*Human*IZING

THE **CANDIDATE JOURNEY**

How to Build a **Holistic,
High-tech Experience**
that **Elevates Every Phase**
of **Talent Engagement**

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AS JOB SEEKERS, we are all self-centered. It's only human. We focus on how a job or role will support our lives today and shape our careers tomorrow. It's an "all-about-me" mindset, which is why the candidate journey through the recruitment process can quickly become disappointing for many job seekers. Candidates start out thinking the recruitment process is about them, but many times end up feeling forgotten.

For some, it starts in the drawn-out processes. According to a PwC study, 67% of candidates who say they've encountered poor recruiting experiences, attribute their frustrations to businesses that drag out the recruiting process longer than a month. For others, it happens as they proceed through the interview process. An Indeed survey, for example, found that the primary reason job seekers report a negative recruitment experience is due to recruiters and hiring managers who don't respect their time by "canceling, showing up late or being unprepared for an interview."

As candidates drop out of a slow, unresponsive, and frustrating candidate journey, staffing firms and their clients miss out on opportunties with top talent. They forfeit great hires because they fail to see recruitment from the candidate's perspective, commoditizing rather than humanizing the candidate journey.

"The job of a recruiter is hard and in the fast-paced, results-driven culture of most staffing firms, it can be easy to forget about the human being on the other side, searching for their next career opportunity" according to **ClearlyRated Founder** and **CEO, Eric Gregg**. "What over a decade of research shows, however, is the people who really succeed in this space, find ways to truly connect to the candidates they work with. The firms that can blend technology with an empathetic, humanizing experience are the ones who consistently outpace the industry with brands that endure."

THE **7 PHASES** OF THE **CANDIDATE JOURNEY**

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On the other hand, staffing firms that are able to build a human-centered, tech-enabled journey for candidates—one that is personalized, intuitive, efficient and insightful—have the foundation needed to build a loyal, growing talent community. Humanized and holistic, the right candidate journey future-proofs talent-reliant companies with great candidates. After all, the talent community a staffing firm builds is its most important recruiting resource. According to SIA's 2019 North America Staffing Company Survey, staffing providers agree the very best source for recruiting talent—the source offering the greatest "bang to buck" return—is the firm's existing candidate database.

Many staffing firms focus their lens only on their immediate goals as they recruit (find the candidate, fill the job and move on), forgetting that the agencies with the best understanding of the candidate's perspective and challenges will stand out. Is your candidate journey humanized? Commoditized? Somewhere in between? The only way to find out is to take the journey, step by step, from the candidate's perspective and here is where you can begin. Join us in an exploration of the seven phases of a staffing candidate's journey to see whether your engagement efforts and technologies are reeling people in or sending them away and what can be done to close any gaps.

THE **7 PHASES** OF THE **CANDIDATE JOURNEY**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SOURCING	APPLICATION	EVALUATION	OFFER	ONBOARDING	ASSIGNMENT	REDEPLOYMENT

"Quick! I want to know more and hear more from you."
- The Candidate

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT

In this very first phase of the recruitment journey, sourcing, candidates are excited, curious, optimistic and hungry for information. And, in most cases, they are pursuing multiple opportunities and employers, which means you don't always have their full attention. From staffing firms, they are looking for two essential things: information and responsiveness. They want to understand the assignment/job, the pay, the employer, the duration and the benefits. And, they want to be able to ask questions and get quick answers if the information isn't easy to find.

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES GETTING IT?

Is information provided in the sourcing phase of your candidate journey specific or is it general and vague? Put yourself in the shoes of a candidate and consider the job/assignment information provided. How many questions are answered around salary, timeframe, location, benefits, the employer, etc.? How many questions remain open? If there are lots of unanswered questions, how can a candidate get timely answers? It's also important to consider one of your most essential talent sourcing streams: referrals. Talent referrals are a high-quality and highly efficient talent source. According to HR

Technologist, for example, referred candidates are 55% faster to hire than candidates sourced through career sites and job boards. As candidates are referred into your organization, are they tracked and engaged or simply thrown into the pipeline?

In many cases, the information provided by employers or their staffing partners in the sourcing phase is either too general or too specific for candidates. It reflects what the employer is willing to share, but not always the details candidates need to make the right choice about applying. That makes opening up a line of communication between potential candidates and the staffing firms essential.

