6 Steps to Creating a
Positive Application Experience

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For companies large and small, a well-thought-out job-application process can have a measurable impact on the bottom line, while saving job seekers hours of time and significant amounts of frustration. Here are some actions an HR department can take to create an application experience that is mutually beneficial to the candidate and the company.

Create a High-Touch Experience

Often an applicant can spend hours meticulously crafting their application for a position — never to hear back from the employer. The experience can be frustrating and leave the candidate with negative feelings toward the company.

To avoid subjecting job applicants to that stress, a company can employ what's known as a "high-touch" job seeker experience. With this practice, applicants are given feedback along each step of the job application process.

At the very least, applicants should receive immediate acknowledgement after applying. But the process shouldn't stop there; it should keep applicants informed when they have passed a milestone or are no longer under consideration, helping avoid the "black hole" perception of the application process.

Instill Your Brand and Culture Throughout the Process

An HR department can integrate the corporate brand and culture into the application experience.

- The application process presents an opportunity to reinforce the company's brand to a large number of career or job-posting page visitors, whether or not they eventually apply.

- Showcasing a company's unique and positive corporate culture and work environment can help attract top employees.

Career pages can give applicants a taste of the work environment. One way is to share pictures and videos, which might cover an overview of the company, a message from the CEO, the company's core values, or employee testimonials to provide a window into what working for the company may be like. This can save time, helping to weed out applicants who immediately recognize that the culture is not a good fit.

Likewise, it's important to ensure the brand is reflected on the job seeker portal. If the company uses a hosted careers page, it should be customized for the company brand and integrated with the corporate website. Applicants can then see familiar graphics, such as the company's logo, and can enjoy a more seamless experience because it doesn't feel like they are jumping to a new site.

Ensure the Application Process Is User-Friendly

Unfortunately, user-friendly application processes are still the exception rather than the rule. Complicated workflows and bad design can lead potential home-run candidates to become frustrated and quit the process early — perhaps taking their talents to a competitor.

So, how can an HR department create a user-friendly application experience? Here are a few points to consider:

- How may clicks from the company's homepage does it take to reach the application page? A good site will limit it to no more than two.

- Are required forms reasonably short?

- Are job seekers given an estimated time to complete the application? It can be frustrating to start an application only to realize the process will require an hour and that the form can't be saved. An automated meter allows candidates to see how much work remains as they progress.

- Are there ample opportunities for applicants to save their work if they are interrupted? Is there a final opportunity to change answers before information is transmitted?

- Are any questions unnecessary for job-related information? The application should be limited to relevant questions only.

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The experience should be easy to follow and pertinent to the position(s) available. Plan workflows up front and revisit them often.

Take Advantage of Social Networking

To reach the broadest base of possible applicants, HR departments should consider making the application system accessible from social networks such as Facebook®, Twitter®, and LinkedIn®. Sharing job openings across social networks can help reach more potential candidates because applicants have the ability to continue to share the openings.

One possibility is to use a Facebook application where candidates can apply directly from the company's Facebook page via a "jobs" tab that allows them to search for positions as they would on the company website. This is another opportunity to integrate the branding, color scheme, configuration, and results to be consistent with the company website.

Other ways to leverage social media to attract talent include enabling candidates to:

- Connect job postings with blogs and RSS feeds.

- Click "Share This" buttons.

- Email positions to friends.

Let Candidates Apply On the Go

While applicants apply predominantly from Web portals, an increasing number of job seekers are using mobile apps or mobile-enabled job boards and search engines. An HR department may consider capitalizing on this trend and making it easy for candidates to apply directly from a mobile device.

Creating a workflow that allows candidates to fill out an application — or even part of an application — from their mobile device can expand the applicant pool. The process should be accessible on all major mobile platforms, including mobile Web. If applicants don't have their resume or cover letter saved to a mobile device, the app should let them save the work they've done on their device, sending an email reminding them to upload their resumé later from their laptop or desktop.

Follow Up, Even When the News Is Bad

Of course, applicants hate to hear they haven't gotten a job, but it's worse to hear nothing at all. When candidates receive any acknowledgement, they generally feel better about the company and the application experience. Set up automated responders, at the minimum, so employees know when they are no longer being considered for the position.

Whether or not a candidate is hired for a particular position, they may be considered six months from now. If a candidate didn't have a good experience the first time, they are not likely to come back.

About myStaffingPro

myStaffingPro, a full-featured SaaS applicant tracking system, provides HR professionals with the tools they need to recruit, qualify, and track applicants, to help hire the best employees. myStaffingPro delivers the hiring process for more than 700 companies and has processed more than 20 million applications. In 2012, HR Services joined the Paychex, Inc. family as a wholly owned subsidiary, now providing even more resources to its customers.

To learn more about the myStaffingPro applicant tracking system, visit **http://mystaffingpro.com**.

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