uncertain. In 2020, 34% of North American candidates received no preparation before the interview, similar to 2019. The more organizations can do to empower candidates before and during the interview, the more positive their experience will be (see Table 17). What's interesting is that, yet again with feedback, candidates were 101% more likely to increase their relationship with that employer when provided with information on their job-fit and candidacy status at the end of the interview day.

Table 17. Preparation and Communication Over the Course of All Interview Events

	2020	2019
Interviewer names and background info provided prior	39%	38%
None	34%	32%
A detailed agenda provided in advance of the interview	24%	27%
Video information, tools and instructions provided prior	20%	10%
Provided job fit and candidacy status feedback at the end of the day	11%	11%
Escorted between each interview event	11%	22%
A campus/facility tour provided during the interview event	9%	15%
Provided process, etc., and follow-up promise afterward	7%	8%
Provided an updated, printed agenda at the interview event	6%	7%
Had to pay for own travel expenses	5%	10%
Travel was fully coordinated	4%	7%
I was reimbursed for my travel expenses	2%	4%

Video interviewing happened 32% of the time, up more than 129% from 2019. While in-person primary screenings were the preferred approach for primary screenings in 2019, it was in second place in 2020 and decreased with 33% compared to last year (see Table 18). Obviously most companies had to transition to virtual interviewing and hiring environments, and since there were candidates in the 2020 CandE data pre-covid and during covid, we'll mostly likely see even higher virtual interviewing percentages in 2021.

Table 18. Types of Interviews Experienced

	2020
Phone screen with recruiter	53%
In-person interview (local)	38%
Phone interview with hiring manager	37%
Video interview (live)	26%
Video interview (recorded)	6%
In-person interview (travel)	5%

How satisfied candidates are in presenting their skills, knowledge and experience during the screening and interviewing process is an important indicator of fairness. Forty percent of the North American candidates this year were extremely satisfied, about the same as in 2019 (see Table 19). But the candidates' willingness to increase their relationship with an employer goes up 131% when they're extremely satisfied. When candidates receive any information about next steps and when they're followed up with consistently by the recruiter/HR professional, their willingness to increase their relationship with the employer increases 52%. However, there is a lot of room for improvement, with over half the candidates not receiving this level of transparency (see Table 20). After the interview, 39% of 2020 North American candidates indicated that they received a verbal and/or written offer of employment, while 21% were told they were no longer being considered.

Table 19. Candidates' Satisfaction with Their Ability to Present Skills, Knowledge and Experience During Screening and Interview

	2020
Extremely satisfied	40%
Satisfied	44%
Dissatisfied	9%
Extremely dissatisfied	7%

Table 20. Actions at the Conclusion of the Interview Process

The recruiter/HR professional explained what would happen next and followed up as indicated	43%
The hiring manager explained what would happen next and followed up as indicated	24%
I have not received any additional information, follow-up or next steps	10%
The recruiter/HR professional explained what would happen next but did not follow up as indicated	9%
The hiring manager explained what would happen next but did not follow up as indicated	6%
I initiated the follow-up and request for next steps with the recruiter/HR professional and received a response	4%
I initiated the follow-up and request for next steps with the hiring manager and received a response	3%

This year we also saw an interesting difference between men and women and their referral and relationship ratings (see Table 21). For the first time, female refer others NPS ratings were 30% higher than the male ratings. And female relationship NPS ratings were 45% higher than the male ratings. However, women were leaving the workforce at four times the rate of men in 2020. This is definitely an area to explore further in our research.

Table 21. Final Refer and Relationship NPS Scores of Candidates Based on Gender

Refer Others Rating	2020	2019
Female	31	20
Male	23	20
Prefer not to answer	-7	-14

Relationship Change Rating	2020	2019
Female	30	15
Male	19	14
Prefer not to answer	-12	-22

What Employers Are Doing

Although there have been fluctuations in the type of assessments used by employers over the years, measuring job-specific skills is still No. 1.

Employers are in the business of “no,” and most candidates do not get the job. That said, 34% of recruiters were required to make a phone call when rejecting external candidates with limited feedback, while only 10% of hiring managers were required to do so. However, 78% of hiring managers were required to make a phone call with limited feedback to internal candidates.

Assessments help employers make better hiring decisions, and according to our data, many types of assessments were again going strong in 2020 (see Table 22). The types that stand out and saw a decrease or increase in utilization were

ability/cognitive (down 9%), simulations (down 6%), personality assessments (down 23%), culture fit (down 19%) and case studies (up 26%). It’s also important to note that although there have been fluctuations in the type of assessments used by employers over the years per our research, measuring job-specific skills is still No. 1.

Situational judgment tests – how candidates respond to work-related situations – are called out separately this year as well, with 25% of employers leveraging these.

Although there have been fluctuations in the type of assessments used by employers over the years, measuring job-specific skills is still No. 1.

Table 22. Percentage of Employers Using Various Assessments

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Job-specific skills	58%	58%	59%	60%	82%	78%
Competency	43%	43%	47%	47%	59%	59%
Ability/cognitive	42%	46%	42%	45%	62%	60%
Simulations (work samples)	34%	36%	44%	38%	54%	36%
Personality	34%	36%	44%	38%	54%	36%
Culture fit	29%	36%	34%	29%	51%	42%
Situational judgment tests	25%	24%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Case Studies	24%	19%	21%	20%	30%	31%

While the use of pre-employment assessments or testing has differed among CandE winners and all other participating employers in the past, in 2020 usage continued to be aligned. Pre-employment assessments offer a degree of objectivity and fairness to candidate screening (see Table 23).

More organizations are taking steps toward a more candidate-friendly and fair interview process.

The business reasons are many as to why employers use pre-employment assessments in hiring, with 69% of North American employers saying the top reason was to help hiring managers make better selections (see Table 24).

More organizations are taking steps toward a more candidate-friendly and fair interview process. And for good reason – these are the finalists that could qualify for future roles if not hired the first time. While many factors affect the number of interviews, it's best to ensure the fewest number of disruptions, as indicated in the business impact section of this report. But the selection process – complicated by the volume of candidates, types of positions, skills and experience, recruiting and hiring manager turnover and the business itself – is never an easy one. Even companies that have developed more effective interview strategies can struggle in getting the most value from their recruiting process and their hiring managers.

Table 23. Are You Using Pre-Employment Assessments/Selection Tests?

	CandE Winners	All Employers
No	39%	33%
Yes, but we haven't conducted an in-house validation analysis	16%	28%
Yes, and we have conducted an in-house validation analysis	45%	39%

Table 24. The Business Reasons for Using Pre-Employment Assessments

	CandE Winners	All Employers
Helping hiring managers make better selections	66%	69%
Improve new hire performance	54%	50%
Risk mitigation	40%	33%
Increase early retention	37%	42%
Candidate flow efficiency	31%	36%
Help candidates understand role	29%	29%

Key Recommendations: What CandE Award Winners Do Better

Companies that have been able to differentiate themselves by making screening more personal and engaging, by providing communication consistently before and after the screening and interview stage, and by providing feedback to final stage candidates are usually the ones that win CandE Awards.

This is also where we see some of the gaps in ratings between CandE winners and all other employers when we convert to Net Promoter Score (NPS) (see Table 25), although this year was tighter than ever. And there are several action items that differentiate the 2020 CandE Award winners and that can help organizations looking to improve the candidate experience during the interview stage (see Figure 7, 8 and 9).

Table 25. CandE Winners vs. All Employers Asking for Feedback after Screening and Interviewing by Key Rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)

	CandE Winners	All Employers
Overall Rating	84	79
Apply Again Rating	63	62
Refer Others Rating	61	60
Relationship Change	58	56

THE EDGE OF PERCEIVED FAIRNESS

At this point in the recruiting process, most employers are engaging candidate semi-finalists and finalists more consistently and fairly. But on average, CandE winners have a competitive edge when it comes to candidates' perception of satisfaction about being able to present their skills and experience (5% difference) and feeling that the job interview process was fair (8% difference).

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

CandE-winning companies conduct structured interviews 23% more often compared with other companies. This is important as it relates directly to the candidates' overall perception of fairness in the process and ensures more consistency from the interviewers as well as the selection criteria. By contrast, CandE-winning companies conduct unstructured interviews 64% less often compared with all other companies.

Companies that have been able to differentiate themselves by making screening more personal and engaging, providing consistent communication, and providing feedback to final stage candidates are usually the ones that win CandE Awards.

NEXT STEPS AND FOLLOW-UP

After the screening and interviewing, 67% of candidates for CandE-winning employers were told about next steps and were followed up with when necessary by the recruiters and/or hiring managers, the same as the rate for all other participating companies. For candidates rejected after the interview process, 56% of those from CandE Award winners were encouraged to apply for another job (6% higher than all companies together). When employers respond to qualified candidates who are finalists, 59% of CandE-winning employers said their recruiters and/or hiring managers always set up a follow-up date.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Candidates for CandE-winning companies who were asked for feedback at every stage of the recruiting process indicated they were more likely to increase their relationship with the employer. And while all stages are important, those candidates who make it to the screening and interviewing phase are most likely to be encouraged to apply again in the future. When asked for feedback after the interview process, there was little difference between CandE-winning companies and all other companies, but candidates overall were 64% more likely to increase their relationship with the employer compared with those that didn't ask for feedback. For those candidates receiving general feedback after the interview, CandE-winning companies had an 80% higher great experience (willingness to increase their relationship) than those who didn't get feedback. And for those who received specific feedback, CandE-winning companies had a 105% higher great experience than those who didn't get feedback.

