

Delivering a great interview experience

We've all been there. We've all had our first interview, our worst interview and the interview that landed the job. If we're truly honest with ourselves, interviewing is not an experience that many of us absolutely love. It's something we know we need to do to get that role we want so much, but is it something we look forward to?

In our experience, the interview process can be made somewhat painless if the interviewers (that's you) spend some time deliberately designing an experience that will set you apart from the rest. A positive experience will leave candidates (regardless of their success in the process), walking away as true brand fans.

We've pulled together a few observations based on feedback we've received from candidates over the years. We consider these to be vital in creating an optimal interview experience for those who have made your shortlist.

A good candidate experience will include:

1. Pre-work and expectation setting

Prior to interview, the candidate has received a job description and understands what to expect and what type of interview to prepare for.

2. Where to go

The candidate is aware of where to go and who to ask for when they arrive. Instructions are sent well in advance of the meeting including tips for parking or public transport if relevant.

3. The people interviewing

The candidate knows who they're meeting, the role they play in your organisation, and their relevance or connection to this role. It's nice to provide a link to your interviewers LinkedIn profiles so candidates can get a feel for their background and responsibilities within your business.

4. Saying hello

Greet your candidate with a warm welcome, offering the essentials like a glass of water or a cuppa. A tour around the office to get a feel for the working environment and culture will also get a big tick.

5. In an emergency

Candidates are advised what to do in an emergency; be it natural disaster or otherwise, where the nearest exit is, and the protocol your team follows.

6. A place to connect

A room has been booked so there's a place to conduct the interview – not in the hallway or kitchen (yes, this happens!) where some may feel less able to speak openly. The temperature in the room is comfortable, not too hot and not too cold.

7. The nitty gritty

We're in the thick of it now and what's most important is making sure you are engaging the candidate in the process, giving them a flavour of what it's like to interact with your people. Let them know about the job in more detail before you expect too much from them. Hold the interview in a conversational manner or in a way that is reflective of how your business operates to give them a taste of what it might be like to work in your organisation.

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A good candidate experience will include (continued):

8. It's a two-way street

Interviewing is just as much for the employee as it is for the employer; a chance to see if the role and company are a good match. Ensuring the candidate has the opportunity to ask questions along the way is important; that conversational approach we spoke of works well in promoting free flowing questions.

9. Saying farewell

The candidate leaves feeling (hopefully) enlightened by what you've shared with them and ready to take on the world with you. They also leave knowing next steps such as when they're likely to hear back, from whom, and any other elements of the process still to come.

10. I like your shoes, let me try them on

Last but not least, put yourself in the candidate's shoes. If this was a process you were going through, would it meet your expectations? How would you like to be treated whether successful or otherwise? It's likely your candidate will feel the same. We're all individuals but most of us appreciate clear, positive feedback and honest conversation so that we can make the right choices and learn from experiences such as this.

Other considerations:

Candidates travelling for interviews

Sometimes, candidates aren't located in your region and travel is needed to meet face to face. We suggest in the first instance, setting up a video connection to check both parties are on the same page. Once you're sure it's a good potential match, a face to face meeting is always recommended.

Travel comes with a cost both in time and money to the candidate. We've seen clients manage this well by doing the following as a minimum:

- Schedule flights to and from the interview or reimburse the candidate for the airfares
- Schedule a taxi to pick them up from the airport or arrange for the hiring manager to collect them
- Schedule a departing taxi to take them for their journey home

It's important to maximize the time they have onsite with you, so we suggest arranging an interview and perhaps a culture fit / team coffee so that both parties get the best out of that time and money invested.

Candidate teleconferences

It's easy to feel slightly disconnected when using online video platforms such as Zoom. It's an artificial environment and can impact way a candidate experiences your leadership and brand. In our experience it's important to approach a video interview as you would a face to face one. Be prepared, be familiar with your tech platform, and relax! Even though you aren't providing the water and facilities, the care factor still needs to be there!

Post-interview care

Whether using a recruitment agency or advertising yourself, it's vital to provide candidates with feedback or an update in a timely manner following their interview. If you've met someone you think could be incredible in your role, chances are another organisation will think they're incredible too! Remember, time is of the essence in securing them so keep moving at pace as you head toward the offer stage.

And if they aren't the one, don't sit on that feedback. Get straight in touch with the candidate or recruiter and provide some meaningful insights that can be used to prepare for future opportunities. We like to give candidates a positive and something to work on or be mindful of.

Summary:

A candidate's experience of your brand starts the moment they apply for your role, not the day they start as your new employee.
Providing candidates with a positive interview experience, regardless of the outcome, will leave them brand fans for life!

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