Yearly 2020 Candidate Experience Benchmark

In-House Recruitment

Starred

Introduction

Candidate Experience (CandE) is vital for Talent Acquisition teams, and if you want to improve on it, you'll need to measure it and benchmark it against the competition. Not just that - you'll also want to get an idea of CandE's state across the globe and different types of organizations.

If you recognize yourself in the intentions described above, then you're in the right place!

Now at its third edition, Starred's yearly Candidate Experience Benchmark Report will show you corporate in-house **benchmark data** on Candidate Experience. Furthermore, it will share strategic advice on how to improve your CandE and Hiring Manager Experience, while considering every touchpoint in your candidates' journey.

This Benchmark Report contains data from both **(large) corporations** such as Fortune 500 companies, and **(tech) scale-ups**, offering you the opportunity to compare your Candidate Experience ratings with the other players in the market.

Why Candidate Experience?

In the field of recruitment, these past years have been all about the 'war for talent'. If you expected the Coronavirus pandemic to turn the tables, you're in for a surprise.
Things have changed in 2020, that is true, but today's market is still not an employer's market. In fact, that shouldn't be expected in the near future either.

So, why should you still focus on Candidate Experience?

1 The drop in vacancy postings isn't so significant as to justify the belief that CandE is now obsolete, and sometimes the star talent you need is still employed even during a crisis. Changes in unemployment rates vary vastly by industry, geography, educational level, specific skills and a number of other factors. Furthermore, the crisis will end, and people talk. Treating a candidate poorly now, will have grim consequences in the future

2 Oftentimes there was a spike in active candidates. This would lead to a larger volume of job applicants per job posting and more people exposed to your brand. These spikes are something you might not be entirely prepared for.

3 The hiring process needs to be much faster, and is now often fully remote. Active candidates are more eager to sign an employment contract, after having spent a considerable amount of time at home, jobless - this means that you must be quick on your feet. As for the remote part, this means that you've probably had to change your process at least partially.

Point 2 and 3 listed above involve a change in your activities during the recruiting process with many implications on the Candidate Experience. In such cases, it's always best to monitor your candidates' experience to see what your new areas of improvement might be.

If you want to find out more about this, you might be interested in reading this piece on the Great Rehiring.

What does this tell us?

Although you might be tempted to do otherwise, you need to make sure that your candidate journey is watertight and that you don't leave candidates in the dark about their status. What do they think you should improve? Now's the time for you to stand out against your competitors thanks to your excellent Candidate Experience, learning as you go in this ever-changing market.
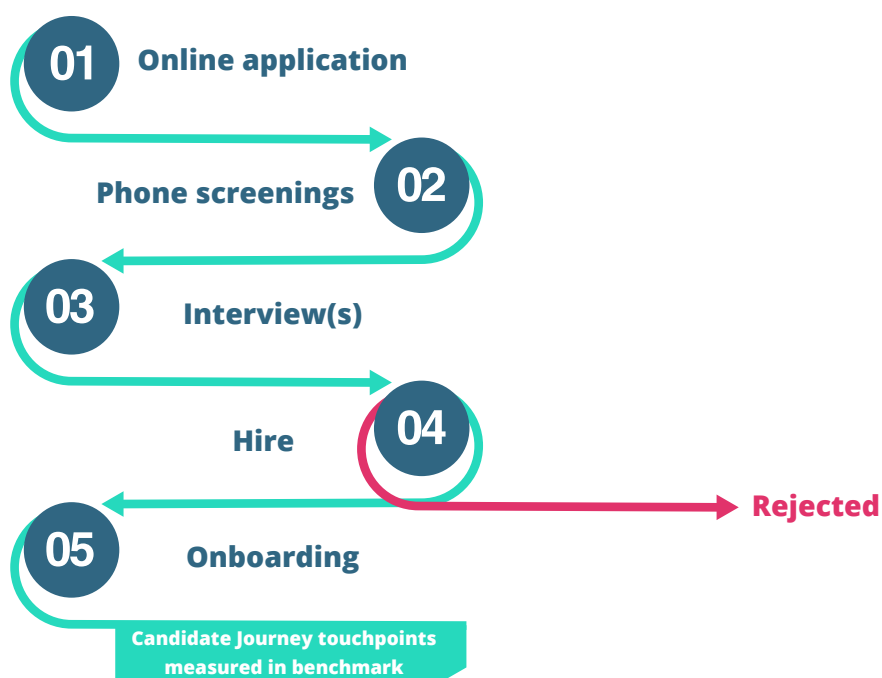
What is Candidate Experience?

Definition: **Candidate Experience** *is a candidate's overall perception and opinion about a company's recruiting and hiring process.*

Are you interested in a deep-dive into the subject of Candidate Experience? Read our Ultimate Guide to Candidate Experience Feedback.

