

eBOOK

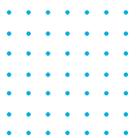
# Improving Your Candidate Experience in 2020

**JazzHR**



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# What is Candidate Experience, and Why Does it Matter?

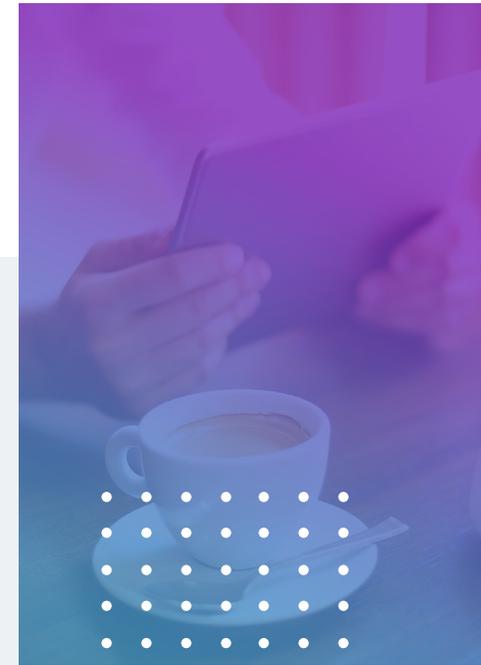
Job seekers encounter a range of experiences, impressions and feelings throughout the recruiting, hiring and onboarding processes. Whether positive or negative, these takeaways are all part of the candidate experience.

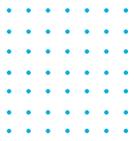
A positive candidate experience has the power to:

- ▲ Make applicants feel respected.
- ▲ Boost employer brand perceptions.
- ▲ Demonstrate company values.
- ▲ Promote employee retention.

However, only 25% of candidates rate their candidate experiences as “great.”<sup>1</sup> This highlights a significant opportunity for employers.

As a talent professional, you must be more strategic than ever about your hiring efforts, especially given the historically tight labor market.<sup>2</sup> An uncertain economic future makes securing the best and brightest talent all the more important to the health of businesses across virtually every industry.





# Setting Clear Expectations for an Improved Candidate Experience

In today's candidate-driven hiring landscape, qualified jobseekers have high — but fair — expectations.

These often include:

- ▲ Fast, mobile-friendly application processes.
- ▲ Quick response times from recruiters and hiring managers.
- ▲ Insight into company culture and values.
- ▲ Clear hiring timelines with regular status updates.
- ▲ Open and inclusive hiring practices.
- ▲ Alignment across job descriptions, interviews and other information sources.

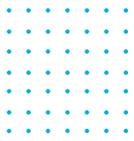
SHRM warns that if your recruiting team doesn't set realistic expectations, jobseekers will create their own.<sup>3</sup> This mismatch between expectation and reality practically guarantees some level of disappointment on the candidate's part.

Unfortunately, this can lead to dissatisfaction and even resentment toward potential employers. Since 2016, there has been a 40% increase in candidate resentment.<sup>1</sup>

To avoid this, set expectations from the first point of contact. Then, make sure you meet or exceed them throughout the candidate lifecycle. This helps establish a positive candidate experience from which both parties can reap the rewards.

Read on for five ways to set clear expectations and improve key aspects of the candidate experience.