If a candidate has questions, how are they submitted? Do they receive both acknowledgment of their inquiry and a timely response? Or, do most questions go unanswered due to time constraints and limited resources? Are you communicating with candidates via the methods they use and prefer, such as texting? When their questions and outreach attempts are overlooked or ignored, it's an early and clear signal to candidates that they are going to be treated as "one of many" to the recruiting organization rather than an individual to engage. It stunts (even stops) candidate relationships before they've even begun.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Automation can play a powerful role in humanizing candidate engagement in the sourcing phase. While not human, AI-driven conversational bots fulfill a simple human need in the sourcing process: to be recognized. Candidates submit job/assignment questions and receive immediate feedback, whether that's more information or simply an acknowledgement that the question has been received and will be answered. Talent coming in through referral programs can receive automated welcome resources and messages, giving them that critical reception that tells them this organization is worth their time. Conversational bots guide visitors to the right referral or application flow. They can immediately acknowledge referral submissions, qualify candidates and connect them to the right recruiter. All these simple, tech-enabled acts of responding to candidate inquiries ensure timely responses to outreach, thwart the dreaded blackhole effect and bring humanity to the recruitment process right from the start. "The Future of Recruiting Is AI and Automation," a research survey and report from TLNT, revealed that conversational bots save both recruiters and candidates time: by helping candidates schedule interviews using recruiter calendars, bots can help time-to-interview shrink by as much as 79%.

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

- Use automation tools to rapidly acknowledge candidate outreach.

- Leverage conversational bots to begin relationship building and information gathering.

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When it comes to reaching out to potential candidates, automated or manually, it's important to be true to your culture. Are you an informal company that projects openness and creativity? Make sure you speak that way to candidates and reflect that in communications. Are you more of a conservative organization with long-held values? Share that side of you. Let candidates experience the company culture right from the start and assess early on how their values align with the business.

Another key communications reminder is to consider their time. Everyone's time is limited and precious. If candidates have questions, acknowledge them whether via AI conversational bots, text, social media or email. If you don't have the answer, let them know. Good communication in recruitment is not always about having the perfect answer. It's about having an answer that makes the candidate feel heard and valued. Good candidates will wait for an answer from a thoughtful, potential employer. They will quickly move on from an unresponsive one.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

- Don't be generic. Whether through automated communications or direct outreach, infuse your brand and values into the communications.

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*"Can I complete the application before my lunch break ends?"*
- The Candidate

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT

When it comes to applying for a job, candidates want the application process to be simple, fast and easy. Why? First, because they are accustomed to the user-friendly, mobile-first apps they use every day—apps that allow them to do almost anything in minutes right from their phones, from applying for a mortgage to booking a vacation to ordering food, gifts, supplies and clothes. Second, because time is limited and people are busy. A long, cumbersome application process all but guarantees a high applicant drop-off rate.

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES GETTING IT?

To assess your application process from the candidate's perspective, start by looking at the data. Who is dropping out, when and why? Once you have the numbers, test the process. Apply for a job or two and test for usability, speed and simplicity. How long did it take? How easy was it to complete? Could you finish it on a short coffee break or would you need to set aside an hour? Can it be done by smartphone as easily as it is done from a laptop? Do the frustrations you encounter match what your data is telling you?
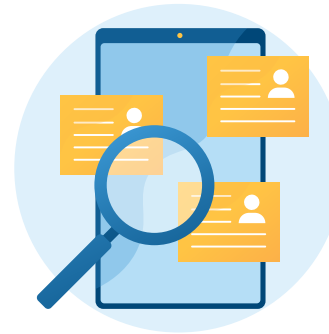
HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Create an optimized, digital application process that saves serious time and captures more talent.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Acknowledge their interest and keep them in the talent pipeline.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Staffing firms that see high drop off rates and know their application process is laborious need to rework the process with today's job seekers in mind. That means optimizing the job application process by leveraging user-centered design best practices to streamline, optimize and accelerate the application process. The goal is to create an intuitive application process that takes no more than 10 minutes and can be completed with equal ease on any device, whether it's a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop.

In addition, thoughtful communications can and should be integrated into the application process, from sending confirmations to those who have completed applications to alerting candidates who have an incomplete application in progress. These automated notifications are another way of letting candidates know that the business hasn't forgotten about them and is grateful for their efforts. Once an application is reviewed, candidates should also receive updates, such as:

"We've looked over your application and are excited that we are seeing some alignment. We will be sending you an interview schedule request and look forward to getting to know you."

OR:

"While we are thrilled to have your application on file, you don't currently fit the needs of our UX Developer opening. We will be sure and alert you of new opportunities that might suit you and your skills. If you would like to speak directly with one of our recruiters, please call us at..."

While candidates prefer to get the first message over the second, they are both welcome communications—especially when the messages conveyed are genuine and true to the company's brand and voice. They demonstrate gratitude for the candidate's effort and time, which is why a staffing firm should never stop communications simply because the business got what it needed. Gratitude towards both the candidates you hire and those you pass on pays off. It builds goodwill and a company with goodwill across the marketplace will generate strong referrals. Everyone wants to work for a company where people matter.