Figure 7. The CandE Interviewing Cycle: CandE Winner Best Practices

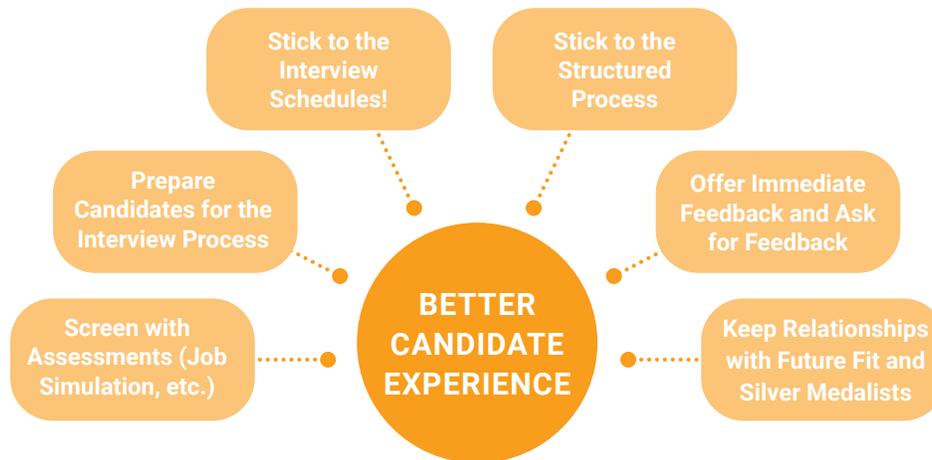


Figure 8. The Candidate Journey CandE Winner Best Practices

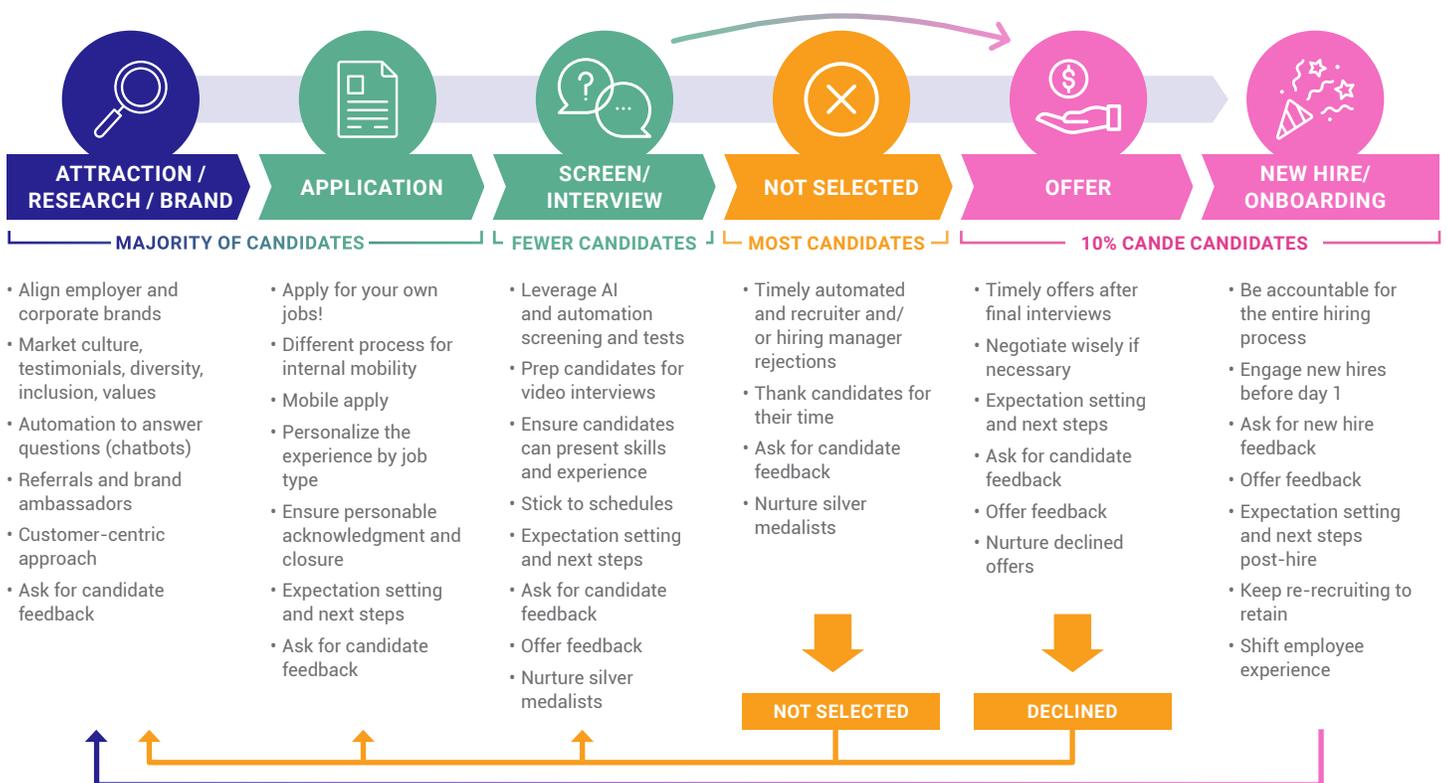
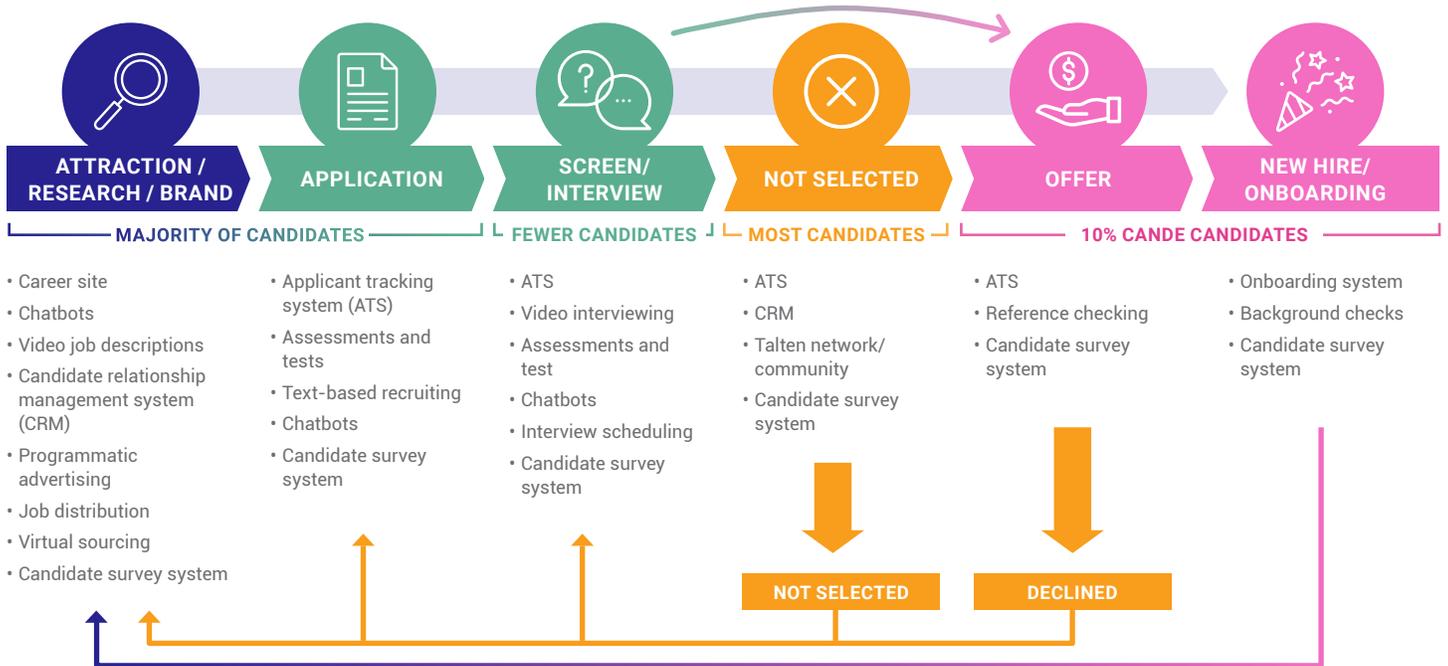


Figure 9. The Candidate Journey Technology Considerations

Talent acquisition technology interacts with candidates at every stage. Here are some examples:



HIRE

Offer and Onboarding

What It Is

The final hiring stages where recruiters and hiring managers make offers to the best candidates and hire and onboard those who accept the offers.

Once an organization decides to hire a given candidate, it first sends an offer letter and proceeds to negotiate, either in print or electronically. However, this intricate and emotionally charged final step in the process can bring frustration since the organization may not succeed in closing the deal – especially when the process takes too long overall. Time continues to be a big frustration factor with final-stage candidates.

Organizations must provide a positive candidate experience throughout the process and beyond the new hire experience via onboarding.

This is why organizations must continue to provide a positive candidate experience and communicate with candidates throughout this process and beyond the new hire experience via onboarding. Onboarding is the final stage in talent acquisition, and when new hires have a positive onboarding experience, they are more productive in their first few weeks and may be more likely to stay with their new employer. The good news at this stage is that most employers are “all in” with those they want to hire, and we see little to no difference in overall ratings during offer and onboarding compared to this year’s CandE winners.

For some companies, however, after making a heavy investment in earlier stages of talent acquisition, human resources and hiring managers ignore candidates (now employees – but candidate experience is perpetual) once they've been hired.

Offer and Onboarding Highlights

- Over 6,000 candidates replied to this section.
- 57% of candidates said that less than one week elapsed between their last interview and the extended offer, up slightly from 2019.
- 39% of candidates said they received a verbal and/or written offer of employment after the final interview.
- 24% of candidates said they were asked for feedback prior to their start date, and these candidates were 129% more willing to increase their relationship out of the gate – a great retention starter.
- 10% of employers conducted candidate experience focus groups and debriefs in the first month of employment.
- 81% of employers said they were competing and leading when it comes to offer management, but only 59% said they were competing and leading when it comes to onboarding.
- Onboarding systems will again be a top 10 technology investment in 2021, with already 79% of employers saying they have one currently in place.

When onboarding goes well, the benefits directly impact organizational success. When onboarding goes badly, employee morale and retention is at risk.

This section will explore what candidates expect during the offer and onboarding phases, what employers are doing to meet candidates'/new hires' needs and what organizations should be doing to improve the overall candidate experience.

What Candidates Want

It is no surprise that candidates want responsiveness during the hiring process, specifically on whether they will receive an offer based on their interview. Fifty-seven percent of candidate respondents said that less than one week elapsed between the last interview and their receipt of an offer letter, up slightly from 2019 (see Table 26). Collapsing this timeframe can make a big difference in hiring highly sought-after candidates.

Candidates want responsiveness during the hiring process, specifically on whether they will receive an offer based on their interview.

Ultimately 91% of participating candidates did accept the offers presented to them. Yet, 44% of candidates in 2020 were not invited to provide any feedback on their candidate journey and the hiring process before their start date, and only 24% were invited to before their start date, a missed opportunity to glean insight that may help improve retention in the long run (see Table 27). However, 8% fewer candidates were asked for feedback than in 2019.

When employers asked candidates for feedback prior to their start date, these candidates were 129% more willing to increase their relationship out of the gate. This is also critical to ensuring retention, at least in the short run, and building the bridge from candidate to employer experience.

Table 26. Time Elapsed Between Last Interview and Receipt of Offer Letter

	2020	2019	2018	2017
Less than 1 week	57%	55%	53%	52%
2 weeks	24%	25%	26%	26%
3 weeks	8%	8%	9%	9%
4 weeks	4%	4%	4%	5%
More than 4 weeks	7%	7%	8%	8%

Table 27. Were Candidates Asked for Feedback Before Starting Work?

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Yes	24%	26%	19%	19%	16%
No	44%	45%	43%	43%	48%
Not sure, I don't remember	32%	26%	38%	36%	35%

Table 28. Final Refer and Relationship NPS Scores of Candidates Based on Generation

Refer Others Rating	2020	2019
The Silent Generation (born in or before 1945)	28	N/A
Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1946 - 1964)	17	14
Generation X (born between 1965 - 1982)	20	17
Millennial Generation (born between 1982 - 1995)	26	24
Generation Z (born in or after 1996)	34	28
Prefer not to answer	25	6

Relationship Change Rating	2020	2019
The Silent Generation (born in or before 1945)	24	N/A
Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1946 - 1964)	9	7
Generation X (born between 1965 - 1982)	14	11
Millennial Generation (born between 1982 - 1995)	23	19
Generation Z (born in or after 1996)	37	28
Prefer not to answer	20	20

Even though we saw higher overall candidate experience ratings globally in 2020, there continues to be a growing sentiment of ageism in our candidate experience research. In fact there was an increase in those who commented in the open-ended questions that they believe age was the reason they didn't get the interview, or the offer, or the job.

In 2020, Generation Z's refer others rating was 52% higher than Generation X's and Gen Z's relationship rating was 90% higher than Gen X's (see Table 28). Obviously there are many differences between the types of jobs that candidates apply for, and time invested and recruiting process complexity can impact experience ratings. Eighty percent of the Gen Z candidates applied for hourly positions, while 56% of Gen X candidates applied for professional and management positions.

Job candidates may also have an existing relationship with the companies they're interested in when they said they began their job search. Some of these relationships may impact their final key candidate experience ratings (see Table 29). It's clear that those who were a current employee of the company and those who were actual customers of the company have the highest key ratings overall, and are much higher overall than in 2019.

The refer rating NPS from current employees of the company increased 10% from 2019, and the relationship rating NPS increased 54% from 2019. Likewise, the refer rating NPS from those who were customers of the company increased 130% from 2019, and the relationship rating NPS increased 106% from 2019. Existing relationships and brand affinity definitely impacted candidate experience for the better in 2020. This in turn can impact quality of referrals, and North American candidates told us in 2020 that referrals were the top way they heard about the job opportunity.

Table 29. Final Refer and Relationship NPS Scores of Candidates Based on Their Relationship with the Company When the Job Search Began

Refer Others Rating	2020	2019
I am a current employee of the company	43	39
I followed the company as a result of thought leadership or company innovation	34	31
I was a customer of the company using their products/services	46	20
I have/had friends/family that work for the company	28	27
I was a past employee of the company	25	N/A
I have/had no relationship with the company	16	8

Relationship Change Rating	2020	2019
I am a current employee of the company	37	24
I followed the company as a result of thought leadership or company innovation	30	27
I was a customer of the company using their products/services	37	18
I have/had friends/family that work for the company	24	21
I was a past employee of the company	19	N/A
I have/had no relationship with the company	11	1

As mentioned in the executive brief, for the past two years, Talent Board has been converting our primary 4-point and 5-point scale ratings throughout our surveys into Net Promoter Scale (NPS) scores.

For example, when converting a 4-point scale to NPS, you subtract the 1 score (lowest) from the 4 score (highest). When we ask candidates how likely they are to refer others, the scale looks like this:

4 – Extremely Likely

3 – Likely

2 – Unlikely

1 – Definitely Not

If a company had 35% of its candidates respond that they were extremely likely to apply again, and 15% said they would definitely not, giving that company an NPS score of 20.

We simplify it even further for our CandE Benchmark Research and group results as follows:

- **AMAZING** (scores above 50) are loyal candidates who will most likely keep referring others based on their experience.
- **OKAY** (scores between 0-50) are candidates who are satisfied but may or may not be too enthusiastic about referring others based on their experience.
- **NOT SO GOOD** (negative scores) are unhappy candidates who can damage your brand and impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

What Employers Are Doing

Phone calls go a lot farther to increase engagement and positive interaction than email does, but employers were slightly more likely to make such calls this year. Employers called only 6% of the candidates in 2020 to tell them they were no longer being considered, up slightly from 2019. However, the overall willingness to increase the relationship with employers went up 30% among candidates who received a phone call versus a personal or automated email. Calling final stage candidates to reject them and give them some feedback is a trend we see increasing.

Also, 23% of employers responded that they ask for feedback before start date, up slightly from 2019. Candidates who were asked to provide feedback prior to their start date had a 129% increase in willingness to increase their relationship with employers. And 20% said they don't ask for the feedback at all.

Engaging candidates prior to their start date can get them excited and further increase their overall positive ratings.

In 2020, 44% of employers said they send specialized marketing and congratulations content and packages to their hired candidates (see Table 30). This can help increase their brand affinity and, at least from a short-term perspective, their initial retention.

In addition, companies are automating the forms management component of onboarding and providing greater engagement before day one with their new hires. Onboarding systems are still a top-of-mind recruiting technology investment for most employers.