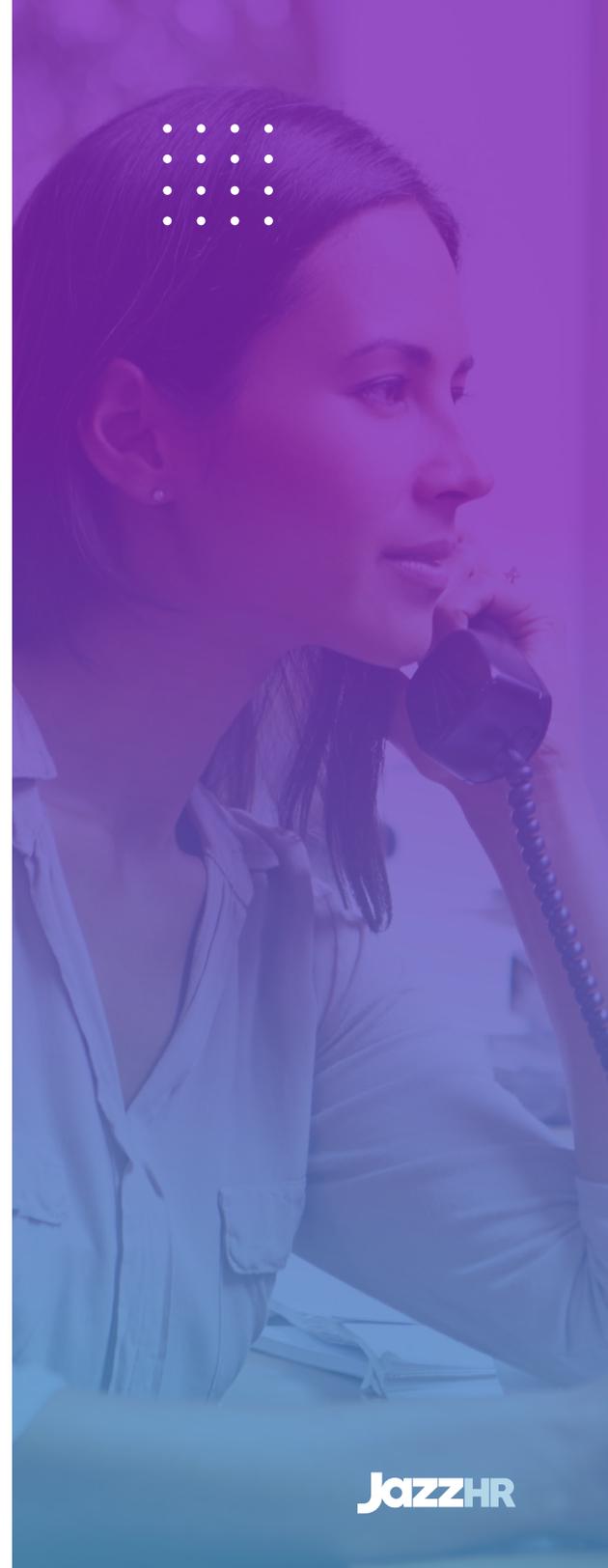
# 1. Establish a Clear Hiring Timeline

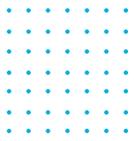
Candidates want to know, “What’s your hiring timeline? When will I hear back?”

It’s important to candidates that you establish and ensure timeline transparency. By setting a schedule, you will show that you respect and value their time. And sticking to it proves that you represent a trustworthy and well-run organization.

Recruiters can take these simple steps to set expectations around the hiring timeline:

- ▶ List how many minutes it will take to complete an online job application.
- ▶ Publish the date a job was posted and last day applications will be accepted.
- ▶ Clarify the hiring process and timeline when reaching out to invite candidates for phone screenings.
- ▶ State when you will follow up with candidates at the end of each touchpoint.
- ▶ Stay true to your follow-up schedule, even if only to say there have been no significant updates yet.
- ▶ Send an agenda for your in-person interviews so candidates can prepare accordingly.





## 2. Ensure an Inclusive Hiring Process

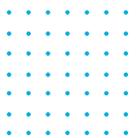
Candidates are asking, “Am I welcome here? Do I have a fair chance at this opportunity?”

Although it’s not a federal requirement, you can present your role as an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) throughout the candidate lifecycle.<sup>4</sup> A fair and inclusive approach ensures legal compliance where applicable, and may also encourage a more diverse group of applicants, as the EEO Commission suggests.<sup>5</sup>

Here are some ideas for setting expectations around your company’s inclusive and fair hiring practices:

- ▶ Use inclusive, gender-neutral language in job descriptions.
- ▶ Let candidates know what specific qualities and skills you’re seeking.
- ▶ Explain that you will consider various combinations of education and experience.
- ▶ Consider including EEO disclosure statements in your job descriptions and applications.
- ▶ Establish a process for how decisions are made and make applicants aware of your evaluation “rubric.”
- ▶ Use an applicant tracking system (ATS) to reduce human bias as you filter and screen candidates.





