

MASTER'S THESIS

Candidate Experience

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Management of Development Projects

STUDY SPECIALIZATION

Project Management of Innovations in a Company

SUPERVISOR

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Název diplomové práce anglicky:

Candidate Experience

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BENEFIT OF THE THESIS: The main benefit of this thesis is cooperation with Talent Acquisition and Staffing department and HR community. This thesis will focus on candidate experience of Nordics countries as Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. The main target is to make process changes to improve candidate experience and make the hiring process easier.

STRUCTURE: (1) Introduction; (2) Candidate Experience in general; (3) Questionnaire surveys; (4) Interviews; (5) Conclusion

Seznam doporučené literatury:

- (1) ADLER, Matt, DINNEN, Mervyn. Exceptional Talent: How to Attract, Acquire and Retain the Very Best Employees. 2017.
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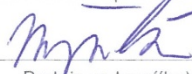
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Acknowledgment

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Abstrakt

Téma mé diplomové práce je „Candidate Experience“. Cílem této práce je zmapovat současnou candidate experience v XY společnosti, a také navrhnout možná zlepšení, jak candidate experience podpořit. V teoretické části jsem se zabývala samotným termínem Candidate experience a aspekty, které candidate experience přímo ovlivňují, jako je značka zaměstnavatele, techniky, jak talenty zaujmout, cesta kandidáta v náborovém procesu a obecnými doporučeními, jak zlepšit candidate experience. V praktické části jsem využívala teoretické znalosti z první části. Vedla jsem rozhovory s kandidáty, kteří byli zamítnuti po posledním kole pohovoru nebo s těmi, kteří se rozhodli odmítnout nabídku, data jsem čerpala z roku 2019. Rozhovor tvořily jak otevřené otázky ohledně zkušeností s nábořem, tak i číselné hodnocení jednotlivých kroků náborového procesu. V poslední části jsem navrhovala doporučení, jak zlepšit candidate experience v XY společnosti na základě zjištěné zpětné vazby od kandidátů.

Key words

Candidate Experience, Lidské zdroje, Nábor, Talent, Kandidáti

Abstract

My master's thesis topic is "Candidate experience". The purpose of the thesis is to map the current candidate experience in the XY Company and to recommend what can the XY Company improve. In the theoretical part, I was describing the Candidate Experience term and its aspects, which have the major impact on the candidate experience such as Employer Brand, Talent Attraction (including the talent attraction techniques), Candidate Journey and the recommendations on how to influence the Candidate Experience in general. In the practical part I was transforming the theoretical knowledge into practice. I was having phone conversations with candidates who were not selected after the final round of the interview and with those who have declined the offer in the year 2019. I was asking them open questions related to their candidate experience from the process as well as asking about their personal ratings of each step. In the end I made suggestions how to improve the candidate experience in the XY Company based on the results I have received.

Key words

Candidate Experience, Human Resources, Recruitment, Talent, Candidate

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Introduction

It is much more complicated to attract and hire the best talents on the market, as the market is candidate-driven and there is a huge competition between companies these days.

This is the reason why companies need to focus on candidate experience and always look for the ways how to improve it.

I work in XY company as a TAS Business Partner, which is an internal job title for recruiters. I cover hiring for commercial roles (mostly sales and marketing) in the Czech Republic and also in Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark). As I communicate with candidates on the daily basis, I can see the importance of the candidate experience and the overall image of the company.

In the XY company we are mapping the candidate experience but we are focusing only on those who are hired. New hires receive an automated form with questions related to the hiring process.

In my opinion, the XY company needs to focus also on the candidates who were rejected or on those who decided to reject the offer. Their feedback is important for us because we would like to stay in touch with the majority of them for any future roles. This way their feedback could help the company to improve the candidate experience and the image of the company itself, which can positively influence the talent attraction.

This is the reason why I decided to focus and contact the candidates who were not selected after the final round of the interview, or on those who decided to reject the offer. My focus is on the candidates from the Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark) who were in the process in the year 2019.

