

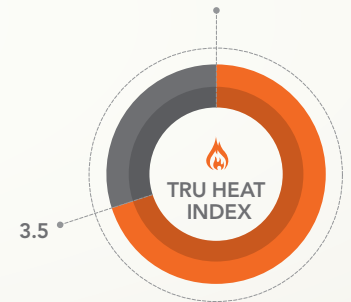
The Tru Files

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE



@BillBoorman

2



48

EVENTS

We scoured presentations and conversations from the last twelve months of TRU events to bring you the best forward-looking ideas in the field of recruiting.

8,000

ATTENDEES

10

BIG IDEAS

**LONG HELD UP AS A CRITICAL
TALENT STRATEGY, CANDIDATE
EXPERIENCE STILL RANKS LOW
FOR ALL BUT THE SAVVIEST
CONSUMER BRANDS.**

**WILL 2014 BE THE YEAR
COMPANIES WISE UP?**





Let's be real here. Most companies really don't give a shrug about candidate experience. Yes, it's a topic that's been making the rounds of HR and recruiting conferences for five-plus years, but only the most sophisticated consumer brands (e.g. Starbucks, Kraft) and companies with persistent talent shortages (e.g. companies in tech, accounting, engineering) manage to do it well. And even many of those fail.

From candidates' perspective, the most critical problem is the application black hole. To quote a recent gripe posted on Reddit by a job seeker, "The biggest frustration about [applying for jobs] is completing the long-ass form for a job you are definitely qualified for, if not overqualified, and then never hearing back."¹ In response, another Redditor replies, "Got ya beat ... long-ass form plus a lovely six-hour round trip drive for an interview. Never heard a single thing back ... No turnaround, no nothing."

This phenomenon—asking job candidates to apply for jobs and then failing to respond to any but a tiny few of the total—is in most cases an intentional strategy. Yes, intentional. After all, applicant tracking systems have an auto-response feature that must be turned off.

¹ http://www.reddit.com/r/funny/comments/1ubv8o/the_biggest_frustration_when_job_searching/

And responsiveness is but one side of the problem. Another big complaint: Endless forms and hoops to jump through ... only to enter the soul-crushing black hole.

Again, Redditors explain,

"You apply to three jobs and it feels like you have been applying to jobs all day!"

"It's like they can't decide if they want just written CV and job application or you to fill out forms. So why not both? And then it just feels stupid to copy paste the same things. Actually it's even worse when sometimes after you do everything [you get an email], "HEY WE CREATED ACCOUNT FOR YOU. USERNAME:29448289 PASSWORD:UDKL2134. PLEASE LOGIN AND FILL SOME MORE DETAILS ABOUT YOURSELF!"

"[Long application forms] definitely filtered me out from a few places where I would have been a great employee. I just didn't have time for their extra-Special Application. In the time it would have taken me to fill out their Special Application, I could send off four others to equally enticing jobs that just required a cover letter and resume."

"Those forms are a great way for companies to weed out highly employable people."

"This isn't funny. Just depressing."



Aside from the application black hole and tiresome online forms, a myriad of other problems plague candidates. Poor communication about the application process and timeline is a huge source of frustration. For example, to save time a recruiter may schedule an in-person panel interview for a candidate, but the candidate may be surprised (and put off) to learn they'll be speaking to five people at once. The situation is particularly regrettable because anyone scheduled for a site visit is most likely a strong candidate, and therefore someone you should be trying to impress.

A poor mobile experience is also common. Particularly with the under-30 group, mobile job information should be the norm. (Though job applications via mobile aren't all that necessary, as few want to fill out so many fields on their smart phone.)

The biggest challenge recruiters face is volume. If a single recruiter is responsible for 35 open positions at any given time, and for each role on average the company receives 75 applications... that adds up to an untenable position for recruiters.

And yet, companies can take specific steps to improve candidate experience with a mix of process updates, automation, and common sense.