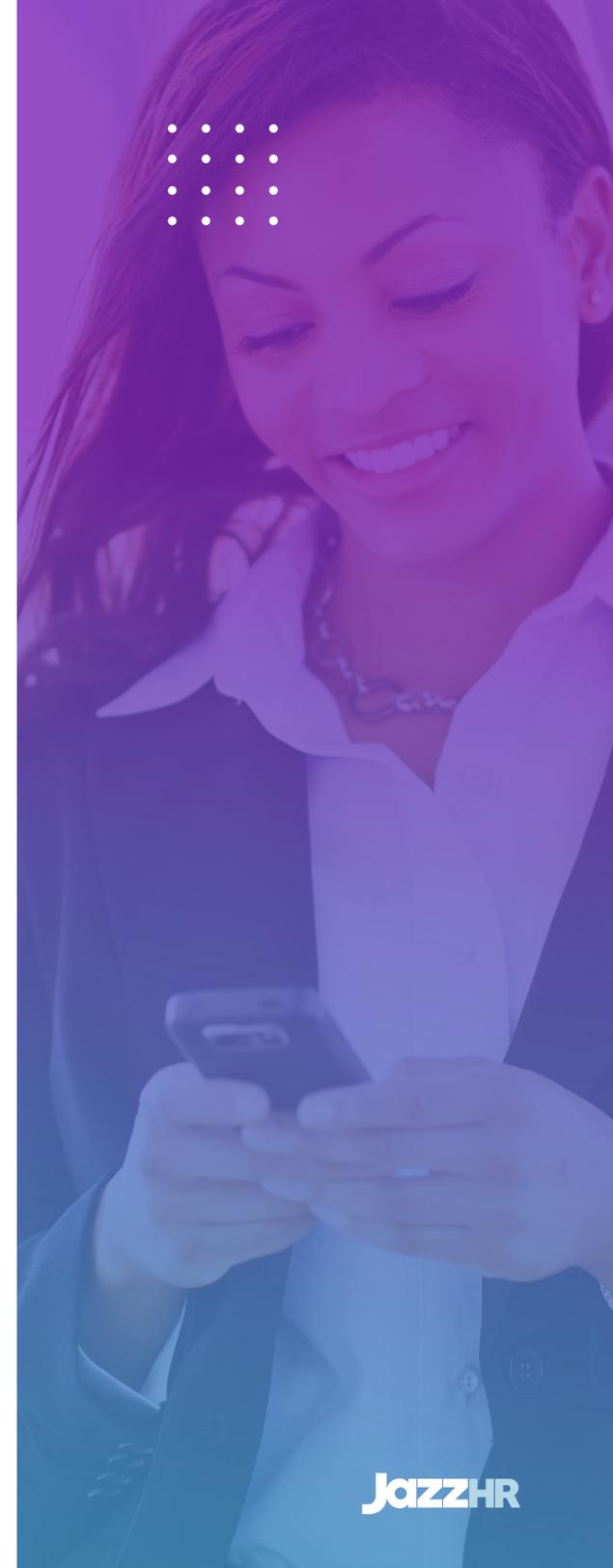
### 3. Maintain Open Lines of Communication

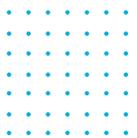
Candidates are eager to know, “Does this employer care enough to respond? Can I get the information I need? Will I have the chance to say everything I want to say?”

Ignoring applicant inquiries and ghosting top talent after the interview phase will be taken as a sign of disrespect. Of candidates that withdraw, 51% cite poor communication as a top factor.<sup>1</sup> If you require candidates to demonstrate strong communication skills, your recruiting team should do the same.

Establish candidate communication protocols among your team. Then, stay communicative with candidates by utilizing the following strategies:

- ▶ Adopt programmable communication tools like automated emails and chatbots.
- ▶ Embrace SMS recruiting so you can respond via text to candidate questions.
- ▶ Schedule outreach at specific intervals throughout the candidate lifecycle.
- ▶ At the end of an interview, ask, “Is there anything we didn’t ask you that you’d like us to know?”
- ▶ Provide closure to candidates once a role they applied for has been filled.





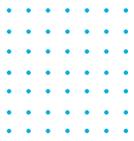
## 4. Put Company Values into Action

Candidates wonder, “What’s your company culture like? Will I fit in here? What are your values, and do they align with my own?”

Workplace culture is not a surface-level attribute but a reflection of your company’s values. By clarifying your values up front, you can attract the right people and reduce culture-shock churn.

To put your values into action and establish realistic culture expectations, try these strategies:

- ▶ Develop an HR mission statement that highlights the culture and values your company embraces.
- ▶ Share stories about philanthropic or charitable initiatives.
- ▶ Publish and distribute employee-generated content for an authentic look at your culture.
- ▶ Have a frank and open discussion around values to determine if there is a culture fit.
- ▶ Advise candidates of your office dress code so they can prepare accordingly for an interview.
- ▶ Give interviewees an office tour and a chance to speak with a few team members.