"I hope they give me a fair shot at this job."
- The Candidate

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT

When it comes to the evaluation process, from interviews to skills assessments, candidates want a fair opportunity to showcase their experience and skills. They want to understand how and when they will be evaluated so they can prepare and set themselves up for success.

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES GETTING IT?

Even highly confident candidates can find themselves nervous wrecks when they don't understand the interview and assessment process. What will the interview look like and when will it happen? Will it be video or in person? Who will be involved and how long will it take? Will there be a skills assessment? If so, how will it work? These are just some of the many questions going through their minds. Consider how much preparation and insight candidates in your recruitment process are getting ahead of assessments and evaluations. Are you answering these questions in a timely manner? Are you sending them to interviews and assessments well informed and prepared?

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Provide automated scheduling tools to give candidates more control and insight into the process.

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WHAT CAN BE DONE?

More information and preparation can improve the evaluation phase of the journey for candidates, and automation can play a powerful role in fulfilling both. For example, automated tools for scheduling interviews and assessments give candidates a greater sense of control. Candidates get to choose dates that work within their schedules and give them the time they need to prepare. Automation is also a way of preparing candidates with useful information. For example, once an interview and assessment is scheduled, the staffing firm can send an automated prep toolkit that includes date and time, format (video, in-person, phone, etc.), who will participate, and some guidance on what to expect.

While automation can deliver lots of good information, remember that some candidates will want more personal engagement as they prepare. It's a good moment to get human and check in with a personal text or email: "Are you ready for your interview on X? You're going to do great. Is there anything I can do to help you prepare?" It's a great time to offer prep sessions via video or phone to coach candidates through common questions and any concerns they might have.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Offer interview prep sessions and tools to help candidates succeed.

"Great start...but can we talk?"
- The Candidate

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT

The offer phase is a lot like the sourcing phase in which information accuracy is really important. However, once candidates have all the details on the offer (and remember they want them all), they also want a chance to negotiate and discuss. How and with whom do they negotiate job elements like pay, location and work schedule?

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES GETTING IT?

Most staffing firms are pretty good at getting job offer details to candidates in a timely manner because it's the step right before filling a job. They are motivated to do it quickly. For highly sought after candidates with in-demand skills, ensuring the offer is received and read is key. They may be getting several offers at once. For all candidates, ensuring that information is thorough and accurate is essential.

What many candidates are missing after the offer arrives is a chance to negotiate for what they want from the job, such as remote work, higher pay or a flexible schedule. Oftentimes,

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Send out offers across multiple platforms to ensure fast delivery and response.

the offer phase is handled as a race to fill the position rather than the way job seekers see it: an opportunity to ensure they are getting and taking the best job opportunity.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

To ensure offers are received in a timely manner, they should be delivered across multiple platforms and the details should be spelled out (pay, benefits, start dates, end dates, training requirements, and onboarding details). While automating the delivery of the offer can get it out faster, wherever possible, try to add a personal touch during the offer phase.

Whether via call or video chat, it's a wonderful thing to get a job offer and involving people in the celebration humanizes the moment. It also creates an opportunity to showcase the values and personality of your company culture with a congratulations and welcome message that speaks to your values and employment brand.

Personal engagement at this phase also opens up the door to the negotiations candidates are looking to have. "Is there anything here you want to discuss or need to better understand in the offer?" Some candidates will be managing multiple offers and negotiating is a way to understand their full opportunities. Other candidates may simply need to hash out offer details with a trusted resource and personal outreach is a way to do that.

It's also important to remember that this phase of the journey is an opportunity to build a foundation of openness and trust. That's true even for candidates who do not receive an offer. Make sure any candidates who went through the full interview and evaluation phase receives feedback on how they did, why they didn't get the offer and what's ahead ("we will keep looking for opportunities for you"). This is the kind of added outreach and candid communication that forges employment bonds and adds enthusiasts to your talent community.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Give candidates opportunities to discuss and even negotiate the offer.

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"Am I starting a job or writing a thesis?"
- The Candidate

WHAT CANDIDATES WANT

Candidates are a lot like employers in the onboarding phase. They are ready to get to work and excited to get to know the employer. They want to be on the job, engaged and useful as quickly as possible. Onboarding is also the moment of that essential first impression--that first real experience the associate has with the employer. They need it to be a positive kickoff to a new work experience.

ARE YOUR CANDIDATES GETTING IT?

Onboarding can be a famously lengthy process with lots of forms to fill in, information to digest and rules and regulations to learn. It can feel like a barrier rather than a transition to the workplace.

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Digitize and accelerate onboarding paperwork processes with user-friendly applications.

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WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Many aspects of onboarding can be done online and early. While staffing firms don't have responsibility for all onboarding, they can accelerate and optimize those processes that do live with them. For example, why have candidates come in to fill in paperwork when they can show up on day one with it already complete? The more a staffing firm can transition onboarding paperwork and data collection to digital, cloud-based processes, the more time account managers and hiring managers will have for the engaging, human side of the process: welcoming, prepping and training candidates.