Engaging candidates prior to their start date can get them excited and further increase their overall positive ratings.

Table 30. Employer Onboarding Activities Communicated to New Hires

	2020
Touch points are orchestrated between company team members and the selected candidate.	84%
Online application/concierge services are provided to the selected candidate to leverage transactional onboarding.	72%
Concierge relocation services provided to family (if needed), when relocation is involved.	59%
Specialized marketing and congratulations content and packages are mailed to the selected candidate.	44%
Candidate experience survey completed prior to start date.	39%
Recruiter follow-up with the new employee within 6 weeks of start date to confirm expectations reflected reality.	28%
Candidate experience focus group/debrief in first month of start date.	10%

Key Recommendations: What CandE Award Winners Do Better

Although all participating employers continue to close the gap at this stage of the talent acquisition process, when we compare NPS scores, CandE Award winners still have a slight edge in terms of more proactive communication and engagement with candidates who received an offer and those hired (see Table 31). Also, there are several action items that differentiate the 2020 CandE Award winners and that can help organizations looking to improve the candidate experience during the interview stage (see Figure 10, 11 and 12).

INTERVIEW TO OFFER

Time is always a crucial factor in recruiting, especially for those candidates who get the offers. If employers make the offer within one week of the final interview, the candidates' great experience and willingness to increase their relationship with the employer goes up 67% for all employers. For CandE-winning companies, it goes up 69%.

ONBOARDING ACTIVITIES

More employers, whether they've won a CandE Award or not, are investing more in communication and engagement with new hires before their start date. The more engagement prior to their start date, the better a retention starter it becomes. For those candidates who get multiple options to communicate goals, meet team members, get questions answered prior to their start date, their great experience increased 83%. When they completed all their new hire forms online in an onboarding system, their great experience increased 68%. And if they get a call from the hiring manager, their great experience and willingness to increase their relationship with the employer increased 68%.

CandE Award winners still have an edge in terms of more proactive communication and engagement with candidates.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Candidates for CandE-winning employers only have a 4% higher NPS for the likelihood to increase their relationship with the employer when asked for feedback after the interview process compared with all other participating companies, but that difference offers an edge when it comes to competing for talent. Candidates from CandE winners say that they were asked for feedback 26% of the time, slightly higher than all other employers, and these candidates were 208% more willing to increase their relationship out of the gate — a great retention starter. Plus, CandE-winning companies said they request feedback from new hires 29% more often compared with other employers.

Table 31. CandE Winners vs. All Employers Asking for New Hire Feedback by Key Rating Net Promoter Score (NPS)

	CandE Winners	All Employers
Overall Rating	93	92
Apply Again Rating	75	74
Refer Others Rating	75	74
Relationship Change	71	70

Figure 10. The CandE Offer / Onboarding Cycle: CandE Winner Best Practices



Figure 11. The Candidate Journey CandE Winner Best Practices

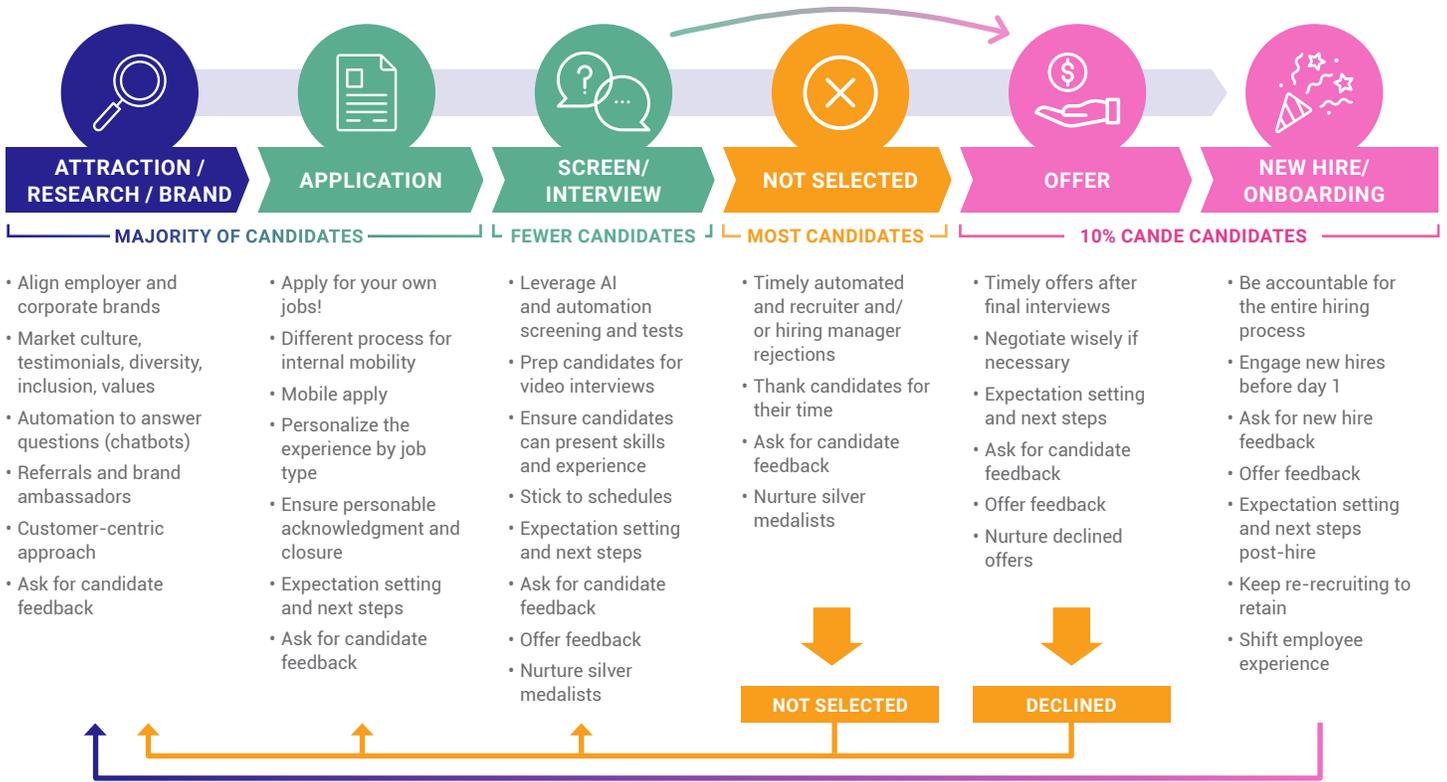
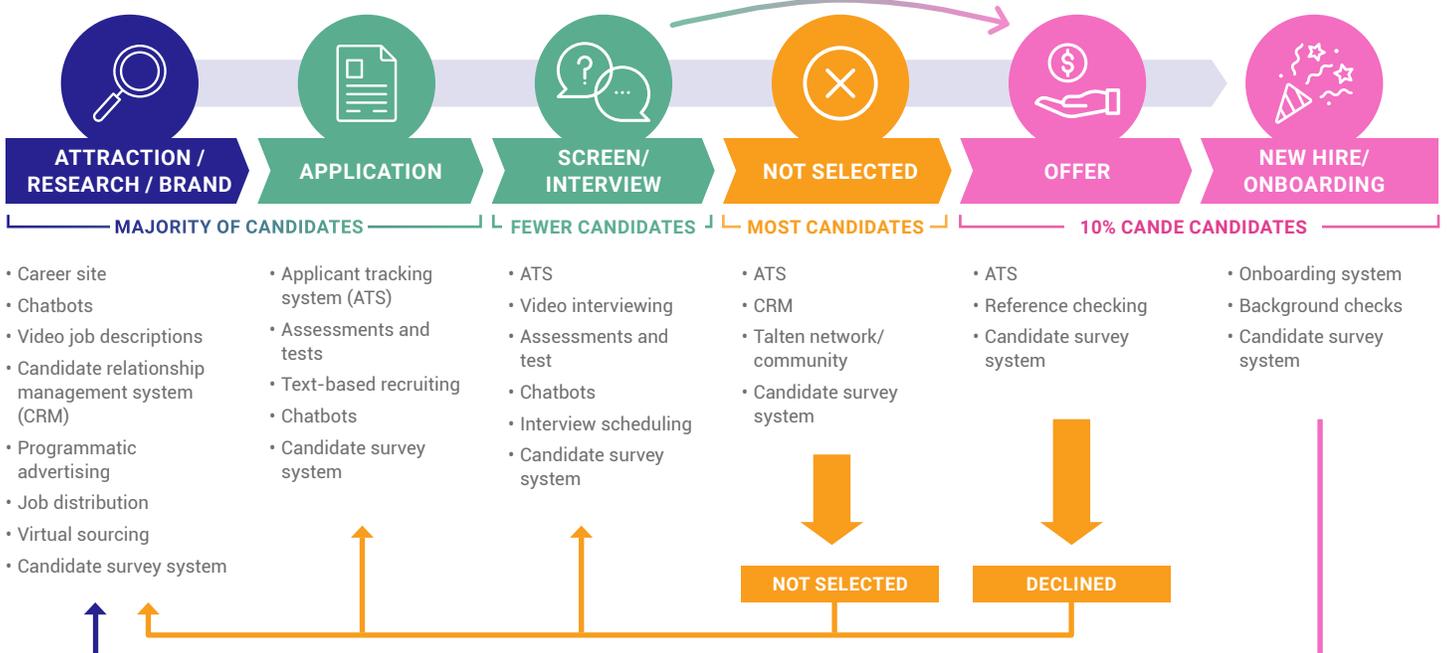


Figure 12. The Candidate Journey Technology Considerations

Talent acquisition technology interacts with candidates at every stage. Here are some examples:



APPENDIX

CandE Recruiting Focus 2021

While candidate experience continues to be impacted by every aspect of recruiting, and is the top recruiting focus for 2021 based on our annual CandE Recruiting Focus survey, diversity and inclusion moved to the second position overtaking employer branding. Over a 100 employers from our CandE community, including large and small employers from across industries, responded to our brief "CandE Recruiting Focus 2021" survey this year.

2020 was a year like no other. After measuring candidate experience in nothing but a growth market in the nine years since Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards (the CandEs) was founded -- then came COVID-19. The global pandemic impacted economies everywhere (and continues to do so), which in turn brought recruiting and hiring to a halt for many companies with millions of people losing their jobs. Combine that with social and racial injustice and inequity, political distress and all kinds of upheaval, it's no wonder we all longed for 2021.

However, regardless of what the world looks like, our mission has always focused on helping companies ensure a quality candidate experience, and our CandE community this year responded to candidates and employees alike with a higher level of empathetic communication like never before. There were those employers that also avoided furloughs and layoffs where they could by re-skilling and redeploying employees to other roles (and continue to do so).

Even in a pandemic, employers can't hide from a negative candidate experience, because those experiencing it are willing to share with their inner circles, people they trust and talk with every day, and online in the form of employer reviews and social media posts.

The good news is that those who had a "great" overall experience say they'll definitely increase their employer relationships – they'll apply again, refer others and make purchases and/or influence purchases when applicable. These aren't just the job finalists or those hired; the majority are individuals who research and apply for jobs but who aren't hired. And these are the candidates willing to share their positive experiences with their inner circles and publicly online. And in 2020, the great experience increased significantly around the world.

Our mission has always focused on helping companies ensure a quality candidate experience. This year our CandE community responded to candidates and employees alike with a higher level of empathetic communication like never before.

What's important to keep in mind is that the volume of applicants also increased in 2020 due to millions out of work. This in turn increased the number of candidates that employers reject during the recruiting process, and this can quickly impact the business and the brand, both positively and negatively. This is why the increased level of empathetic communication and transparency from employers was so important in 2020.

We again explored the primary recruiting initiatives employers would be focused on in 2021 by surveying employers as part of our benchmark research. These questions included:

- In what regions does your organization primarily hire? (North America, EMEA, APAC and/or Latin America)
- What primary recruiting initiatives/activities will your talent acquisition team focus on in 2021? (multiple choices)
- How will you accomplish these recruiting initiatives/activities in 2021? (multiple choices)

Most of the companies that responded said they hire in North America, followed by EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa), APAC (Asia-Pacific) and Latin America (see Table 1).

Table 1. Where CandE Employers Hire Globally

	2020
North America	85%
EMEA	26%
APAC	23%
Latin America	14%

The top 10 recruiting initiatives/activities global talent acquisition teams will focus on in 2021 include candidate experience, diversity and inclusion, employer branding and more (see Table 2).

Globally, candidate experience, diversity and inclusion and employer branding are the top three recruiting focuses for 2021.