NEW GOAL: ATTRACT FEWER JOB CANDIDATES

We can all agree the resume is a sadly impotent tool to evaluate an individual's job suitability. It's simply an inventory of academic credentials and previous work, but communicates little about true ability, knowledge, or personality. LinkedIn offers a bit more: references and endorsements from colleagues, as well as a greater understanding of what issues interest a candidate. And yet, a hiring manager needs *much more* to pull out one talented candidate from a sea of hundreds.

In time we believe the very notion of an application process will become out-dated. If artificial

intelligence can analyze the credentials of large pools of people, and select an individual based on (a) knowledge, (b) skills, (c) personality fit, and (d) availability, it's easy to see how the traditional application process is obsolete.

And while it may seem counter-intuitive, attracting fewer job applicants is actually a good thing. Technology will winnow the field of attractive candidates such that only a dozen perfectly suited candidates will apply for a job—and that bodes well for both applicants and hiring companies. Why invite someone to apply, after all, if you're extremely likely to reject them?



RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

01 First and foremost, companies are trying to get more people to apply when in fact they should be focused on getting fewer applications.

Recruiters should provide such clear instructions and initial screening filters that very few applicants are in fact qualified to fill out an application. But that's easier said than done. The truth is technology (and in particular matching algorithms) is the bigger driver of change here. Rather than open a new position wide for anyone and everyone to apply, companies should be investing more money in artificial intelligence—engines that can scan large pools of *potential* applicants and submit invitations to the most desirable among them. Research shows that when the majority of candidates are sourced (i.e. invited to apply) or referred, the candidate experience is high—which makes intuitive sense because less time is spent weeding, and more time is spent wooing.



02 Second, companies should be measuring candidate experience for all applicants ... not just those who successfully applied.

Currently most companies only poll successful job applicants to find out their experience of the hiring process, but that's akin to asking big tippers to rate their restaurant experience. (And for companies that use recruitment process outsourcing partners, policy can sometimes make the practice actually worse. Contracts can contain punitive language for poor applicant experience, creating a mis-alignment with the group responsible for actually reporting on the experience).

None of it should be acceptable. New technologies make surveying candidate experience much easier. A solution called Mystery Applicant, for example, uses questions chosen at random to poll candidates during different moments in the application process (and offers a remarkably complete picture of candidate experience from initial query to close).



03 Also, ensure the hiring manager interacts with applicants— and in particular with candidates on the short list.

There's a direct relationship between how candidates feel about the hiring process and how closely the hiring manager participated in that process. When candidates are relegated to speak mostly to a recruiter, candidates feel they did not merit attention.

Make the on-site visit extra special. Are your candidates at the center of the process, and if so, how exactly do you enchant them when they visit your location? One company we worked with gave potential employees an iPad upon arrival. The iPad contained a detailed schedule of their visit, profiles of the executives they would meet, and information about working for the company. Visitors were also told to use the iPad for personal and professional reasons (e.g. checking emails, social networking, etc...) in a nod to each visitor's generous investment of time visiting the company's offices. The company also paired candidates with a "buddy" who ensured they were escorted to each meeting and had company for lunch. The motivation was two-fold: (a) make it more likely a finalist will select the position and (b) leave a positive impression on those who were not selected with the belief that they may become candidates again in the near future.

Remember, your focus is not to woo a single candidate for a specific job, but to provide a positive experience for many candidates.



04 If you're trying to leave a good impression, involve customer service.

It stands to reason that the true satisfaction experts at your company are likely to be sitting in customer service. Why not involve them in redesigning your candidate experience process? At GE they did just that. The hiring process was designed by customer service to ensure all applicants felt satisfied by the application process, even if not selected. Given GE's hunger for top-flight talent, the strategy makes perfect sense. They even tie hiring manager KPIs and bonuses to candidate experience in order to ensure it's more than lip service.