I have prepared a short form with questions related to their personal experience from the hiring process for them to answer whilst I was having informal phone conversations with them.

This thesis consists of two parts - theoretical and practical part. My personal experience gained from the XY company is captured and explained in both parts. The majority of the theoretical part is then built from the information and facts stated from various books and other resources. The practical part focuses on the actual data that map the candidate experience.

Firstly, it is important to explain what the candidate experience actually is and to take an objective look at both positive and poor candidate experience.

Secondly, I will be focusing on the company brand and the elements building the brand.

In the next chapter, I will be talking about the talent attraction and the examples of the talent attraction techniques which explain how and on which platforms the company gains the candidate's attention.

In this part, it is also important to describe the differences between active and passive candidates.

The candidate goes through various stages during the hiring process. Every stage can positively or negatively influence the candidate experience. It is pivotal to focus on every step of the candidate's journey and how we can influence it positively.

There are also general recommendations what can we do to improve the candidate experience.

In the practical part I will be stating facts about the XY Company.

The main focus in the practical part is to transform the theoretical knowledge into practice.

Then I will be describing the talent attraction techniques used in the XY Company.

In the next chapter, I will be focusing on the XY Company hiring process step by step including the people involved in the process from the beginning to the end.

In the last chapters, I will be dealing with the purpose of the candidate experience study in the XY Company including the aim, research questions, and the results from the conversations with candidates including the examples.

And the last topic I will be sharing, are my recommendations on how to improve the candidate experience in the XY Company based on the knowledge from the theoretical part and the facts from the candidates as well.

THEORETICAL PART

1 Candidate Experience (CE)

Candidate Experience is now a hot topic in the recruitment world. The reason why companies are paying much more attention to the candidate experience is that they must fight with other companies to attract and get the best talents and employees.

Candidate experience consists of the quality of every single interaction during the hiring process. (Alder & Dinan, 2017)

It all starts with looking for a new job and ends by joining the company and being onboarded. (Juntanen, 2018)

The candidate experience concept comes from marketing the companies start to be more customer-oriented to attract the best potential candidates. (Mortsiefer, 2017)

It is important to focus on candidate experience not only with successful candidates but also to focus on candidates who were not selected. Candidates with positive candidate experience are more likely to apply again or even refer someone.

Building the candidate experience is building the brand of the company. (Mortsiefer, 2017)

Since candidate experience is more complex, many aspects can influence it for example salary, benefits, work-life balance, future development opportunities, values and behaviors, colleagues in the team, manager, and also the whole hiring process with the people involved in it (for example recruiters).

The hiring process plays a big part in the candidate experience. Candidates, who are actively looking for a new job can choose any company and do an easy research about their salaries, benefits, work-life balance, future development opportunities, values, and behaviors and they may also check the references of the current employees. But they can not affect who will be part of the hiring team and who will be leading the potential candidate through the hiring process.

1.1 Positive Candidate Experience

The key aspect to receive positive candidate experience is to be open and always keep an honest communication during the whole recruitment process. (Recruiting: The Case for Providing a Positive Candidate Experience, 2019)

It doesn't necessarily mean that we should be focusing to get the positive candidate experience only from candidates who are hired in the end. To reject the unsuitable candidates in a proper way will be beneficial for the candidate experience and for the company in return.

Candidate experience is building the relationship between the company (recruitment team) and the candidate. Nowadays, it is much harder to attract candidates because people have more opportunities, brand new positions are being created, people can travel all over the world to get another job, etc.

Building trust is the key element because you can show the values and behaviors of the company, which plays an important part in the deciding process, which job to take and which company to join, and these candidates will be more motivated to work for the company. (Dyson, 20200)

There are two types of candidates, those who are hired and those being rejected. Both these groups of candidates are important. It is common these days that candidates, who are actively looking for a job are applying to more than one job in more than one company. There are more aspects making an impact on deciding which offer to accept in the end. It can be salary, benefits, job responsibilities, team, etc., but positive or negative candidate experience can also play a big role.