The Study

Although no recruitment team operates in exactly the same way, we do see common touchpoints in the candidate journey. This benchmark contains the Candidate Experience benchmark on the touchpoints shown below, now including 'Onboarding' for the first time:

01 **Online application**

02

Phone screenings 02

03 **Interview(s)**

04

Hire 04 → **Rejected**

05 **Onboarding**

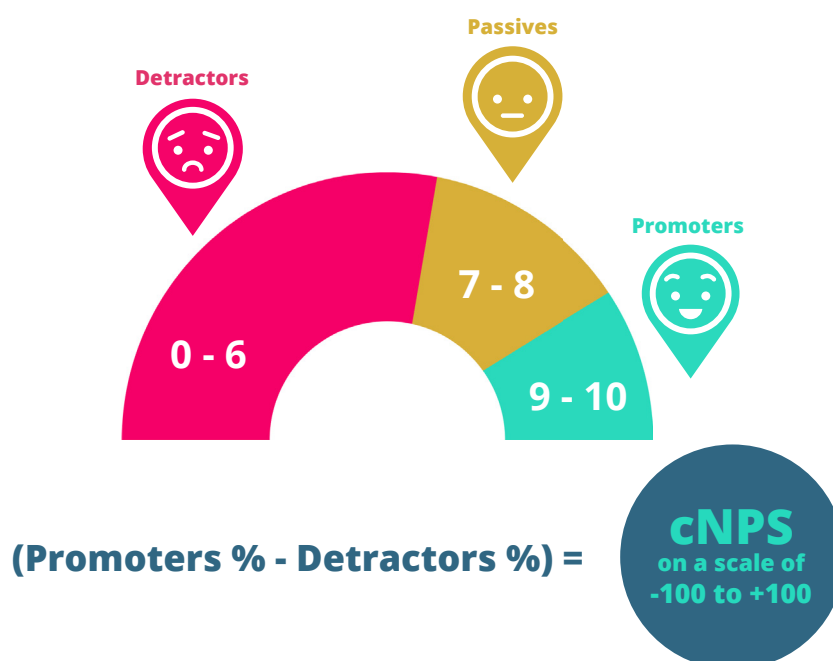Candidate Journey touchpoints measured in benchmark

In addition, our customers have collected feedback from the hiring managers. In other words, this is feedback the recruiting managers share after candidates are hired.

This Starred Candidate Experience Benchmark report for the year 2020 includes 58,947 respondents, using Starred as their feedback platform.

For this Benchmark Report, we have calculated the candidates' Net Promoter Score (cNPS).

What is cNPS and how is it calculated?

How likely is it that you would recommend someone else to apply at ___?

Detractors

Passives

Promoters

0 - 6

7 - 8

9 - 10

(Promoters % - Detractors %) =

cNPS
on a scale of
-100 to +100

Our Starred Candidate Experience benchmark for the year 2020 includes companies with 25+ respondents per measured touchpoint. In order to avoid skewness due to the different response volumes, all brands are weighted equally, regardless of the number of candidates or hires. This best allows us to understand the diversity of the companies inside our sample, making it applicable and relevant for other in-house recruiters.

About the participants

The total number of responses included in this study reached 58,947. Out of these, the vast majority were candidates and 965 were hiring managers.

43,280 responses were from companies based in Europe and 15,667 from companies based in the US. Responses from big corporations and (tech) scale-ups were split almost 51/49: with 30,103 respondents from large corporations, and 28,844 from scale-up companies.

The touchpoint "Rejected after CV screening" presents the lowest score of all: -19. We then see "Rejected after assessment", with a higher score: -9. "Rejected after an interview" was scored +9. The more engaged candidates have been in the application process the higher the cNPS.

This is followed by the candidates who have withdrawn from the process with a more generous score: +37. Hired candidates reach +61, and new hires after after their onboarding scored an average cNPS of +73.

Hiring Managers score the recruitment process an NPS of +37 on average.

Yearly 2020 CandE NPS, split across regions	Overall	Europe	USA
After CV	-19	-18	-22
After Assessment	-9	-3	-22
After Interview	+9	+4	+16
Withdrawn	+37	+40	+28
Hired	+61	+57	+70
Onboarded	+73	+72	+79
Hiring Manager	+37	+32	+58

For reference, these are the 2019 data.

It is good to keep in mind that apart from a real difference in Candidate Experience there are cultural differences in NPS scores as this article explains.