05 Consider providing extra value through educational content.

All job applicants—but in particular students—are hungry for information about their careers and the job market. And while career fairs are not on the verge of disappearing, they are often too generic to provide meaningful value to applicants. We've seen companies have remarkable success with new mediums such as webinars (with narrow and highly targeted topics) and even Twitter chats. These are channels that younger workers already use, offer a high-level of engagement, and are remarkably inexpensive for employers adept at using social. A recent survey by Boston Consulting Group showed employers that use social networking for HR capably have revenue growth 1.5 times higher than those employers that define themselves as least capable.²

² <http://universumglobal.com/2013/12/digital-storytelling-relations-are-formed-in-social-media/>

06

Banish the concept of one-time relationships.

When an applicant applies for a particular job, consider that individual a potential member of your talent network—someone you can query about future jobs that may open at your organization. (And if it wasn't clear before, this is why candidate experience matters so much! Rejected candidates may fit a future role perfectly, and they have friends and colleagues you want to impress. Each relationship matters.) Rather than treating a rejection as the end of the road, a rejection should be the beginning of a new path in your relationship with that professional.





SOME KEY FUNDAMENTALS

Improving candidate experience isn't a simple act, to be sure ... but we've boiled it down to some key fundamentals:

Consider attracting fewer applications. Recruiters should provide such clear instructions and initial screening filters that very few applicants are in fact qualified to fill out an application. And the best companies take it one step further: Use sourcing technologies to invite the very best, rather than designing an

application process to attract the most candidates possible. Remember, if only the very best candidates enter the funnel, you'll have fewer relationships to manage, and a much better chance at providing the best experience.

Measure experience of all candidates, not just those selected. If you don't have the competency in-house, purchase a survey tool specifically designed for measuring candidate experience.

Ensure hiring managers interact with top contenders. Candidates report they are more satisfied when they've had a chance to interact with the hiring manager in addition to the recruiting staff.

Treat finalists as potential candidates in future searches. In all your interactions with your finalist pool, remember these individuals are as important to impress as your chosen candidate. Treat them well and ensure site visits are designed to enchant them.

Design a talent network strategy. If it's true that talent is a key competitive advantage, you should be focused on building a so-called talent network, which includes: (a) an up-to-date database of all the professionals you've interacted with and recruited in the last 3 to 5 years, (b) a plan to engage these individuals on an ongoing basis.



For more thoughts on talent networks, see *Social Recruiting & Personalization* eBook.

→ [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)



THE #TRU STORY

I first discovered the Unconference concept when I led a track at #RecruitFest in Toronto in 1999. I was taken aback by the way discussion flowed and how different the format was to a traditional conference. I led a track all day under a tree and learnt far more than I gave.

Two months later and back in the UK, we ran the first #truLondon at Canary Wharf in November 2009. Today, we're running dozens of #tru events a year across Europe, North America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific. Thousands of recruiters, HR leaders and providers come together in an informal spirit of information sharing and networking.

#tru is based on the BarCamp principle, which means that everybody can be an active participant instead of listening to speakers and watching presentations all day. The emphasis is on communication and the free exchange of ideas and experiences where the participants fuel the conversations.



BILL BOORMAN

THE TALENT PROJECT

For more thought leadership go to talentproject.com

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF RECRUITING,
DOWNLOAD THE FOLLOWING TRU FILES EBOOKS.



ABOUT KELLY SERVICES®

Kelly Services, Inc. (NASDAQ: KELYA, KELYB) is a leader in providing workforce solutions. Kelly® offers a comprehensive array of outsourcing and consulting services as well as world-class staffing on a temporary, temporary-to-hire, and direct-hire basis. Serving clients around the globe, Kelly provided employment to approximately 540,000 employees in 2013. Revenue in 2013 was \$5.4 billion. Visit kellyservices.com and connect with us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#). Download [The Talent Project](#), a free iPad® app by Kelly Services.

This information may not be published, broadcast, sold, or otherwise distributed without prior written permission from the authorized party.
All trademarks are property of their respective owners. An Equal Opportunity Employer. © 2014 Kelly Services, Inc.

KELLY®

EXIT