Table 2. Expected Primary Recruiting Initiatives/Activities in 2021 Globally (Partial List)

Recruiting Focus	Overall	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Candidate Experience	76%	77%	76%	73%	85%
Diversity and Inclusion	69%	76%	68%	82%	62%
Employer Branding	58%	61%	60%	59%	31%
Screening and Interviewing	48%	49%	52%	45%	54%
Recruitment Marketing	47%	49%	60%	64%	54%
Onboarding	42%	40%	36%	36%	46%
Analytics and Data Management	39%	39%	40%	36%	38%
Social Recruiting	38%	40%	36%	36%	38%
Employee Referrals	38%	38%	52%	50%	38%
Career Site Development	36%	34%	52%	45%	38%

Globally, candidate experience, diversity and inclusion and employer branding are the top three recruiting focuses for 2021, underscoring the disruptive changes experienced in 2020. Screening and interviewing and recruitment marketing rounded out the top five for employers worldwide. Diversity and inclusion will be a higher priority in APAC than anywhere else, and although employer branding will not be a top three priority

in Latin America, screening and interviewing and recruitment marketing will get a higher priority. How will employers accomplish these recruiting initiatives/activities in 2021? The answers come down to using a variety of methods, including overwhelmingly improved processes and efficiencies, followed by current staffing, technologies and more (see Table 3).

Table 3. How Global Employers Plan to Accomplish Their 2021 Recruiting Initiatives/Activities

Recruiting Focus	Overall	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Improved Processes and Efficiencies	77%	80%	86%	85%	82%
Current Staffing	66%	65%	68%	60%	73%
New Technologies	56%	56%	55%	55%	36%
Current Technologies	42%	44%	55%	55%	45%
Outsourcing	19%	17%	37%	35%	45%
More Staffing	10%	10%	9%	5%	9%
New Leadership	5%	4%	5%	5%	27%

Technology is always important to driving repetitive recruiting processes and practices and new and current technologies are vital to how global employers will activate their 2021 initiatives (along with current staffing). Having to transition most interviewing and onboarding to virtual and then managing remote teams everywhere was no easy task (and will continue to be the norm in 2021).

EMEA, APAC and Latin America will also utilize recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) to accomplish their goals much more than in North America, a common practice around the world.

Tables 4 and 5 recap the employer responses from our 2020 benchmark research, which included all 200 global employers. Video job descriptions were again overwhelmingly the primary planned technology investment for 2020, and job-description optimizations were next, with the exception of Latin America.

Technology is always important to driving repetitive recruiting processes and practices and both new and current technologies are vital to how global employers will activate their 2021 initiatives.

Also, text-based recruiting, predictive analytics and interview scheduling will be important for a third of the companies from 2020, except EMEA (see Table 4). Video interviewing and virtual onboarding will continue to pick up for employers in 2021 due to COVID-19.

Table 4. Primary Areas Where Global Companies Plan to Purchase External (Third Party) Technology Solutions to Improve Recruiting in 2021 (Partial List)

Recruiting Focus	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Video Job Descriptions	72%	90%	66%	100%
Job-Description Optimization	58%	50%	60%	0%
Text-Based Recruiting	43%	18%	31%	33%
Predictive Analytics	30%	40%	32%	20%
Candidate Relationship Management (CRM)	28%	29%	22%	33%
Talent Community/Network	27%	11%	18%	0%
Assessments/Testing	22%	90%	29%	20%
Video interviewing	21%	37%	25%	40%
Interview Scheduling	21%	19%	14%	0%
Onboarding	21%	16%	26%	0%

It's also important to note how artificial intelligence, smart technologies and machine learning are helping employers improve recruiting and hiring (see Table 5). We'll continue to see increases in utilizing chatbots, virtual sourcing and more in 2021. Employers that have any hiring volume need to leverage these technologies that help them to improve quality targeting, automate personalized communications, and to help reduce human bias in all recruiting and hiring processes.

However, improving processes and efficiencies first, before purchasing new technologies or optimizing current tech, must be the priority. Otherwise, employers could just be enhancing bad recruiting practices. In addition, when communication and feedback gaps can be addressed by technology where there was little to no communication previously, particularly in the pre-application, application and early screening/interviewing stages, then the overall candidate perceived fairness and positive ratings can be increased.

Employers also use other service providers to help them improve different parts of their recruiting process year after year (see Table 6). Campus recruiting services, recruiter and hiring manager training services, and assessment validation and/or development services, with the latter being the most prevalent globally looking out to 2021. Veteran/disability program services and employer branding services are also planned on being used globally.

Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards will continue to focus on recruiting, hiring and the candidate experience. This includes the potential impact on the business and the brand that companies should be paying attention to year after year. Pre-covid, candidate resentment had continued to trend upward around the world. It completely reversed in 2020, along with again the good news that the willingness of candidates to increase their relationship with an employer increased in 2020.

Improving recruiting and the candidate experience is always a work in progress, and the hardest part is sustaining it over time, whether disrupted by a global pandemic, economic downturns, social and racial unrest, political upheaval, leadership changes, mergers and acquisitions, and whatever else impacts businesses year after year.

Kudos to the 2020 CandE-winning companies, and here's to continued success in 2021. Please note that the 2021 CandE Benchmark Research Program opens up in January. We look forward to your participation! Be safe and well.

Kevin W. Grossman
President
Talent Board

Table 5. Primary Areas Global Companies Plan to Purchase Artificial Intelligence Technology Solutions to Improve Recruiting in 2021 (Partial)

Recruiting Focus	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Measuring and Predicting Employee Job Changing Behavior	68%	14%	50%	50%
Sourcing Existing Candidate Database with a Virtual Assistant	66%	50%	46%	57%
Sentiment Analysis of Candidate Open-Ended Feedback	65%	55%	55%	25%
Chatbot Recruiting Automation (Q&A "Customer-Service" on Career Site)	62%	56%	53%	38%
Sourcing Candidates from External Sources with a Virtual Assistant	61%	67%	58%	57%
Video Interviewing with Assessments	53%	50%	53%	33%

Table 6. Primary Areas Where Global Companies Plan to Contract with External (3rd party) Service Providers to Enhance Recruiting Efforts in 2021 (Partial List)

Recruiting Focus	North America	EMEA	APAC	Latin America
Campus Recruiting Services	28%	0%	15%	0%
Recruiting/Hiring Manager Training Services	26%	6%	15%	20%
Assessment Validation and/or Development Services	25%	22%	29%	40%
Employee Advocacy and Referral Program Services	24%	8%	25%	0%
Veteran/Disability Program Services	23%	14%	27%	25%
Employer Branding Services	18%	20%	19%	25%

4 Keys to a Winning Candidate Experience

Every company wants to create a winning candidate experience — one that attracts the best people for the available jobs and the best possible reviews from all candidates. The question is — exactly what constitutes a winning experience?

According to our Talent Board CandE Benchmark Research, where we've analyzed more than 1 million candidate experiences over the past decade, the very best experiences share a number of characteristics including frequent communication, ease of application, and just the right amount of automation, among others. Our latest research also indicates that a winning experience meets candidates' expectations in four key areas:

1. Setting Expectations
2. Accountability
3. Fairness
4. Feedback

Investing in these four areas of your candidate experience makes candidates feel they've been treated fairly and respectfully — even when they've been rejected. That's more important than ever, as soaring unemployment may force you to turn away record numbers of job seekers in the months ahead.

According to our Talent Board CandE Benchmark Research, where we've analyzed more than 1 million candidate experiences over the past decade, the very best experiences share a number of characteristics including frequent communication, ease of application, and just the right amount of automation, among others.

1

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

What candidates want: to be told what will occur during each phase of your recruiting process so they're not left guessing.

From your candidates' point of view, this is a matter of common courtesy and respect. Job searches are time-consuming and stressful. You only add to that stress when you fail to communicate the steps of your recruiting process and the associated timelines.

Ideally the basic milestones of your candidate journey should be outlined on your career site, and you should communicate next steps and timelines whenever candidates reach a new phase of their journey (screening, interviewing, offer, and onboarding). As our research reports have noted, accuracy is paramount in these communications — e.g., if your recruiters tell candidates they'll be in touch two weeks after application but it actually takes four weeks, it undermines the quality of the entire experience. As a result, candidates will be much less willing to apply to your other jobs, refer colleagues and friends to you, or even buy your company's products or services.

In short, setting expectations not only elevates the quality of your company's candidate experience but it can also positively impact your bottom line.

2

ACCOUNTABILITY

What candidates want: to know that your recruiters and hiring managers will keep their promises.

For many candidates, nothing is worse than a recruiting process seemingly devoid of accountability — e.g., recruiters and hiring managers who fail to keep their promises and appointments. Candidates understand that your team is busy but it's hard for them to remain patient when they feel their time and efforts aren't being respected, especially during the later stages of the recruiting process. Even worse, when it feels like no one is accountable for this kind of poor treatment, candidates naturally assume it's endemic to your company's culture. Top talent won't hesitate to bail on such a process, even in a tough job market.

3

FAIRNESS

What candidates want: to feel that your overall recruitment and assessment processes are fair and impartial.

The perceived fairness of your candidate experience could work for or against you like never before, given the nation's current focus on systemic racism and other forms of bias. For instance, when we surveyed job seekers about the fairness of employers' assessment process, it found their overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) was 33 in 2019 and 58 so far in 2020, which is amazing. We see this every year: the more "engagement activities" with candidates, the higher the level of perceived fairness, regardless of the assessment type.

It's important to remember that most of the candidates surveyed were turned down after application. So again, it was the perceived fairness of their experience – not whether they got hired – that mattered most in their ratings.

4

FEEDBACK

What candidates want: to give their feedback and opinions about the various stages of your candidate journey.

Candidates appreciate your honest feedback about their backgrounds, interviewing skills, resumes, and the like. Equally important, they value the chance to give you their feedback on various aspects of your candidate experience. For example, our data shows that employers who asked for feedback about their application process saw a 72% increase in their ratings as "a great candidate experience." Asking for feedback during the screening and interviewing stage generated a 148% increase in ratings – and in candidates' willingness to increase their relationships with these companies. When feedback was both asked for and offered throughout the attract-recruit-hire process, it overwhelmingly increased the average candidate's positive impression of the given organization.

THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE JOURNEY AND CANDE WINNER BEST PRACTICES

We've been doing this candidate experience benchmark research for 10 years now. Again, after surveying over 1 million candidates from over 1,000 employers big and small across industries, we now understand better the best practices that drive a more positive candidate sentiment as well as a higher level of perceived fairness in the recruiting and hiring process.

Those companies year after year that win our coveted CandE Award work hard at improving all of the above areas and more. We've created a new infographic that conveys the candidate experience journey from pre-application to onboarding and all the CandE Winner best practices we identify each year.



Celebrating 10 Years of CandE-Winning Companies

Congratulations to all of our winners over the years, regardless of how many times they've won!

Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards (CandEs) has been carrying out its mission of elevating and promoting a quality candidate experience for a full decade now, a milestone we never could have achieved without the dedication and support of HR and recruiting leaders and their teams, employers big and small across industries around the world, generous sponsors and partners, and of course, the CandE winners – companies that have the highest candidate sentiment ratings in our annual benchmark research.

Together we've built a CandE community that is undeniably helping to improve the quality of candidate experiences across the world. It's never been more critical than during this year of COVID-19, economic devastation, social inequality and racial injustice. Now that we have nearly 10 years of CandE benchmark research under our belt, it's the perfect time to salute [all the past CandE Award-winning companies](#) – particularly those who've won the most awards to date.

Winning a CandE Award means that an organization has improved their recruiting and hiring processes enough to ensure a higher level of positive candidate sentiment and perceived level of fairness. Participating companies are evaluated through two rounds of multi-dimensional surveys: 1) a company's recruiting team is surveyed about their recruitment processes and practices, and 2) a random sampling of each company's candidates are surveyed about their recruiting experiences from pre-application to onboarding (if hired). It's important to note that companies need to target no more than 20% of hired candidates in the survey process, so it's not like they can rely on only happy new hires for their evaluations. In 2019, only 10% of the total global candidate responses were from those who were hired.

The survey data are run through a statistical analysis and an algorithm that produces final CandE scores, which are then stack ranked to determine each year's winners. There are also minimum qualifications and standards that companies have to meet. You can read complete details about our scoring and methodology on page 76 of this report. Bottom line – if you win a CandE, you've earned it – and your candidates are the better for it.

CANDE WINNERS WITH THE MOST WINS

As mentioned, we want to give special attention to companies who've won the most CandEs since the program was launched, an achievement that speaks volumes about their commitment not only to improving the candidate experience but to sustaining it over time. That's the ultimate sign of their commitment to a gold CandE standard.

An impressive number of companies have won CandEs, so I'll call out just some of the top winners in each region here:

NORTH AMERICAN WINNERS

- **AT&T**—8 CandEs
- **Colorado Springs Utilities**—8 CandEs
- **Lockheed Martin**—8 CandEs
- **BASF**—7 CandEs
- **Humana**—7 CandEs
- **Deloitte LLP**—6 CandEs
- **JetBlue Airways**—6 CandEs
- **T-Mobile**—6 CandEs

EMEA WINNERS

- **Intel**—9 CandEs
- **Accenture**—6 CandEs
- **E.ON Inhouse Consulting GmbH**—6 CandEs
- **AUTOLIV TURKEY**—5 CandEs
- **Sapient**—4 CandEs

APAC WINNERS

- **Intel**—6 CandEs
- **Accenture**—4 CandEs
- **Jacobs**—4 CandEs
- **Johnson & Johnson**—4 CandEs
- **Virtusa Corporation**—3 CandEs
- **GE**—3 CandEs

Congratulations to all of our winners over the years, regardless of how many times they've won.