Building trust and having an honest conversation can become a major aspect. Also, people who join the company and experience the positive candidate experience will most likely refer friends or ex-colleagues, which is a very valuable source of the candidates, because these people know each other in personal life.

On the other hand, we can build a positive candidate experience also with candidates who are being rejected and we should do it. The reasons for rejecting a candidate may vary. The candidate may not fit for the position due to the lack of experience or the candidate fits better in another area of work. In my opinion, building the relationship with these candidates is what every recruiter should do. It is likely that these candidates will be the perfect fit for another position now or in the future. Both parties can benefit from that, as the candidate will be offered a job better matching her/his

profile and the company will hire a person in the shorter time because the relationship is already established.

Benefits of the positive candidate experience:

1. You will receive more applicants
2. You will be able to win over the competitors
3. The quality of hires improves
4. It will promote the brand of the company

(Recruiting: The Case for Providing a Positive Candidate Experience, 2019)

1.2 Poor Candidate Experience

Almost every candidate share their experience from hiring process with friends and colleagues in person or on social media. Poor candidate experience can damage the company's reputation and the opportunity to hire the best talents. (Maguire, 2018)

"According to research, nearly 60% of candidates have had a poor candidate experience." (David, 2016)

Candidates who are actively looking for a new job spend hours editing their CV, looking for the right opportunity and reading articles about their chosen companies. There is a high possibility that they will be reading the job reviews of the company as well, which can have a big impact on them applying for the job.

As the candidate experience accompanies the whole recruitment process from the beginning to the end, these are some of the examples causing the poor candidate experience:

1. Lack of response or no response from the employer
2. Submitting the application is complicated and time-consuming
3. Negative experience from the interview
4. The hiring process is too complicated
5. The job description is unclear

(Zojceska, 2018)

„It takes 12 positive experiences to recover from one negative experience."

(Baker, 2019)

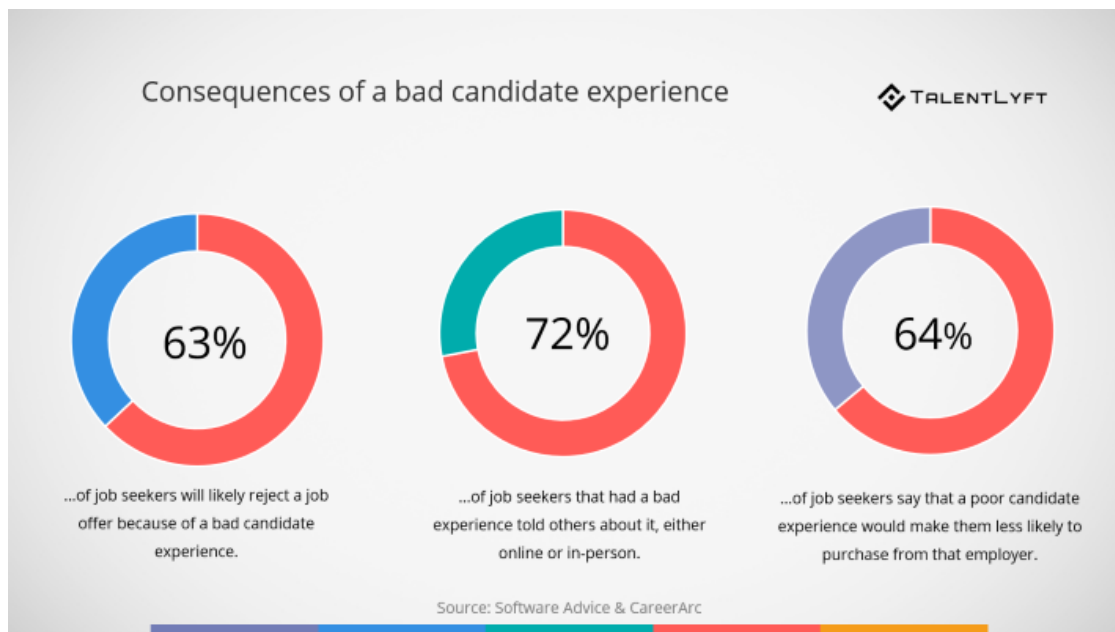


Figure 1 - Consequences of a bad candidate experience

(Zojceska, 2018)

The companies which do not see the need of providing good candidate experience will have trouble finding and attracting the best talents. Candidates expect a return on invested time. (Carpenter, 2013)

1.2.1 The State of Candidate Experience study - CareerArc

The state of Candidate experience is the study mapping the candidate experience in numbers.

