



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Early Careers Virtual Roundtable

No. 5

Wednesday 12th
10am - 11:30am

Overview

Candidate engagement has changed as a result of the national health crisis and has presented a wealth of new challenges and opportunities for recruiting organisations.

A virtual world has evolved from the necessary increase in remote working and digital communication, presenting difficulties in generating complete and effective candidate journeys.

The fifth roundtable in the series looked to break down the topics of creating simple and connected candidate journeys while approaching the issue of unsuccessful candidates and what to do with them.

The MAJIC model of recruitment:



Attendees of the fifth roundtable included:



Creating easy candidate journeys



Examples like that of the challenger bank market, where simple consumer journeys have resulted in consistently large growth over traditional banks, demonstrate the opportunities available when the consumer journey is made more efficient and enjoyable. Similar opportunities exist for the early talent market, but how attainable are they and what might they look like?

The conversation



Where applicant tracking systems (ATS) are shared across global business areas, adapting candidate journeys can face some internal red tape. Where changes can be made (i.e. post-application), large volumes of applications make it difficult to communicate on a personal level.

For another large corporate attendee, the challenges associated with the candidate journey relate to the onboarding process. Post-application, the candidate was introduced to a personal and effective communication process which was found to dramatically increase the quality of relationship between company and recruit. The quality of post-application process could not be replicated once the candidate had started their programme however, which raised questions around the possible retention duration of the candidate.

To mirror this, another attendee explained how expectations of young people are very high at present. Although many are grateful to be considered for an opportunity, self-entitled candidates are a regular occurrence. Will these individuals struggle when the hard work starts?

According to one attendee, the job crisis caused by COVID-19 has led to an increase in ineligible candidates, as more young people increase their applications to improve perceived career chances. This has particularly been the case for graduates applying to apprenticeships that they weren't eligible for.

Another attendee found that ineligible candidates had increased drastically for vacancies with specific entry needs, such as a qualification in engineering, exacerbated by more than a 100% increase in year-on-year applications.

The attendees agreed that the duration of attraction campaigns drastically affects the possible candidate journeys. For one attendee, who carried out campaigns lasting anywhere between a few days and 12 months, up to 15 candidate journey variations have been used.

Using examples of how current employees were hired and retained has improved applying candidates' perceptions and made them advocates of the organisation, according to another attendee. Although application and onboarding experiences are still individual to each applicant, a baseline for success can be set in their perceptions by sharing real life candidate case studies.

Extended and unsuccessful candidate journeys



Although journeys from attraction and engagement all the way through to hiring and onboarding can be pre-planned, external factors can often influence that process. The result is changing hiring deadlines and often – as is the case with all journeys – unsuccessful candidates. Contingency and prevention are useful tools for dealing with these outcomes, but they will never be avoided. So how does an organisation better resolve one of these situations?

The conversation



The biggest change as a result of COVID-19 has come in the form of uncertainty and changing candidate start dates, according to many attendees. The shift in process has made it very difficult to maintain regular contact with candidates as engagement rises and falls. With no agreed start date in mind, organisations are often at a loss with regards to what to communicate to candidates.

One example of phoning 300 candidates over a three-month period to maintain engagement saw huge success at a time when start dates weren't confirmed. Simply being honest with candidates about what they can expect and what the company is working towards is still useful for generating close relationships. In some cases, candidates were happy to get an interim opportunity for 3-7 months until their first choice of career route became available again.

Most candidate journeys have focussed on the successful candidates, but where unsuccessful ones are apparent, is recycling a possibility?

This is a hot topic for companies with large application volumes, one attendee said. Talent ecosystems can be built across organisational groups and industries to act as a safety net for candidates, whilst providing talent opportunities to all members. Limiting pipeline stages is necessary to reduce unsuccessful candidates but where prevention is impossible, talent ecosystems can be helpful and self-fulfilling.

Agile attraction campaigns allowed one attendee to limit the intake of candidates by tracking applications and adjusting output accordingly. This had a direct impact on reducing the number of unsuccessful candidates, while also removing successful vacancies to focus on those with a lower level of engagement.

The roundtable agreed that candidate self-esteem has been reduced due to uncertain employment prospects. This makes personal development and candidate care even more important at the hiring and onboarding stage, but also where unsuccessful individuals are concerned.

Feedback, regardless of type, was considered well received by attendees and necessary to all hiring processes. Relationships can be built even when the applying party is not successful, with positive effects to the brand.

One attendee explained how they offered weekly training to unsuccessful candidates, as a way of upskilling these individuals to a point whereby they were a company fit. This had positive impacts on building relationships with these people and benefitted the brand too.

Journeys for Diverse and Inclusive Representation



Candidates experience recruitment in different ways, even if that process remains consistent. Attraction and engagement must often be tailored to a specific persona for greater success and the candidate journey is affected as a result. If an organisation knows who they want to target, what journeys must they create to reach that candidate effectively?

The conversation



Providing support for different audiences is essential in recruitment. But with the rise of the digital environment, are organisations subconsciously leaving demographics behind?

One attendee shared their experiences of hiring more females for IT-based roles by saying that appealing everybody is difficult, but by understanding that non-males had a low level of confidence when approaching IT roles, a specific journey could be tailored to attract more of the audience that was important to them.

Open conversation where questions are encouraged has been found to promote positive non-male environments. Assessments were found to put them off, whereas virtual events did the opposite.

Planning assessment days had seen reduced non-male applicants across the roundtables' attendees, with 100% male-only candidates experienced in one case.

Attendees agreed that candidate journeys extend all the way to job start and no part of the process can be left out. A culture and environment must be created that supports under-represented groups for best retention results – particularly with vulnerable candidates.

An 'always on' approach was particularly successful for one attendee in increasing diverse representation within their talent funnel. Having a brand that is open and always available allows candidates to engage and interact at a time that suits them. It also reduces costs the long term by reducing the need to top up spend on boosting candidate numbers further down the line.

Having an openly communicating brand creates a more open atmosphere and encourages candidate engagement. For under-represented and low confidence candidates, this makes the organisation look more approachable, said one attendee.

The roundtable agreed that diverse and inclusive candidate intake cannot be achieved overnight but campaign testing and small changes to candidate journeys will have a gradual and positive impact towards this goal. Listening to target demographics and learning from their feedback has allowed some organisations to identify opportunities and make the necessary changes.

In conclusion

Candidate journeys play a big part in the successful attraction, engagement and hiring of early talent. Although there is no 'one size fits all' approach for these journeys, opportunities do exist in making small changes to grow a relevant and valuable talent pipeline. Journeys don't end with job offers either and engagement must be maintained even into starting work at an organisation. So, listen to your target audience and provide where you can, for better feedback from those unsuccessful and for more diverse and inclusive representation.