Every employer who's ever earned a CandE is a shining example of how to treat candidates with the empathy and respect they deserve. They're also showing other companies exactly what it takes to build an employment brand they can be proud of. And any employer willing to ask their candidates for recruiting experience feedback benchmark their candidate experience are winners as well!

What 10 Years of Research Is Teaching Us About Sustaining the Candidate Experience

Employers have spent the past several years diligently improving their candidate experiences. Despite the many lessons learned along the way, nothing could have prepared them for 2020 and this emerging reality: sustaining a high-quality experience is even trickier than building one.

Here in the U.S., for example, employers are navigating a series of external challenges (including COVID-19, social and racial inequity and injustice, political upheaval, and economic turmoil) while also dealing with a cascade of resulting internal hurdles (budget cuts, reduced recruiting plans and talent investments, and shifts in business plans and priorities).

Given this litany of tribulations, it'll take serious resolve to sustain the quality of our candidate experiences in the months ahead, although our 2020 benchmark research had shown us that the bar has again been raised.

Employers have spent the past several years diligently improving their candidate experiences. Despite the many lessons learned along the way, nothing could have prepared them for 2020.

A DECADE'S WORTH OF INSPIRATION

So where can you find ideas worth emulating as you nurture your own candidate experience? Fortunately, [Talent Board has a decade's worth of research](#) you can tap into. Our research reports contain a multitude of case studies on [CandE Award-winning companies](#), including those that have earned the most CandE Awards – a clear indication of sustained quality and commitment.

Here are a few of these companies along with some of the tactics they've employed to maintain the superior quality of their candidate experiences (from our CandE research reports and [CandE case studies](#)):

- **Virtusa Corporation** – Winner of 4 total CandE Awards in North America, 3 in EMEA and 4 in APAC, this information tech services company significantly overhauled how it engages with candidates – holding more in-depth conversations and probing for exactly what candidates want from their jobs and careers. As a result, its offer-to-join ratio has increased, the percentage of candidates who back out of the process early has decreased and rejected candidates have been more willing to stay in Virtusa's pipeline. The company also launched an AI-powered chatbot that helps better engage candidates and assists with screening them. Virtusa's careers site has gotten easier to use over the years and its "chat with a recruiter" feature has helped streamline its pre-application process.
- **Humana** – Winner of 7 total CandE Awards in North America, this health insurance powerhouse administers a variety of internal and external surveys to gather candidate feedback about their experiences; the feedback is then used to drive strategic talent initiatives. It has also increased its use of pre-screening questions, chatbots, and texting with candidates over the past several years. Analytics are used to identify recruiting issues, such as the need to assess candidates more effectively, and the company is making ongoing investments in recruiting technologies and process improvement.

- **T-Mobile** — The renowned telecom company, and winner of 6 total CandE Awards in North America, launched an updated application experience several years ago to provide candidates with a streamlined, more responsive, and fully mobile friendly application. It also enhanced its interviewing process with role-playing exercises that allow candidates to better showcase their skillsets. Improvements were made to its video interviewing initiatives and the functionality of its careers site, providing more detailed search filtering, enhanced customization, and improved optimization for mobile and tablet users. In addition, T-Mobile increased the social footprint of its employment brand and began surveying all of its candidates post-application (roughly one million per year) and post-interview. This survey data has been used to improve how recruiters and hiring managers interact with candidates.

Of course, these activities represent only a fraction of the work these companies are doing to sustain their candidate experiences. They continue to evolve and make progress because the candidate experience itself is always a work in progress, regardless of the internal and external challenges that arise.

5 KEY DIFFERENTIATORS

Sustaining a great candidate experience means you can never just stop making improvements. The minute you do, your competitors will pass you by. Here are five key differentiators of CandE Award-winning experiences that you can and should leverage to keep that from happening:

- 1 **Consistent communication from pre-application to onboarding**
- 2 **Setting better expectations about the recruiting process**
- 3 **Asking for feedback and provide feedback more often**
- 4 **Holding your organization more accountable**
- 5 **Ensuring a higher level of perceived candidate fairness**

Implementing these strategies will keep your candidate experience going strong into 2021 and beyond. And be sure to [download our research reports](#) and comb through all the case studies from this year and previous years for inspiration.

Adopt and Adapt These Next-Level Recruiting Strategies from 2020's Top 10 CandE Winners

Inspiring.

That's the word I used to describe the 61 global 2020 CandE Award-winning companies. I didn't use that word lightly either. Looking back over all the disruptive change in 2020, how could you not be inspired by these companies? I mean, who plans for a pandemic?

Facing a year filled with unprecedented challenges, the CandE winners never took their eye off improving their candidate and employee experiences. They remained committed to delivering a model candidate experience to external and internal candidates alike with a level of empathic communication we haven't seen, even as they dealt with a pandemic, economic turmoil, unpredictable shifts in recruiting and hiring priorities, and the need to quickly implement new approaches to keeping their businesses moving forward and keeping their people safe. You can't get much more inspiring than that.

In fact, if you need a little inspiration on how to improve your company's candidate experience, the Top 10 North American CandE Winners of 2020 are a perfect starting point. They're using some very definite strategies to deliver winning candidate experiences and garner positive reviews.

START AT THE TOP (THE TOP 10, THAT IS)

Before we get to these strategies, I want to share the names of the Top 10 (the 10 North American companies with this year's highest-rated candidate experiences):

1. NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital
2. D2L
3. ICIMS, Inc.
4. Optum
5. Sharp Healthcare
6. PointClickCare
7. Colorado Springs Utilities
8. Inspire Brands
9. Billtrust
10. Johnson & Johnson

Facing a year filled with unprecedented challenges, the CandE winners never took their eye off improving their candidate and employee experiences. They remained committed to delivering a model candidate experience.

Drawing from our 2020 CandE benchmark research, here are five strategies from the Top 10 CandE Winners that can significantly elevate your candidate experience:

1. **Align recruiter performance with candidate experience.** Nine of the Top 10 do this; more broadly, only about 6 out of every 10 North American employers do. Don't get me wrong, 60% of all employers in North America is a good thing—but it does show there's plenty of room for improvement.
2. **Conduct structured interviews.** Structured interviews help to level the playing field among all candidates (which can have a major impact on how fairly your employment brand, company culture and more are perceived), and can provide more accurate assessments – 7 of the Top 10 utilize them. For about one-third of North American employers in general, structured interviews remain an untapped area of opportunity.
3. **Establish and honor follow-up dates.** Without question, one of the best things you can do to lift the quality of your candidate experience—not to mention the ratings/reviews you receive—is to make sure your recruiters and/or hiring managers follow up with finalist candidates. In fact, when they do so, there's a 50% rise in their "great experience" ratings from candidates. Indeed, 9 of the Top 10 CandE winners establish follow-up dates with finalists and stick to them consistently, while only about half of all North American employers do the same.
4. **Survey all finalists.** Six of the Top 10 CandE winners survey all finalists about the quality of their overall experience; this number drops to roughly 4 out of 10 for all employers in North America. It's worth noting that, while the other four Top 10 CandE winners don't conduct a survey, they do formally review any feedback they receive.

5. **Provide feedback to finalists.** This is a clear point of differentiation among employment brands. Every one of the Top 10 CandE winners provides feedback to finalist candidates, while only 40% of all North American employers do. Over the years, Talent Board's research has clearly shown that all (not just finalists) candidates appreciate feedback. They want to know how they're being perceived and what they can improve for future interviews. Employers who offer these insights always see a positive jump in their candidate ratings. More specifically, employers who offer candidates feedback on job fit see a 15% bump in ratings that say they provide a "great experience," and those that offer feedback on assessments conducted see a 20% bump in "great experience" ratings. (Pro tip: the best feedback you can offer rejected candidates is a recommendation on what they should do next since you're not going to pursue them. Obviously, the specifics will depend on the individual, but recommendations can take many forms such as indicating which skills to sharpen, additional schooling or training they might pursue, other jobs to look into, or even other employers they should consider.)

You might have noticed that most of these strategies pertain to interactions with finalist candidates, who are often considered future-fit or high-potential candidates for other jobs, so it's no surprise the focus is on them. However, these same strategies apply to all candidates, and the more widely you implement them, the greater potential positive impact they'll have on your ratings and the overall perception of your employment brand.

WHAT DO THE CANDIDATES SAY?

A great candidate experience has a number of critical outcomes including making candidates more willing to engage with a brand (which is important to all brands but absolutely vital to a consumer brand) and imparting a [higher level of perceived fairness](#) to that brand.

We asked candidates about several other impacts of their experiences with the Top 10 CandE winners including:

- **How likely it is that they would apply to other jobs.** Averaged across the entire Top 10, 91% of the responses were "likely" or "extremely likely." Compare that to only 76% of all companies – an 18% difference.
- **How likely it is that they would refer other people to these companies.** 90% of the responses were "likely" or "extremely likely" (averaged). Compare that to only 78% of all companies – a 14% difference.
- **What kind of relationships would they want to have with the Top 10 after their recruiting and hiring experiences (job-related exchanges, brand affinity, influencing purchasing decisions for consumer-based companies).** 75% of the responses were "pretty good" or "great" (averaged). Compare that to only 60% of candidates from all employers – a 22% difference.

The above differences can be significant, especially when your company is competing for the best people across critical job requisitions – or any job for that matter.

Again, these are just some of the positive impacts of a great candidate experience. They're also just some of the insights you can glean from this year's Talent Board research that you're reading now.

CandE Multi-Year Panelists Deliver a Master Class in Sustaining a Great Candidate Experience

During our 2020 CandE Awards Virtual Conference, we featured representatives from four remarkable CandE Award-winning companies during a panel discussion. What makes them so remarkable? Each company has earned eight CandE Awards based on having some of the highest candidate ratings in our annual benchmark research program. That's right, we're talking 32 CandEs among four companies.

Offering what amounted to a master class in [sustaining a great candidate experience](#), the panelists discussed the unique and creative paths their organizations have taken to achieve repeat award-winning results year after year. Attendees were given a rare window into the metrics these organizations have used to measure success, how they built a business case for their efforts, what they're most proud of, and much more. Like the [top 10 CandE Winners this year](#), companies big and small across industries can and should apply these strategies to their recruiting processes today.

Below we've gathered some highlights from our discussion, condensing responses for brevity. We hope you find their wisdom as valuable as we did.

THE PANELISTS

With well over five decades of combined experience, our panelists have an array of responsibilities including talent acquisition, organizational development, oversight of their employment brand, and HR, among others. The four panelists were:

[Melissa Corwin](#), Vice President – Employee Experience, AT&T

[Stacy Van Meter](#), VP Talent Acquisition, Deluxe

[Bill Meeboer](#), Senior Manager, Enterprise Talent Sourcing & Innovation, Lockheed Martin

[Jonathan Liepe](#), Human Resources Supervisor, Colorado Springs Utilities

AS 8-YEAR CANDE WINNERS, WHAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AND HOW DID YOU SUSTAIN THEM?

Melissa: It's really tempting to focus on serving internal constituents, but to get the talent attraction process right you really need to put the candidate first. So, I'm most proud of how we've kept the candidate at the heart of our decisions. I'm also proud of the fact that we continue to map the candidate journey to the employee experience. Candidates aren't just candidates when they're first coming through the door. They remain "candidates" as they move throughout the business. It's one continuous journey. We work hard to provide a seamless, effortless experience at each transition point of this journey. We've also gotten better at making sure incoming candidates really understand AT&T's values, culture, and what it's like to work here. We've created job preview videos that we constantly refresh so candidates get a truly accurate, comprehensive view of what it's like to be in a specific role and a specific environment at AT&T.

Stacy: I'm most proud of the fact that for 10 years we've been calling our candidates "customers" and treating them accordingly. We want every candidate walking away from their experience feeling like they matter, whether they get the job or not. Our recruiters and hiring managers spend time with candidates making sure every one of them feels like they matter, even when the person isn't right for the job. We also give candidates feedback and insights into how they can do better in future interviews.

"We want every candidate walking away from their experience feeling like they matter, whether they get the job or not."

**– Stacy Van Meter,
VP Talent Acquisition, Deluxe**

Bill: At one time, Lockheed Martin relied pretty heavily on brand recognition and people applying to jobs on our career site. At that time, we also had extremely long applications and lots of red tape to clear in order to get hired. Fast-forward to today and we've really streamlined and improved all of the touchpoints throughout our process, including the ways we leverage our talent communities.

Candidates can actually reach out and ask one of our engineers what it's like to work here. We've also shortened our applications significantly—from 20 minutes to an average of about 4 minutes for a new applicant. And we built in automation where we needed it. For example, we automated our interview scheduling, which is a big help with roughly 50,000 interviews a year. Overall, I'm proudest of our improvement in human interaction with candidates. Most of the candidates we hire today have talked with a talent sourcer, have been personally referred, have met our campus representatives, or had some kind of human interaction rather than just finding their way to us through a career site.