Good communication throughout onboarding is essential. Let candidates know what onboarding consists of. Will there be training? Will there be paperwork? How long will it take? Who will they meet? Onboarding is a great time for information sharing and also for some strong facetime. Introduce new hires to key people in the office who have or will help them out during their assignment. Give them a chance to get to know the people behind the scenes at the staffing firm who are working to make sure their assignment is a success.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Communicate the onboarding process ahead of time so candidates are prepared and excited.

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"Am I all alone out here?"
- The Consultant

WHAT CONSULTANTS WANT

While it's great to be on assignment, productive and earning, staffing firm consultants still want to feel connected and valued. They want to feel good about the work they are doing and supported.

ARE YOUR CONSULTANTS GETTING IT?

As a consultant or temporary worker however, it is easy to feel disconnected from the culture and people on the client site. You're a part of the team, but not fully integrated into the company. To assess how well your organization is maintaining connections with assigned talent, take stock. How often is your staffing firm reaching out and engaging associates once they are on the job? Are you taking the time or is the focus on filling new job orders?

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Schedule and automate regular check-ins and milestone celebrations that demonstrate your commitment and talent focus.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Rather than turning all focus to filling new openings and sourcing new talent, staffing firms need to see the assignment phase as an active aspect of talent engagement. Outreach to consultants on assignment should be regular, personalized and fun. Consultants on the job want ongoing support and connection, in which technology can play a central role. For example, regular check-ins via email, text or chat, can be used to see how consultants are doing on the job and if they need anything. Staffing firms can either schedule reminders for staff to do personal check-ins by phone or text with consultants or use automation, even conversational bots, to send out automated check-ins to remind workers they are valued and have a support team behind them.

Celebration messages, employee recognition and contests, to birthday and work anniversary reminders and employee referral programs, create reasons to reach out to talent on a regular basis and involve them in company culture and events. These extra efforts help staffing firms build stronger relationships with consultants who are then more likely to refer other talented candidates. They become brand ambassadors who help grow the staffing firm's talent community. It's a positive loop of engagement that fuels a strong and growing talent community.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Balance automated messages with personal check-ins that ensure consultants know you care and are invested in their success.

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"What's next for me?"
- The Consultant

WHAT CONSULTANTS WANT

According to ClearlyRated, consultants begin thinking about their next assignment or redeployment within 30 days of being on the job. They are looking to their staffing firm partner to proactively send them future opportunities, long before their current assignment winds down.

ARE YOUR CONSULTANTS GETTING IT?

Are you informing candidates with new deployment opportunities early on or leaving the next phase of their journey in their hands? A holistic candidate journey pushes beyond the end date and into the next opportunity. If associates are simply falling out of touch after completing assignments, it's a missed opportunity for your business and your employment brand.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If you need to improve your offboarding process, start with good data and automation. Assignment end dates are something you know. Automated check-ins can be added as a way to reach out to associates as their assignments are winding down. Use them to let associates know they remain a valued part of your talent community. Provide them with resources, such as links to current job openings, and the option to schedule a transition meeting with a recruiter. Every interaction, automated or not, is a way to strengthen the relationship and keep great candidates inside your talent community and engaged across a more holistic, rewarding career journey.

A CAREER PATH IS LONG. EMBRACE THE JOURNEY.

For candidates, the career path goes far beyond one assignment, one job or one employer. It's a winding journey of working, learning, experience, achievements, struggles, promotions, connections and growth. Rather than serving simply as one stop along a candidate's career journey, staffing firms should step back and focus on the whole expedition. As Dave Smith, COO and founder of Triple Crown Consulting explains, a successful career partner is there for the long haul: "We know that for a consultant, the job we are filling is only one part of the career they are building and the future they are chasing. By building a strong candidate experience that guides, shapes and supports their immediate career goals, they will stick by us, either by continuing to grow as a consultant or by referring other talented professionals to our team."

For staffing firms, that means looking for the many places to reach, recruit, support, celebrate and coach talent along the way. Embrace a holistic, tech-enabled approach to candidate engagement, and your power for fueling workplaces with talent will surge as your talent community grows.

HOW CAN **TECH** HELP?

Schedule automated check-ins as assignments come to a close to begin the redeployment process.

HOW CAN **BETTER COMMUNICATIONS** HELP?

Personalize thank you messages to associates and invite them to share their experience as a way to extend the relationship and keep them within your talent community.

NEED HELP REFINING YOUR CANDIDATE JOURNEY?

HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY HELP?

Request a **DEMO.**

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sofi@workllama.com

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marketing

clearedgemarketing.com
info@clearedgemarketing.com