The research was conducted in partnership with research firm Future Workplace in April 2016.

((David, 2016)

They were asking the 826 job seekers and 374 professionals focusing on every stage of the hiring process.

Around 60% of applicants have had a poor experience.

According to the study, the key process steps, which are affecting candidate experience are:

1. The Application

The study says that a typical candidate will spend from 3 to 4 hours to prepare and submit the application. On the other hand, 72% of recruiters will review the application in less than 15 minutes. 70% of the recruiter think that candidates will spend around 1 hour to prepare and officially apply.

2. The notification

Around 65% of the applicants will never or rarely receive the notification about applying. 51% of the candidates who received the notification says it took more than one month.

3. Candidate's reaction

Candidates who are not informed about the status of the application are 3.5 less likely to apply again to the company. 72% of the candidates which had had poor candidate experience are likely to share the feedback on social media or directly. These are the main examples how companies lose their talents and negatively influence their reputation.

2 Employer Brand

The term employer brand was described in 2010 by Brett Minchington (the employer brand expert) as *"The image of your organization as a great place to work in the mind of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers, and other key stakeholders)"* (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Since the employer brand is a very popular topic these days, the title was transformed into "Talent branding". (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The term employer brand comes from marketing, but there is a need for close collaboration between marketing, HR, and top management to create and support the employer brand. (Barrow, 2005)

It brings new challenges for the marketers and also for HR experts, as the marketers need to leave some responsibilities to the HR and HR experts are facing the new area. (Knox & Maxwell,

The Interest in the employer brand is driven by the customer-oriented market and the competitors, it is helping to attract external people and bring them to the company. In terms of internal employees, a good employer brand will support their motivation to stay in the company. (Mosley, 2007)

To understand and create the employer brand, we need to answer these questions:

- **What does your company brand stand for?**
- **What is your company culture?**
- **What is the message you are trying to share?**

We are trying to provide a realistic expectation to the future potential employees what it is like to be the company employee.

(Zander, 2020)



Figure 2 - Employment brand

(Biswas, 2012)

There are four elements to define the employer brand:

1. **The Employment Package** - It comes with the offer, it is the salary, work-life balance, the position of the person in the company, benefits, development, etc.
2. **Culture and environment** - the culture of the company and the working environment driven by the size of the employer
3. **Brand image and reputation** - Brand image and reputation need to stand integrity.
4. **Management performance**

(Biswas, 2012)

The simple explanation of the talent branding is: building trust to get attention by the culture, values, and experience of the company, which is building the Employee value proposition (EVP) as being "A unique set of offerings, associations, and values to positively influence target candidates and employees." The EVP should be transparent and open, let the employees speak.

As every company is now dealing with a very competitive marketplace, the EVP should show how the company is different, to be creative to maximize the brand. Potential employee's perception of the company is built by a mix of the customer and user experience and it is building the impression of what it would be to work in the company. It is the key factor for potential candidates. (Adler & Dinenn 2017)

The image of the company can be damaged by the influences, such as company scandals or financial problems but also the employee's reviews on social media as Glassdoor¹, has a strong power in building positive or negative impressions. (Alder & Dinnen, 2017)

Employer's image and reputation are connected with the company image. The reputation of the company is mapping, how people talk about the company, and the employer image is describing, how people see you as an employer. „Basically the company image refers to a holistic assessment of which company raises in people's minds." (Juntunen, 2018)

¹ Glassdoor is a job and recruitment site, which offers a company's reviews (benefits, experience from interviews, salaries, values, and behaviors, etc.) (Glasdoor, 2008-2020)