Jonathan: Our overriding philosophy at Colorado Springs Utilities is to make sure every applicant is treated with the same high level of dignity and respect, and to make sure their applications get the diligent review they deserve. One thing we did long ago was to solicit feedback from applicants about our application form to make sure it's short, easy to complete, and gives us only the information we really need. We also took a look at every part of our continuous feedback loop—application, phone screen, assessment, every stage of the process—to identify what we could do better. This led us to automate certain things and adopt technology that adds value for the candidate while giving us the specific information we need to make the best decisions.

HOW DO YOU MEASURE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE AND THE IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS? WHAT METRICS AND ANALYTICS ARE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS?

Bill: In addition to looking at the usual talent acquisition metrics, we really do value the things that Lockheed candidates tell us. We use a variety of partners—along with the CandE survey—to gather information and feedback from them. We also tap into recruiter performance, tracking individual candidate experiences to specific recruiters and using the findings to coach our recruiters. We use all of these data to drive strategic investments and course correction when things don't work out as planned. The data have validated some of the changes we've made to our process. In the last year, we've created an internal AI team made up of full-time data scientists dedicated to HR, and they've built custom algorithms to help us analyze things like the top 10 to 20 positive and negative phrases from our candidate evaluations. They've helped us pinpoint major areas of concern as well as areas of opportunity.

Melissa: At AT&T, we use a variety of surveys conducted with candidates and hiring managers at each interaction point to gather data and metrics. We also measure our effectiveness by determining whether we're enabling the business to achieve its key priorities ... and how well we fill jobs with qualified

“One thing we did long ago was to solicit feedback from applicants about our application form to make sure it's short, easy to complete, and gives us only the information we really need.”

**— Jonathan Liepe, Human Resources Supervisor,
Colorado Springs Utilities**

candidates and, ultimately, engaged employees who are able to deliver on expectations and needs. Another thing we look closely at is the recruiting team's impact on AT&T's overall brand health. We're an important connection and interaction point with consumers, and we have the opportunity to shape their perceptions.

Jonathan: We use surveys as well, conducted at various stages of the recruiting process to spot trends. One metric we look at closely across the organization is quality of hire. Actually, this single metric is made up of several different metrics woven together including performance data. At the one-year mark, for example, we circle back with the employee to learn whether our company is still a good fit for them and whether they'd recommend it to others.

HOW DID YOU BUILD THE BUSINESS CASE TO MAKE RECRUITING IMPROVEMENT INVESTMENTS, WHETHER THEY WERE TECHNOLOGIES, STAFFING OR BOTH?

Melissa: We tied our case back to the business's key priorities in a way that was strongly linked to our culture. Our culture is built on four pillars: serve customers first, move faster, act boldly, and win as one. So, in making our case, we had to show our investments would drive these four pillars and enable our culture. We also had to be able to quantify what the returns to the business would be and how the investments would differentiate AT&T in the talent marketplace. We even identified how the investments would deliver on what matters to our customers and employees—diversity and inclusiveness, for example, in ways that tie back to business results.

Stacy: Because of our growth as a company, we were fortunate at Deluxe not to have a lot of resistance to recruiting investments. But, given the challenges we face today, such as COVID-19, when we do want to make an investment—in an employment brand site, for instance—we need to show what the return to the business will be.

Jonathan: At Colorado Springs Utilities, we need to justify our investments in terms of improved efficiencies and, ultimately, their value to the customer. Because we're a utility company, we're basically a nonprofit, which means we don't have a lot of money to throw around. Every dollar we invest—whether it's in human capital or technology—is scrutinized for its potential impact to our rates. We need to keep our rates as low as possible for our local community.

LOOKING BEYOND 2020, WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION, RECRUITING, HIRING AND CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE?

Jonathan: The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink how we bring people into the company. Historically, that was done in person but now we're doing a lot more virtual recruiting and onboarding. So, we need to make sure this process is as robust as possible, and we need to get more efficient at preparing candidates and making them available to our hiring managers.

Stacy: At Deluxe, we're most excited about the upcoming work we'll be doing to showcase our diversity and inclusiveness efforts. We're going to expand a lot of our storytelling on our career site so that it's much more clear to candidates.

Melissa: At A&T, we're excited about how we use technology and process improvements to drive transparency, particularly in a world that almost mandates immediate access to information. We're thinking about how we measure the performance of our staff, how to get those 5-star ratings from candidates, how to better facilitate interaction between candidates and our recruiters and hiring managers. We're also excited about where we can use data, technology, and process improvements to drive real change along with greater diversity and inclusion. For example, we're using labor pool availability data to gauge in real time whether our candidates meet or exceed labor pool availability and ensure that we're passing diverse, qualified candidates to our hiring managers.

Bill: Since none of us know when we're going to come out on the other side of the pandemic, we really need to get less reliant on in-person interaction. We've been working with some really great partners on enabling a "touchless" experience through technology. In fact, we've been able to accelerate some of our investments in these areas, and we're making some strong long-term plans. As an organization, we're becoming more flexible in terms of how we think about the jobs we offer. We're reclassifying some jobs that, until now, we wouldn't have considered as full-time, teleworking roles. The circumstances we're all dealing with today aren't the circumstances we'd want, but we're doing what we can to adapt and make the best of the situation.

"As an organization, we're becoming more flexible in terms of how we think about the jobs we offer. We're reclassifying some jobs that, until now, we wouldn't have considered as full-time, teleworking roles."

— Bill Meeboer, Senior Manager,
Enterprise Talent Sourcing & Innovation,
Lockheed Martin

"We're using labor pool availability data to gauge in real time whether our candidates meet or exceed labor pool availability and ensure that we're passing diverse, qualified candidates to our hiring managers."

— Melissa Corwin, Vice President,
Employee Experience, AT&T

Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards

Founded in 2011, Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards is the first non-profit research organization focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience.

Talent Board delivers annual recruiting and hiring industry benchmark research that highlights accountability, fairness and the business impact of candidate experience.

The organization, the Candidate Experience Awards program and its sponsors are dedicated to recognizing the candidate experience offered by companies throughout the entire recruitment cycle and to forever changing the manner in which job candidates are treated.

Each year, participating companies send surveys to hundreds of thousands of employment candidates to assess their experience during the recruiting process. This rigorous, scientifically supported data capture enables companies to see how they're doing, internally and relative to the rest of the industry.

We believe that there's no better source of real recruiting insight than crowdsourced candidate impressions. In fact, these impressions help us all raise the bar — enabling us to measure and set standards for the candidate experience for the entire industry.

This rigorous, scientifically supported data capture enables companies to see how they're doing, internally and relative to the rest of the industry.

Program and Scoring Methodology

The Talent Board Candidate Experience (CandE) Awards Benchmark Research Program accepts employers from around the world (North America, EMEA, APAC and now Latin America). The CandE Awards and research are composed of two rounds of evaluations: Round 1, the employer survey, and Round 2, the candidate surveys.

Round 1 is the employer survey designed to capture and evaluate the participating company's recruitment processes and practices that affect the candidate experience. After that, companies participate in Round 2, which involves surveying a random sampling of their job candidates. These candidates were given several questions about their recruiting experience, and were asked to rate their experience via 4- and 5-point scales.

To qualify for a CandE Award, each firm had to commit to a specific, statistically significant candidate response and a set standard for the proportion of randomly selected respondents who were not hired. This means each company had to first meet a minimum qualification for responses based on the size of the candidate population plus a minimum percentage of those not hired. These candidate responses included multiple touch points from the pre-application process to onboarding (if hired).

These were scored and then normalized to a standard ratio of those "Not Selected" versus those "Hired" (80/20) to eliminate any "halo" effects. This means companies could only include up to 20% of hired candidates in the survey process (the "Hired" percentage could be higher than 20%, but it would affect the final CandE score and ranking).

The data was then run through a statistical analysis and an algorithm that produces a final CandE score for each company. After that, we stack rank the scores and select the winners that have CandE scores above the lowest winning CandE score from the year before. This is in addition to the statistical analysis and algorithm applied above and the selection of the top CandE winners.

The four key ranking and scoring questions that determined the winners:

- The overall candidate experience ranking per those candidates surveyed (on a Likert scale of 1-5)
- Whether or not the "Not Selected" candidates would reapply to the organization (NPS-like score based on four choices)
- Whether or not the "Not Selected" candidates would refer other job seekers to the organization (NPS-like score based on four choices)
- How the candidates would change their business relationship status with the organization going forward based on their experience (NPS-like score based on four choices)

We continue to see an increased focus on candidate experience and the value it brings to an organization.

Data Collection Overview

- North American Employer and Candidate Surveys were open from January 1 to September 30, 2020.
- Over 130 organizations registered for the North American CandE Awards and Benchmark Program.
- 123 organizations completed Rounds 1 and 2.
- 152,000 candidates completed the Round 2 Candidate Survey.



Contact

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2020 Global and North American CandE Sponsors

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Sponsorship Opportunities

Talent Board is supported solely by the generous donations of industry solution and service providers, individual donations and corporate donations. This allows us to keep our research accessible to all and to provide the talent acquisition discipline with benchmarks and best practices that empower continuous recruiting innovation and a better overall candidate experience – all of which has the potential to impact your bottom line.

Sponsoring the Talent Board CandE Awards is one of the best ways to connect and engage with human resources and talent acquisition leaders around the world who care about recruiting and candidate experience. These buyers and influencers are key additions to any prospect network. CandE sponsors also enjoy year-round visibility and lead generation through Talent Board symposiums, awards galas, research reports, workshops, webinars and more.

About Talent Board

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throughout the entire recruitment cycle and to forever changing the manner in which job candidates are treated.

The CandE Awards also serve as a benchmarking program to raise awareness of the benefits of a positive candidate experience and highlight the processes, methodologies and technology that can enhance the recruiting experience as demonstrated by the winning organizations.

More information can be accessed at <https://www.thetalentboard.org>.

TALENT BOARD 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



GERRY CRISPIN

"Now in its 10th year, the CandE Awards benchmark research has proven that positive candidate experiences lead to positive hiring outcomes, which often have positive business implications, even during

a pandemic," said Gerry Crispin, Talent Board co-founder and principal and chief navigator at CareerXroads. "This year's CandE Awards winners have again demonstrated their commitment to upholding this practice and we are delighted to recognize their work advancing the recruiting process."



DEBBIE MCGRATH

Debbie McGrath, Talent Board chair, and founder and CEO of HR.com, shared, "The CandE Awards have helped demonstrate the business value of positive hiring practices by advocating for the importance

of the candidate experience and the impact on recruiting and the bottom line. Congratulations to this year's Candidate Experience Benchmark Class for their proven commitment to promoting candidate experience excellence."



ED NEWMAN

"Since founding the Candidate Experience Awards 10 years ago, we have amassed an unprecedented amount of data on the recruiting and hiring process and worked to foster a community interested in

transforming talent acquisition practices," shared Ed Newman, Talent Board co-founder, and founder & CEO at talentEXP. "The 2020 CandE Awards Benchmark Class understand the value of transparency and a better candidate experience."



KEVIN GROSSMAN

Talent Board president and board member Kevin W. Grossman commented, "After conducting this research in nothing but a growth market for nearly nine years, it's inspiring to see so many companies

work even harder on improving their candidate experience. Especially in the face of such extreme adversity in 2020. Transparency, consistent communication and feedback loops at every stage of the recruitment process continue to be critical and can equate to a big impact on business outcomes and the employment brand."

"Now in its 10th year, the CandE Awards benchmark research has proven that positive candidate experiences lead to positive hiring outcomes, which often have positive business implications, even during a pandemic."