Yearly 2020 CandE NPS, split across company types	Overall	Corporations	Scale-ups
After CV	-19	-15	-21
After Assessment	-9	-4	-14
After Interview	+9	-3	+12
Withdrawn	+37	+43	+31
Hired	+61	+31	+83
Onboarded	+73	+72	+79
Hiring Manager	+37	+32	+58

Diving into the results

While looking at the overall results, most conclusions are intuitive. It is, in fact, to be expected that rejected candidates will give lower scores when compared to those who withdrew from the hiring process, or the ones who were hired.

The candidates who had to go through the assessment and did not pass are generally happier than those who were rejected after the CV screening. Those candidates who have been rejected after an interview show an even higher score. Why?

When candidates are rejected earlier in the funnel, their scores are lower because the rejection messages sent out at an early stage are often automated, containing 'standardized' rejection reasons, and, therefore, feel impersonal. This negatively affects these candidates' experience, as reflected by this touchpoint's score.

If rejected after the interview stage, the candidates have been in contact with the company's recruitment team and hiring managers. These rejections are handled more personally. The constructive feedback about the candidate's performance in the process and prospects in the company that often goes along with them are valued and result in a higher cNPS.

We could conclude that the more engaged candidates have been in the application process the higher the cNPS.

If we focus on the two different regions, we see some interesting differences. Specifically, the US companies in the sample performed far better than their European counterparts for the touchpoint 'rejection after interview', with a difference of 12 points.

Looking at scale-ups versus large corporations it's interesting to see that the score at the touchpoint 'Rejected after Interview' is 15 points lower for corporations, which is worrisome.
When a large share of their candidates are also their clients, their revenues might be affected by

a poor Candidate Experience, as [this case study](#) shows. Finally, hired candidates with scale-up companies seem to be more excited to be hired for their new job than with large corporations, with a difference of 52 points in their cNPS scores, only partially explained by the ratio of 3:2 (scale-ups versus large corporations) in our sample.

Conclusion: Next steps in Candidate Experience

It's time to look at the recruitment strategies for 2021! What does the near future have in store for recruitment, as far as we're concerned?

1 **Do you want to improve your Candidate Experience?**
Search for deeper insights.

Benchmarking is important to know where you stand in the recruitment space, but the data don't teach you how to improve. For that, you need deep insights. Starred users have those insights segmented per application stage, as they can ask their candidates additional questions on top of the classic recommendation (NPS) question.

We advise you to set up a granular feedback system mirroring your candidates' specific applicant journeys automated via your ATS. For example, if applicants for tech roles follow a different hiring process from the ones applying for business roles, make sure you set up appropriate survey workflows and ask specific questions related to their respective experiences.

Start measuring Hiring Manager feedback to know how the partnership with Talent Acquisition in your company is perceived, as your hiring targets for 2021 will need to be achieved together!

2 **Get control of your reputation by following up on individual feedback**

With 60% of job applicants having had at least one negative experience in their lives and 72% of them sharing it online, the odds are that someone has written something less than flattering about your recruitment process - or will soon. Most people check at least 6 reviews before forming an opinion about a company, and around 55% of applicants avoid businesses on which they've read negative accounts. So, get control of your reputation!

It's easier said than done, but it's so important and will prevent your company from getting horrendous Glassdoor reviews that will haunt you forever. It's best practice to decentralize this task and have recruiters contact the candidates who gave you feedback, starting with those who shared negative remarks (detractors). An important side effect is that recruiters will really face the feedback; it will no longer be just a statistical data point on a dashboard.

We know that not all issues can be solved. When something can't be fixed, remember that sometimes a simple message of understanding in which you accept the feedback sent your way can do wonders. You'll be surprised by the positivity you'll experience when you reach out to the candidates.

3   Hire respectfully

Be inclusive and respectful in how you recruit. Be empathetic and remember that remote interviews might be stressful for people and that there is less room and time to make someone feel comfortable via video.

To assess whether you're hiring respectfully, you can ask your candidates questions about whether they felt respected and welcomed, as well as address the remote aspect of the process - how was the remote employee onboarding program according to your candidates?

Here's a short checklist to make sure your hiring process is respectful:

1. Make sure your job vacancy's wording is welcoming and comprehensive.
2. Describe the role, the company, and the benefits in detail. This will help the candidate understand if there could be a good fit.
3. Keep your candidates updated about the way your process is structured. How many steps are there, what is expected of them, who will interview them - these are all valuable pieces of information for your job applicants.
4. Last, but most certainly not least - check yourself for unintentional bias: acknowledging it is the only way to overcome it.
5. When possible, privilege take-at-home tests without a deadline. This takes into account different backgrounds and working styles.

4   Finally, learn from your peers

Benchmarking your results to the competition is useful, but so is deriving examples from the choices of other recruitment leaders. What do the current trends indicate as the most relevant issues for you to focus on, on your journey to improving Candidate Experience? We've identified these for the near future. You can read more about them in The State of Recruitment in 2020.

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