

THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Candidate Experience in Numbers: Why It Matters



The Challenge

Research by the Defense Digital Service (DDS) highlights that little consideration is given to the candidate's experience throughout the hiring process at the Department of Defense (DoD). Candidates may apply through USAJobs and hear back months later, if at all, with limited transparency into where they are in the process.

When considering STEM/technical roles, "Time to hire" metrics are based on Government-wide standards and do not adequately account for the fact that these skills are highly sought after and compensated for by the private sector. The top STEM talent is continuously recruited by the private sector in the fastest possible fashion, making the time to hire a crucial element of the candidates

experience and a highly influential factor on their final decisions. According to the 2020 Survey on the Future of Government Service, 73% of federal executives agreed or strongly agreed that their agency often loses good candidates because of the time it takes to hire.

Even when applicants are identified by hiring managers as successful candidates, certain “requirements” like resume formatting end up delaying the process and alienating the candidate. While sometimes additional information is genuinely required to make a final hiring determination or set pay; the hiring team must avoid placing additional burden on candidates (especially when leveraging direct and expedited hiring authorities). The DDS report on Technical Talent Acquisition, Management, and Retention asserts, “It is unreasonable, and creates a poor experience, to expect that the candidate understands the unique requirements and competency language of the job series and should tailor (or rewrite) their resume to the Operating Manual.”



What Candidates Want & How to Improve the Candidate Experience

Research by iCIMS, a leading talent cloud company, finds that a great candidate experience is one that is accessible, “fast & easy,” engaging, and personal.

- ◆ **Accessibility.** The candidate experience starts with how they find you. Making job announcements and position details accessible by advertising where candidates are looking is crucial. For example, consider posting your job announcement to other locations like LinkedIn, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, and other popular job boards. Hirethon leverages the NSIN network and its online presence to help you reach candidates in places beyond USAJobs, expanding and diversifying your reach.
- ◆ **Fast & Easy Process.** Over 68% of applicants who have abandoned a job application have done so because the application process was too long or required too much information (iCIMS, 2017). Hirethon’s quick and easy application increases the number of candidates who complete the application.

- ◇ 78% of candidates agree that the professionalism of a company’s career portal is moderately to highly important to their decision to apply (iCIMS, 2017). Remember, “professionalism” could mean different things to different people; it is important to reflect your organization’s culture in the way your leadership sees fit. Nevertheless, user-friendly, visually-appealing, mistake-free platforms are good examples of a professional brand.



◆ **Personal Engagement.** Applicants want to be engaged, even if it is bad news. Notifying candidates in a timely fashion about 1) their status at every stage, 2) what next steps look like, and 3) the anticipated timeline of the process is imperative for a positive experience.

- ◇ When inviting candidates for an interview, it is important to be clear about the position they are considered for and about all details of the interview (especially in the NSIN Hirethon). In your email to the candidate, it is best to include expectation, duration, format, and setup details of the interview and attach the Position Description.
- ◇ The interview process is a significant early milestone in the candidate-employer relationship. Providing the candidate with a clear understanding of your organization, culture, and expectations helps the candidate highlight where they fit in and allow you to detect any red flags.
- ◇ 43% of new hires leave a job because it wasn't what they were expecting (Jobvite, 2019). By engaging candidates in a comprehensive, clear way during the interview, you'll have a better idea of their skills, character, motivations; and as a result, you're able to retain candidates in certain positions for longer periods of time.
- ◇ Keep in mind that the most frustrating part of the candidate experience can be the lack of meaningful communication or feedback on their application or interview. Remember to always communicate clearly and within a reasonable amount of time.



SOURCES

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