— Gerry Crispin, Talent Board co-founder and principal and chief navigator at CareerXroads

Connect with #TheCandEs

www.thetalentboard.org

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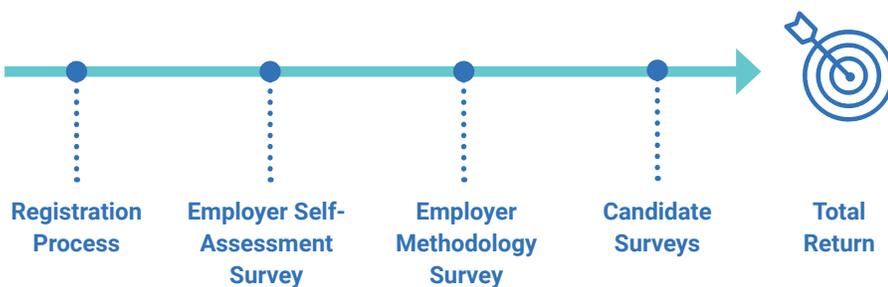
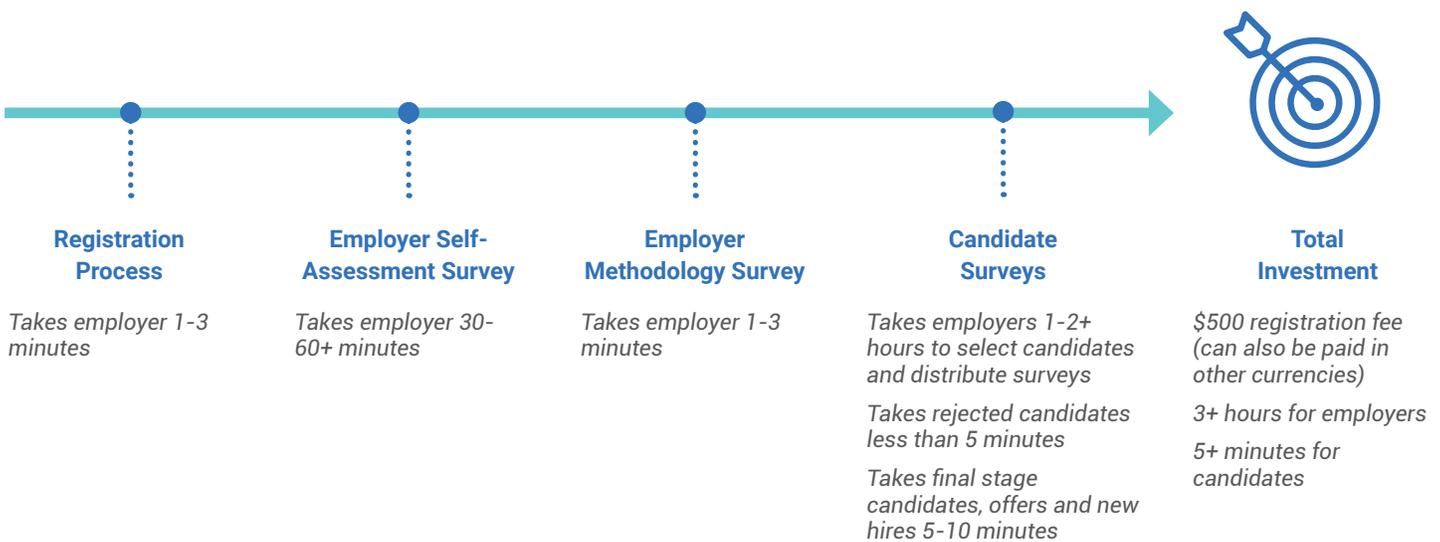
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How to Get Involved in 2021

PARTICIPATING AS AN EMPLOYER

Registration for the global 2021 Talent Board Candidate Experience Awards and Benchmark Research Program is open for all regions – North America, EMEA, APAC and Latin America!

A little investment goes a long way to understand the impact of candidate experience on your business from pre-application to onboarding.



DESIGN

- Survey methodology and candidate targeting resources
- API integration available to distribute via Survale if needed

DATA

- Candid anonymous feedback from targeted candidates
- Confidential and anonymous aggregated benchmark data
- Access to all benchmark data via secure Survale account and powerful filtering tools

INSIGHTS

- 1-on-1 data review to understand overall business impact
- Access to industry peers and experts on candidate experience
- Employers with the highest positive candidate ratings to receive public industry recognition and a CandE Award

10 Reasons Why You Should Participate in the 2021 Talent Board CandE Benchmark Research Program:

- 1 Learn what your candidates want from your recruiting and hiring experience.
- 2 Identify strengths and weaknesses in your recruiting process and your candidate experience.
- 3 Build the business case to develop improvement strategies based on the candidate feedback data you receive.
- 4 Track year-over-year changes and the return on investment on improvement initiatives you've implemented.
- 5 Benchmark against other organizations and gain valuable insights into your competitiveness in today's tight labor market.
- 6 Connect with peers and see other recruiting practices and candidate experience initiatives in practice.
- 7 Understand that for consumer-based companies candidates are either customers or potential customers and their candidate experience impacts their purchasing decisions.
- 8 Understand that for all B2C and B2B companies candidates are potential referrals and their candidate experience impacts their referral decisions.
- 9 And enjoy a very small investment overall...
- 10 For a very big return!

Candidate Experience: Certification of Learning Program

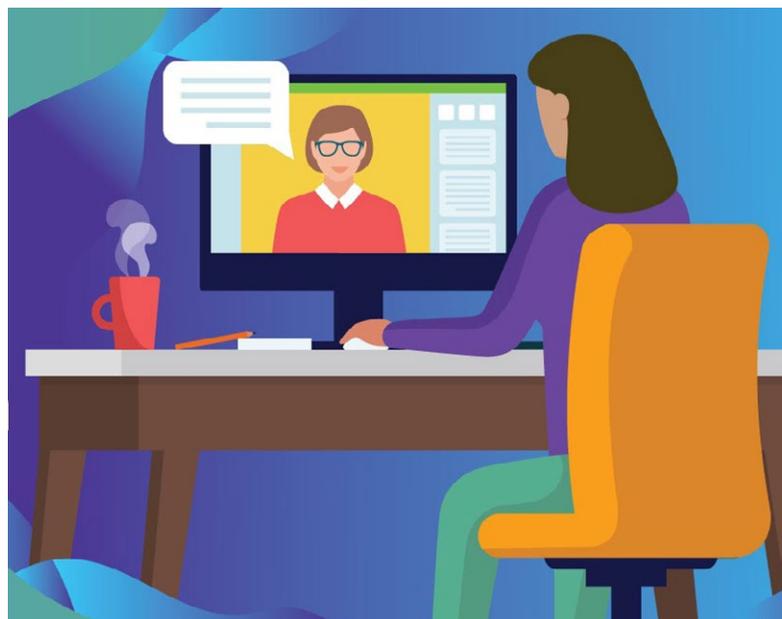
COMING IN EARLY 2021!

This course by Talent Board and HR.com is based on 10 years of Talent Board candidate experience benchmark research and best practices. It's designed to help companies gain a competitive edge in recruiting and hiring, secure the best people, and improve their employer brand by improving candidate experience.

This is a professional development program created exclusively for:

- Companies Big and Small Across Industries
- Talent Acquisition Managers & Teams
- HR Managers & Teams
- Recruiters
- Candidate Experience Professionals
- Recruiting Marketing Professionals
- Employer Brand Professionals
- Talent Acquisition Solution and Service Provider Professionals

[Classes are starting in early March – Learn more about the learning program!](#)



CandE Benchmark Membership



BENEFITS INCLUDE

- ✓ Annual Benchmark Research Program Participation
- ✓ Deeper Benchmark Research Analysis
- ✓ Candidate Experience Certificate of Learning Program Discounts
- ✓ Quarterly Master Classes
- ✓ Professional Growth Opportunities (Speaking and Panels)
- ✓ And much more!

After 10 years of candidate experience benchmark research, Talent Board is excited to launch a new CandE Benchmark Membership program for HR and recruiting leaders and their teams.

The Talent Board CandE Benchmark Membership is an annual membership that gives recruiting leaders and their teams an opportunity to participate in our annual benchmark research program

[Learn more about benchmark membership!](#)



Auburn–Washburn USD 437

Auburn–Washburn USD 437 is a public unified school district headquartered in Topeka, Kansas, United States.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

With the move to more virtual recruiting during the pandemic, we updated and increased our candidate communication by creating templates within our applicant tracking system to better ensure that our candidates were receiving consistent communication in a timely manner. We know that our changes were making a difference not only through anecdotal candidate comments, but also in our CandE survey results.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

We knew that in a period of isolation and social distancing that we did not want our candidates to feel isolated and alone. Not only was our country faced with a crisis, but our candidates were also in crisis. Many had lost jobs and did not know what they were going to do. Research shows how important clear and concise communication is during a crisis. We knew that this translated to our candidates as well. Clear, concise, and consistent communication would help candidates to feel a little less stress and anxiety about the unknown and waiting for communication.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

We talked with our teams and broader organization about the importance of communication during this time period with candidates. We provided training on how to use the communication templates within our applicant tracking system. We also asked ourselves the question “How can we virtually do what we were doing before?” often.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

We utilize the CandE survey to measure our candidate experience. We utilize this data to share information and stories with our recruiters and hiring managers to reinforce positive behaviors and identify areas for continuous improvement.

Clear, concise, and consistent communication helps candidates feel a little less stress and anxiety about the unknown and waiting for communication.



BASF creates chemistry for a sustainable future. They combine economic success with environmental protection and social responsibility.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

We tried to take satisfaction responses and 2019 CandE feedback to make enhancements. In an effort to focus on diversity and candidate experience, we created an internal interview portal to help ensure diverse interview panelists are on every interview panel, so candidates see themselves within the interview. For BASF, this is just one more step towards ensuring we maintain our open culture and candidates are subject to a fair interview process.

We also identified a need to educate and connect with our candidates in a more intimate way. We answered this call with fun explanatory videos which detailed our company, post application expectations, interview overview, and offer/close the deal.

Then came COVID-19 — once the world started to change BASF knew we needed to evolve our recruiting practices quickly. Our plan to personalize and simplify the candidate experience was more important than ever. We kicked into high gear and started to make improvements. First & foremost we made changes in the correspondence to our candidates. We strived to create full transparency on new interview processes, positions that were put on hold, changes in travel, interviews needing to be cancelled/postponed or interview health screens, so they had all the necessary information.

Our technology began to come even more into focus & video became more a part of the BASF culture than ever before. We rebranded our video interviewing platform to become more user friendly for candidates. Our team developed a video which reflected our company culture to provide candidates with an understanding of what it's like to belong at BASF. We truly aimed for a more personal & transparent candidate experience.

This year BASF has polled double the number of candidates than in years past. Despite these unprecedented times, we have been named a 7x CandE Award winner in 2020 and we have exceeded our scores in almost every category vs. 2019

results. It was truly amazing to see our team pull together, amid such uncertainty, and exceed expectations as it relates to our candidate experience scores. Clearly evidence we are evolving our process and making an impact.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

At BASF the foundation of our corporate strategy is to put our customer and their needs at the forefront of how we create chemistry. It is increasingly obvious the trends in candidate behavior are moving towards more of a customer mindset. The need to cater to our candidates and provide them with the BASF narrative is critical to the future of our business. This concept, which mirrors our corporate strategy, was the driving force behind our Talent Attraction initiatives for 2020.

We take candidate feedback from sources like the CandE Award Survey to heart. These results provide valuable insight to enhancing our process, to guide best practice and a way to help ensure a high-quality candidate experience for our potential employees. Although numerical data is incredibly important and helps tell the story, we put much emphasis on candidate comments from various internal & external surveys, job board comments & other feedback we capture throughout the year to create a holistic picture of the BASF candidate experience. We feel if it was important for our candidates to provide detailed feedback it's equally as important for us to listen and respond whenever it's possible!

We take candidate feedback from sources like the CandE Award Survey to heart. These results provide valuable insight to enhancing our process, to guide best practice and a way to help ensure a high-quality candidate experience for our potential employees.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

For some 2020 has turned their entire life upside down and the outpouring of empathy across the world echo's the realization that people are what truly matters.

The support from our leadership team to personalize our approach and put candidate needs at the forefront of how we operate was widely felt throughout BASF and the call to action was quickly embraced by our teams.

After reviewing the 2019 data and comments our trends were very apparent. We were not hitting the mark for a high touch candidate experience. Insights about the lack of diversity on our interview panels were revealed along with a new understanding that our candidates didn't necessarily understand what we were looking for during our interview process. Overall our numerical data supported the commentary, so we had a true understanding on how to impact our candidate experience quickly.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

Candidate Experience at BASF is measured from various sources. We solicit feedback from every member of our candidate pool via our own BASF candidate survey. This survey combined with CandE Award data are critical to measuring our candidate journey. The commentary and scoring on external job boards and listening in on social media are additional key data points we rely on to collect candid feedback.

We feel it is very important for candidate data to find its way into the right hands in order to begin to move the needle and create impactful change. We have periodically held various webinars to acquaint our teams with candidate data. In addition, we held training and best practice for continuous improvement on candidate behavior and the importance of employer branding at this time. In addition, statistic and Rol from job sponsorships, total cost for apply, results of marketing campaigns are being assessed, compared to industry data and presented to our Sr. Leadership to evoke change.

We feel it is very important for candidate data to find its way into the right hands in order to begin to move the needle and create impactful change.



