



THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE PLAYBOOK

Elkie Holland



Introduction

The war for talent is no longer just about salaries or benefits. In 2025, it is about experience. The candidate experience begins long before an interview is scheduled and continues long after an offer is accepted. It shapes your employer brand, impacts offer acceptance rates, and influences what the market says about your company. This guide explores what makes a truly excellent candidate experience and how small changes at each stage can deliver significant improvements.



Why Candidate Experience Matters

The numbers speak volumes:

- 58% of job seekers have declined a job offer due to a poor candidate experience.
- 72% of candidates who had a bad experience told others about it online or in person.
- Companies with strong candidate experiences improve their quality of hire by up to 70%.

In short, every interaction with a candidate either builds or breaks your reputation.



Job Ads and Applications

1. Clear, realistic job adverts

- Avoid jargon. Focus on responsibilities, not a wish list of skills.
- Include salary, benefits, location, and remote options.

2. Streamlined applications

- Make it mobile-friendly.
- Avoid duplicate steps (CV upload and manual form entry).
- Communicate estimated time to complete the application.

3. Acknowledgement emails

- Simple confirmation emails reduce uncertainty and build trust.



Humanising the Process

1. Personalise your communication

- Use names, reference specific roles, and avoid bulk-style messages.

2. Introduce the team early

- Use video intros or welcome messages from hiring managers.
- Set expectations on timelines and next steps.

3. Provide a clear point of contact

- Candidates should always know who to speak to and how.



Preparation and Transparency

1. Prep the candidate properly

- Send interview structure, topics, and names of interviewers.
- Share tips on company culture and values.

2. Interview logistics

- Offer flexible time slots.
- Provide access links or location details well in advance.

3. Interviewer consistency

- Train interviewers to follow a fair and structured process.
- Avoid making candidates repeat themselves in multi-stage interviews.



Punctuality and Feedback

1. Keep momentum

- Long gaps between stages result in dropouts.
- Communicate timelines clearly and stick to them.

2. Offer constructive feedback

- Even a short paragraph of feedback is better than silence.
- It shows respect and encourages brand advocacy.

3. Ghosting is never acceptable

- Always close the loop, even with unsuccessful applicants.



Offer Stage

1. Deliver the offer personally

- Phone call before the email makes a big difference.

2. Be flexible with negotiations

- Understand motivations beyond money (flexibility, development, purpose).

3. Make the onboarding seamless

- Send contracts quickly.
- Offer start-date flexibility where possible.



Candidate Experience Metrics

Track and improve with data:

- Application drop-off rates
- Interview-to-offer ratios
- Offer acceptance rates
- Candidate NPS (Net Promoter Score)

Collect qualitative insights:

- Use surveys after every interview stage.
- Ask candidates for open-ended feedback.



Small Fixes That Deliver Big Wins

Top five low-effort, high-impact improvements:

1. Auto-confirmation emails with contact details.
2. Candidate interview guides.
3. Feedback within 48 hours.
4. Named contacts throughout the process.
5. Post-offer welcome packs.

Bonus tip:

- Always ask, "What would make this easier for the candidate?"



Final Thoughts

Candidate experience is no longer a 'nice to have'. It is a competitive advantage. In a **tight labour market**, the way you treat people during the hiring process can either attract or repel the best talent. By implementing **small, thoughtful fixes**, you create a hiring journey that reflects your company's values and **earns respect** – whether or not the candidate gets the job.

A **positive experience** lasts longer than the job title.

Make it count.



GET IN TOUCH

Let's talk talent! Book a chat with me:

MEETING

<https://calendly.com/elkie/15min>

EMAIL

elkie@prospectus.co.uk

PHONE NUMBER

01932 269563

WEBSITE

www.prospectus.co.uk

LOCATION

Prospectus IT Recruitment Unit 124, Image Court,
326-328 Molesey Road, Walton-on-Thames, KT12 3LT