HRIZONS® Insights & Best Practices

Early Engagement: Optimize your candidate and new hire experience

Learn how every touchpoint between an individual and your organization during these early, vulnerable times can bolster their entire experience - making a lasting impression

Employee engagement – or disengagement -- starts before day one on the job.
That's right: before your employees even meet their teammates, their recruiting and onboarding experience will influence their future commitment, productivity and cultural impact.

Notice, we aren't saying the recruiting and onboarding experiences can influence employees' future engagement. They will. While statistics vary by year and study, an aggregated review suggests that:

- Around **50%** of job seekers drop out of hiring processes that take too long or that they deem too arduous.
- **More than half** of job seekers share publicly or with peers when they undergo bad hiring experiences, negatively impacting employer brands.
- New hires onboarded in a thoughtful and standardized way are around **60%** more productive.

These are only a few of many stats that highlight the influence of early engagement.

So it's important for hiring managers to wield that influence wisely.

Get to know your candidates' and new hires' experience.
Candidate experience is the way potential employees perceive your hiring process. The new hire experience is how incoming employees feel about the early days of employment. Every touchpoint between the individual and your organization during these vulnerable times has huge power to bolster or derail their experience.

So, in the vein of "stapling yourself to an order," consider stapling yourself to your hiring and onboarding process. Get to know the touchpoints involved. Do they engage your prospective and early talent? Do they set them (and your organization) up for success? What tools and technologies underpin them? How can you improve each moment, nurture great candidates, and smoothly onboard new hires?

Candidate experience touchpoint examples	New hire experience touchpoint examples
Company website	Receiving and negotiating an offer
Job description(s)	Communication prior to the start date
Application system and process	Accessing forms and policies
Interview process and interviews	Meeting managers and colleagues
Interactions with recruiters, hiring managers and team members	Introductions to systems and policies
Communication through the recruiting window	Training and development

The role of technology in candidate and new hire experience
HR technology plays an outsized role in early engagement. It has the potential to impact every touch point and to make or break the experience for both the candidate and for the organization's HR team and hiring managers.

For example, if you've ever perused LinkedIn you've likely seen jobseekers calling out "ghosting" or application software that doesn't parse resumes. Given the state of modern technology, those frustrations are fair! No job seekers should encounter those issues. No recruiters or hiring managers should worry about them either. If your recruiting technology isn't making hiring processes easier with self-service and automation capabilities, it may be time to rethink it.

Similarly, robust, modern onboarding technology should handle everything from form management and e-signature services to training and development, making the new hire experience easy and engaging. It should simultaneously lighten the lift for HR teams and managers.

Even better? As today's HR teams transition from human capital management (HCM) to human experience management (HXM), HR technology can help them understand and improve that experience in real time. Here are a few tips for combining recruiting and onboarding processes with HXM technology to drive early engagement.

The candidate experience: Recruiting

Job descriptions
Job descriptions are one of the first touchpoints candidates will encounter with your company. They may contain valuable information about the role, but also about the organization and aspects of the culture. How to optimize job descriptions:
1. Make sure the job exists! Maybe this seems like a no-brainer, but it can wreck a candidate's perception of your company. Talent who feels their time has been wasted by a non-substantive job description will think twice before applying to the organization again.
2. Ensure the description is complete and accurate. While there will always be room for "other duties as assigned," candidates want to know what a role will entail, from location, to department, to compensation range. Don't make them guess what they are applying for!
3. Avoid bias. Job descriptions can inadvertently alienate great talent because the language, requirements, or qualifications signal gender, class, or other preferences.

Candidate relationship management
From targeting the right talent to maintaining great communication, HXM technology should support every facet of the candidate relationship.
How to optimize candidate relationship management:
1. Targeted candidate outreach – Based on the job description, target the talent you need and build candidate profiles. Targeting the right individuals with the right opportunities creates efficiency for both parties.
2. Build and nurture a talent pool – Don't lose touch with great talent; if a quality candidate doesn't fit your current openings, continue to nurture and engage them with ongoing communication.
3. Automate what you can – Make it easy for your talent team to close the loop with candidates who won't move to the next stage, follow up with interview requests, or to remove closed jobs from job boards. Simple automations can eliminate some of the most negative experiences like ghosting.
4. Give feedback – Automation can support this, but direct feedback from a recruiter or interviewing manager can encourage candidates to apply in the future, stay in touch with the organization, or help them excel in their next interview. As our HRIZONS' Employee Experience team says regularly: Feedback is a gift.

Candidate listening
Speaking of feedback, it should be a two-way street. You can glean enormous value by asking candidates why they want to work at the organization, how their candidate experience has impacted that desire, and what you can do better during the recruiting process. Engagement software like Qualtrics or Viva Glint support that sort of listening and analysis from the earliest moments.

The new hire experience: Onboarding

Once a candidate becomes an employee, their experience pivots. They need information, support, and a warm welcome to feel at home and ready to deliver. Onboarding processes and technology to the rescue!

Self service capabilities

A cloud-based onboarding program that integrates fully with your core HR system should digitally welcome new hires prior to their start date. Not only will this ensure smooth transfer of information across the employee and HR journey, but it will digitally hold new hires' hands: gathering information, introducing them to important policies and tasks, and providing early learning. Plus, it will do all of that without leaning heavily on hiring managers, freeing them up to welcome their new team member in a more human way – without the baggage of paperwork.

Training and development

One-on-one time with managers is key, as is a warm reception from teammates and new-hire buddies. But in the inevitable downtime between relationship-building, technology can offer a library of learning content that managers and HR teams hand-select for each role. This keeps new hires engaged when they are on their own.

New hire listening

As with candidate listening, listening to new hires' feedback about their experience provides important insights. For example, analysis over time can lead to correlations like: Did new hires who completed certain tasks show higher engagement down the road? Is tenure impacted by the way new hires perceive their welcome?

Meanwhile, simply being asked how they feel about their onboarding engages new employees, and seeing action based on that feedback boosts their morale. Such early engagement will pay dividends in the form of psychological safety and a culture of feedback.

Invest in your people before Day One

While we tend to think of recruiting as a means to capture top talent, it is also – arm in arm with well-designed onboarding – a way to build the foundation for an engaged workforce. Starting with technology solutions like HRIZONS' Job Descriptions Made Simple and SAP SuccessFactors Recruiting that help take the guesswork out of developing the very first touch points for candidates, while making the process of managing and posting jobs lighter for hiring managers and HR departments. Make sure your processes, technology, and feedback strategies are working together to make that foundation a strong one.

With years of award winning experience, HRIZONS can help. Contact us to learn more about how we partner with organizations to explore, implement, and manage SAP SuccessFactors solutions – including Recruiting and Onboarding. And if you're looking for a partner who can help you assess and measure your Employee Experience or support your Glint or Qualtrics solutions, look no further than our EX Division