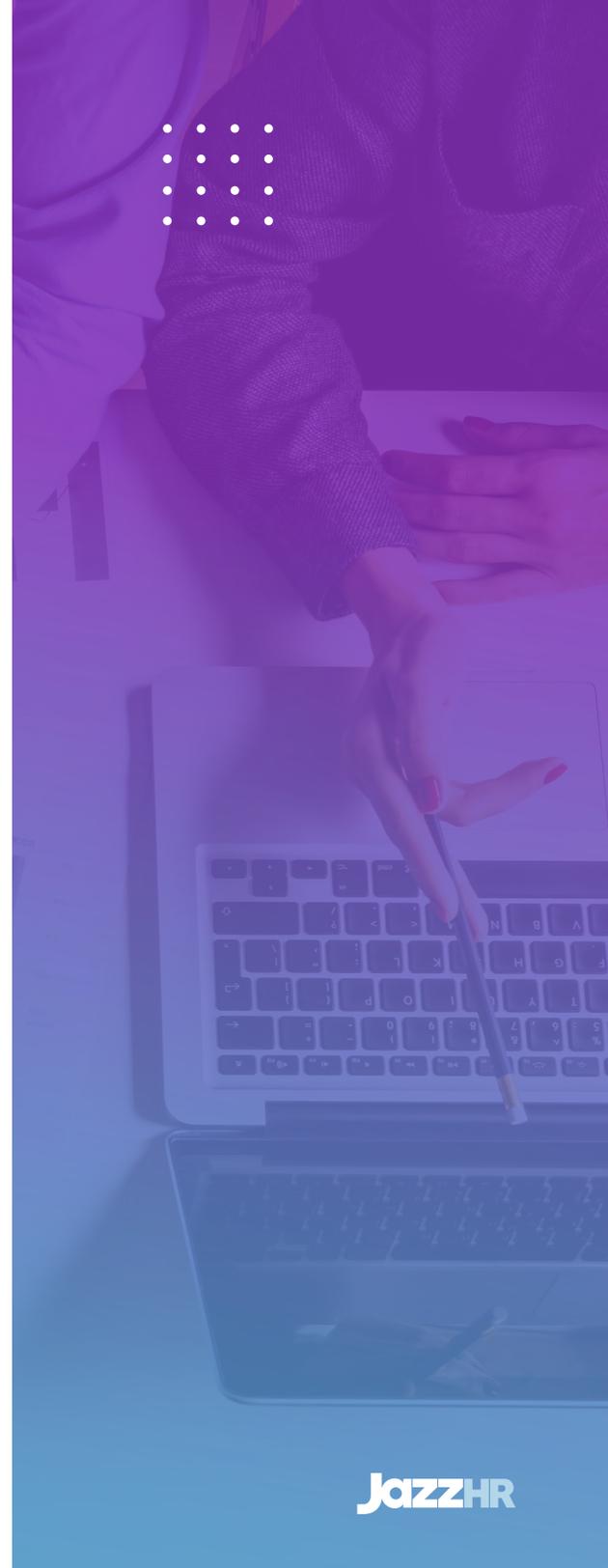
## 5. Take Candidate Feedback Seriously

Candidates speculate, “What did other applicants think of the hiring process? Why does this employer want my feedback – will they actually act on it?”

In an era when candidates are consumers, review sites are influential on their decision not just to accept a role but to apply in the first place. And active candidates are eager to provide their own input. When asked for feedback on a screening conversation or interview, employers see a 148% increase in “great” candidate experience ratings.<sup>1</sup>

Set expectations by emphasizing how you implement changes informed by candidate feedback:

- Approach negative reviews head-on during candidate conversations and explain what you are doing to change your process.
- Use an ATS to distribute surveys and collect candidate feedback.
- Generate reports of key recruiting metrics to identify weak points in your process.
- Analyze candidate engagement levels as well as satisfaction levels.



# Conclusion

Setting clear, realistic expectations is essential in every step throughout the candidate lifecycle.

You can ensure a positive candidate experience by establishing:

- ▶ Protocols and intentions around your hiring timeline.
- ▶ Inclusive recruitment practices.
- ▶ Company culture and values.
- ▶ Clarity around communication frequency and the feedback process.

Consider where else you can inject this approach into your hiring process and candidate communications. For instance, you can set realistic job expectations by discussing the “bests and worsts” of the position. This will enable a candidate to evaluate the whole picture and may help improve retention rates.

No matter what strategies you employ, a robust ATS can help. To find out how, [sign up for a free JazzHR demo.](#)

## Sources:

1. Talent Board – 2019 North American Candidate Experience Research Report
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3. Society for Human Resource Management – Make Your Job Candidates Happier in 2019
4. National Institutes of Health Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – Conducting a Fair Selection Process
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