Children's Mercy Kansas City



Children's Mercy is recognized as one of America's best children's hospitals by U.S. News and World Report, ranking in all 10 pediatric specialties.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

The biggest change we have made is the move to a new ATS – iCims. This platform offers a lot of candidate friendly features that our old ATS did not. We have received several comments from candidates that can now respond by text about the ease and quick response ability and that they appreciate being able to see what step of the process they are on by logging in to their account. We have built out seven different workflows that build a custom experience and communication based on the type of job they apply too. The added chat box has provided candidates quick responses to general recruiting questions. Additionally, we now have a way to create talent pools in the ATS and job alerts go out weekly to those in that group to alert them of positions that are open that they have stated they would be interested in.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

The feedback from previous CandE surveys told us that candidates didn't feel like they knew where they were in the hiring process and didn't feel that they received much feedback. Our goal was to implement an ATS that would allow for more transparency, better communication, and improved time to fill. We have found that by having the ability to text candidates, whether to schedule an interview, or ask follow up questions have improved our time from apply to decision by over six business days. We also knew that we were losing almost 40% of our candidates during the application process which was long and cumbersome. We now have the ability to serve up a short application for our candidates by asking them a few job specific questions to apply for a position and then complete the rest of the application if they are moved to the interview process. This allows for candidates to apply for a job and drop in a resume in less than 5 minutes.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

To be honest, the recruiters had been asking for a better ATS with more tools and functionality to help them do their job for a few years. The sell to hiring managers was easy once we explained how quickly they would be able to review candidates for their desktop or mobile device. In the old system, after applicants applied, they really didn't hear anything unless they were called for an interview or dispositioned out. Hiring managers would call and say that a person they knew applied but hadn't heard anything. Candidates would say the same thing. We had to find a way to incorporate frequent communication into the process. Now, each time a candidate is moved to a different status, they receive communication in addition to being able to log in and visually see what step in the process they are in. Because we have built out workflows, a candidate might see they are in step 2 of 3 for one job and step 3 of 5 for another. This allows for more transparency instead of a one size fits all approach.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

Once a year we send out a survey to candidates that were NOT selected asking them to rank their experience. This allows us to look for trends in feedback and determine what areas we need to focus on. The Sr. Director of TA and our VP of HR will have discussions around this data which helps shape recruiting goals. One example that came to mind is that we received feedback that one department was not selecting diverse candidates to interview. After reviewing the data, we found that the hiring manager was only selecting candidates that were referred by current staff which resulted in diverse candidates not receiving interviews. This led to discussions with nursing leaders and the recruiters about the importance of presenting a diverse slate of candidates for review. One feature that is now available through iCims is a diversity report for each job. It shows the recruiter how many candidates applied and how many of those are qualified candidates that are diverse. This helps the recruiter know if they need to deploy additional recruitment strategies to ensure they are presenting qualified diverse candidates to the hiring manager.



Colorado Springs Utilities



More than a basic service provider of electricity, natural gas, water, and wastewater, Colorado Springs Utilities has been a community partner for more than 100 years.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

Most recently, we re-evaluated our candidate communication templates and automated notifications based on both requisition status changes as well as candidate status changes within a requisition to ensure not only timely delivery of these messages but also to create consistency between recruiters. We did the same with communications sent to hiring managers throughout the recruitment and selection process. The bulk of this work was completed before this year's survey period. Results across all key indicators from the CandE survey showed improvement and recruiters are spending less time keeping applicants and hiring managers informed during the hiring process.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

Colorado Springs Utilities is a community-owned asset focused on providing exceptional hometown service. So, for us, our candidate experience journey started with an overriding desire to treat all applicants with the same level of dignity, respect, and diligent review we would expect if we were applying for a job.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

Gaining support was not difficult. Providing value to our community is in our DNA. Our leaders understand to hire the best, you need to attract the best. Creating a positive applicant experience is critical to maintaining a continuous flow of traffic to your careers site.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

We survey our applicants year-round through custom surveys we developed targeting key stages of the hiring process (application, phone screen/interview, test/assessment, onboarding and new employee orientation). We also survey our hiring managers after every requisition is filled. This data has been the primary driver for many changes. Hiring manager survey data is provided to recruiters and is used as part of their performance evaluation annually.

Our candidate experience journey started with an overriding desire to treat all applicants with the same level of dignity, respect, and diligent review we would expect if we were applying for a job.



Foot Locker

**Foot Locker**

Foot Locker is an American sportswear and footwear retailer, with its headquarters in Midtown Manhattan, New York City, and operating in 28 countries.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

Enhancing candidate experience is at the forefront of many of our recent process changes. This past year we streamlined our internal processes and enhanced our communication with candidates. We created toolkits for our hiring managers, HR business partners and recruiters to utilize throughout the hiring process. We ensured candidate messaging was more thoughtful, detailed and on brand. We created more candidate touch points to ensure their status was regularly communicated. To keep candidates engaged we also created talent pools. These changes have resulted in us receiving positive feedback from both our hiring managers and new hires.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

We performed a self-evaluation and solicited process feedback from both internal stakeholders and external candidates during a large global initiative. The results we received allowed us to discover inconsistencies in the experience of our candidates and hiring managers. To unify the team, we documented processes and created process efficiencies along the hiring journey for both our internal and external customers.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

We have taken a variety of steps to ensure the importance of candidate experience is at the forefront of everything we do. We internally review the results of a global hiring experience survey on a quarterly basis to identify areas of success and opportunity. We have a cross functional team that meets on a

quarterly basis to identify solutions to any potential recruiting issues like onboarding a new associate. Finally, we have developed core templates for the teams to utilize to enhance consistency and ensure a positive candidate experience.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

We use a variety of methods to measure candidate experience. First, we use our hiring process survey to gather insights and then break down results by geography and function. This data is then used in larger discussions with recruiters and hiring managers if consistent trends are noticed. Second, we include traditional recruiting metrics like time to fill and time to hire in every recruiter's performance evaluation. Finally, we use our ATS to track the time it takes to move between recruitment phases to identify pain points and increase process efficiencies. For example, how long does it take to move a candidate from reviewed to phone screen to hiring manager interview. This data is then reviewed on an annual basis from a global perspective with a member of our internal project management team to identify trends.

To unify the team, we documented processes and created process efficiencies along the hiring journey for both our internal and external customers.



Southwest Airlines



Southwest Airlines is a major American airline headquartered in Dallas, Texas, and is the world's largest low-cost carrier.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

Recently, we are really proud of having identified, mapped out, and re-written the communication our candidates receive along every step of their hiring journey from start to finish. We have also changed and added processes to ensure that candidates will receive timely, consistent communication from our recruiters immediately after applying. We want to ensure that no candidate falls through the cracks in terms of follow-up, and this has been and will continue to be a priority. We are also in the middle of a large technology implementation that will allow us to better serve candidates.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

As our founder Herb Kelleher famously declared, "The business of business is people." We participate in the CandEs because we want our candidate experience to mirror our values and world-class hospitality. The research from the survey gives us the tools we need to listen to our Candidates and design an experience that honors them as people, customers, and potential future members of the Southwest family.

For the last several years, we have been able to synthesize the data we receive from the CandE survey and create tangible action plans to improve our experience for candidates. Also, we can't help but admit that we're a little competitive in terms of wanting to have the best candidate experience around!

On top of the information we receive from the CandE survey, another helpful piece of data that helped us drive our decisions within the last year was the information from a report in our ATS that showed how long our average disposition time was for candidates. Having this actual data allowed us to determine if we were providing the Hospitality we thought we were or wanted to provide to our candidates.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

For the last several years, we have compiled our candidate experience data into a presentation that we have been able to share with all our recruiters, senior leadership, and other relevant stakeholders throughout Southwest. We share our year-over-year scores and pull out relevant feedback that tells the story of what our action items will be for the upcoming year.

We also have set goals for our team around our candidate experience score, celebrated the awards we have received, and been intentional to hire recruiters who live into our Southwest values and prioritize providing incredible hospitality to our candidates.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

The primary way we measure our candidate experience is through the data we receive from the CandE surveys. However, we also evaluate our Glassdoor and Indeed ratings, and we review the analytics from our CRM and ATS sites. Using the Talent Board's Candidate Calculator tool, we have been able to tie our customer value to our candidate value and better understand and communicate the financial implications of our candidate experience decisions to others throughout Southwest.

The research from the survey gives us the tools we need to listen to our Candidates and design an experience that honors them as people, customers, and potential future members of the Southwest family.



Stantec Inc.



Stantec Inc. is an international professional services company in the design and consulting industry.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

We have continued to evolve our process and enhance the framework that is already in place. The Stantec Talent Acquisition model ensures we have the right people doing the right things, for maximum effectiveness. Based on business needs, we ensure the right support is assigned at the right time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in changes to some of our recruitment processes. Employee safety at Stantec comes first and this extends to our candidates as well. Where necessary and essential all in-person interviews have shifted to video/phone interviews and remote onboarding is becoming the new normal at Stantec. Despite the changes we are experiencing because of physical distancing, providing our candidates with a positive experience has remained a top priority. Key enhancements included:

- Job posting review was completed to ensure the validity of openings available to our external candidates.
- We made changes in the application process to let candidates know that some sections of our application were optional (such as the work history, education, and certifications sections). This was done to help shorten the time/process.
- COVID-19 email templates were created and added to our ATS system to allow our TA team to provide real-time updates to candidates on how their application might be affected by COVID-19.
- We increased communication with our candidates to ensure transparency with regards to the requisition status, application status, any delays, and what changes to expect. Used virtual hiring tools to minimize the impact on candidate engagement. We used Microsoft Teams to enable digital interviewing and rolled out virtual interview training to make the process as close to in-person interviews as possible.

- A centralized location was created to help our various stakeholders answer and ask questions that pertain to hiring in these challenging times. This included guidance on how to respond to incoming inquiries as it related to hiring during COVID-19.

The actions we took to provide our candidates with an exceptional experience without making the process feel less personalized was evidenced by our 2020 CANDE survey results. Stantec's overall candidate experience 4-star and 5-star rating rose to 65.7% from 62.2%, our apply again ranking went from 81.68% to 85.17% and our referral percentage elevated to 82.06% from 80.7%. This resulted in Stantec moving from #21 overall in 2019 to #16 overall in 2020

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

Stantec's goal continues to be the destination of choice for world-class talent. Our commitment to hiring, developing, and deploying the best talent is guided by our overall corporate strategy. We are focused on building an inspiring, inclusive work environment that attracts, supports, and develops world-class talent. This is also one of the 6 strategic directives of the Stantec organization and was our guide for direction.

We have encouraged the TA team to focus and engage with potential talent through networking and promoting our brand via social media to cultivate a strong relationship with professionals even before they apply for opportunities and become active candidates. By doing this it enhances the candidates overall experience through the journey from learning about Stantec to becoming an applicant or successful incumbent.

We were able to use the data from the 2019 CandE Awards to understand our gaps and to help us improve in our candidate experience for 2020. The result is our increased ranking in this year's CandE Awards.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

We continue to educate our hiring managers on inclusive and best hiring practices throughout our hiring process. Digital interview training for our hiring managers was developed and deployed with the aim of making the experience as close to an in-person interview as possible.

In addition, to help onboard new hires during the COVID-19 crisis, we implemented a virtual on-boarding process. This was done to make the new hires onboarding journey as personal and smooth as possible.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

Analytics is vital to how Stantec recruits. It is a critical step in understanding the impact of talent acquisition on business operations and helps us improve our outcomes.

We use data to measure hiring volumes and the efficiency of our recruiting efforts. Our descriptive analysis provides us with a view into activity such as hiring volume, talent pool size, time to fill, source of hire and cost of hire. We also use the results to help with our recruitment process improvements, guide our recruiters sourcing tactics and have more productive conversations with hiring managers.

Stantec's goal continues to be the destination of choice for world-class talent. Our commitment to hiring, developing, and deploying the best talent is guided by our overall corporate strategy.



Walgreens



Walgreens is an American company for pharmacy, photo and health & wellness products.

1. What changes have you made to your candidate experience recently? What improvements are you most proud of? How do you know that your changes are making a difference?

HIGH VOLUME

We implemented post-training production schedule selection following pre-employment clearance to provide a better candidate experience to new hires that are onboarding. We also implemented text messaging as a standard for candidate communication (in addition to phone/email) – especially when requesting action from the candidate. This has made it easy for a candidate to schedule their phone screens and understand any pending items for their application, such as assessments that need taken or a callback request.

SUPPORT CENTER

We recently implemented a guide for both Recruiters and Hiring Managers, focused on best practices for ensuring timely and constructive interview feedback. This document not only provides unique insight from a candidate's perspective, but it's also focused on ensuring decisions are made without bias.

2. Why did you decide to make changes to how candidates were being treated? What data or evidence prompted you to make a change?

HIGH VOLUME

We experienced higher first day attrition and overall candidate nonresponse rate, so we knew we had to adjust our approach. Changing the two things above has impacted our overall applicant response rate and response time.

SUPPORT CENTER

We continuously search for more ways where we can improve the overall experience of our candidates because they are ultimately also our retail-based customers. We want to ensure that their experience, whether selected or not, remains positive and straightforward.

3. How did you build support and commitment within your team and the broader organization? How did you demonstrate the importance of candidate experience?

HIGH VOLUME

Both leadership and recruiters have goals aligned to candidate experience – specifically process improvements that will enhance the candidate experience – which has encouraged the team to think outside of the box when faced with pipeline engagement challenges.

SUPPORT CENTER

This year, we have taken extra steps to strive towards more Hiring Manager education. In addition to a formal feedback guide presented at the intake call, we have also added content to our Hiring Manager training curriculum stressing the importance of providing timely feedback and unbiased hiring decisions.

4. How do you measure candidate experience? How do you report on your recruiting process? How do you use that data to demonstrate financial impact as well as manage recruiter and hiring manager behaviors?

BOTH

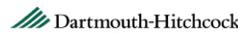
Candidate and new hire surveys – we use direct candidate feedback gathered from our Candidate Experience surveys to analyze areas for optimization in an effort to continuously improve and optimize our recruitment processes.

We continuously search for more ways where we can improve the overall experience of our candidates because they are ultimately also our retail-based customers.

2020 North American CandE Award Winners



Booz | Allen | Hamilton



FISHER INVESTMENTS