There are many things which are being considered in potential career move: *„Remuneration, opportunities for development and skills enhancement, flexible rewards, leadership, a great place to work where they feel valued, culture, a strong network of internal relationships and corporate citizenship.“*

„Creating a working environment and culture in which people can perform, grow, and thrive can outweigh concerns over sector, function, and reputation.“ (Alder & Dinnen, 2017)

This is the reason why it is important to differentiate as a company to meet the possible candidate's expectations and include them in the company EVP. All the stakeholders such as HR, learning department and talent acquisition should work together on it. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Employer brand is the concept which we can implement into the recruitment process, it is not just a marketing exercise, it is the start of the relationship between the company and potential candidates. (Biswas, 2012)

To support the brand of the company the employers often share the positive employee's stories to underline the culture of the company, but to ensure success we need these stories to be authentic.

There are challenges which need to be overcome by the employer to harness the power of employee-generated content. It includes identifying the effective employee brand and creates the content, which will be produced on regular bases and will ensure that the content is aligned with the EVP of the company and it is bringing the authentic format. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

„Treat candidates just like customers.“ (Zander, 2020)

The unemployment rates² are so low these days that candidates can do job searches as they would do online shopping.

Candidates are the customers of the HR department and recruiters are trying to sell the position to them.

The impact of the candidate experience on the company image is huge. People who have no personal experience with the company are creating the image on the bases of what they hear or see. Candidate experience is not only influencing the company image but also the business. (Juntunen, 2018)

² An European unemployment rate is 6,7% (May 2020) (Eurostat, 2020)

„The challenge is how to create that rational and emotional connection with employees, so they fall in love with your company and give 120 percent.“ (Hunt, 2014)

3 Talent Attraction

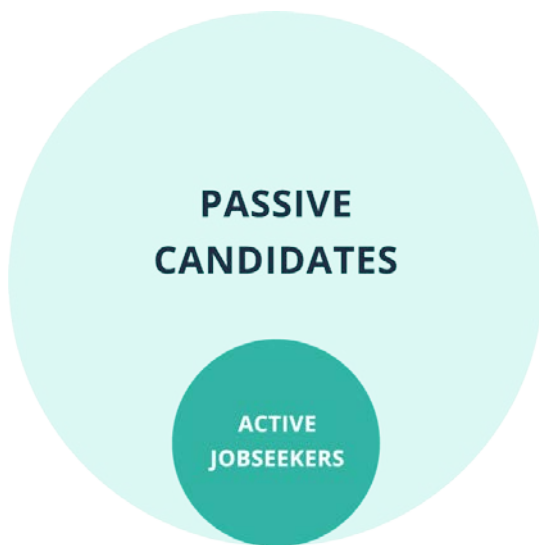
Talent attraction is where recruitment meets marketing. The recruitment was developing in the last 20 years from „recruitment advertising“ to „talent attraction“, which is more linked with strategic marketing. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The current job market is very competitive, so the question how to attract the talents is crucial.

To attract the best talents is difficult, but not impossible. In fact, there are no boundaries, the companies can easily hire from abroad. There are new possibilities, how to attract and hire the best talents. (Docherty & Wasdin, 2007)

„The war for talents starts with attraction.“ (Dowell & Silzer, 2009)

3.1 Candidates



During the hiring process the recruiters deal with candidates, who can be divided into two groups – active and passive candidates. In targeting these two groups the companies need to use different marketing strategies. (

Firstly, it is important to describe what these terms mean.

Figure 3 – Candidates

(Slater, 2020)

Active Candidates

Active candidates (job seekers) are actively looking for new opportunities, they are searching on their own and could be targeted by job adverts. They may be unemployed or they may be not satisfied

with their current job so they have decided to move on. These are active applicants.

Passive Candidates

Passive candidates are not actively looking for a new job, but they could be open to new opportunities, which are matching their long last goals, or they can be interested due to the employer brand (if it is strong).

Approaching the passive candidates is not easy, but is to become the more common practice, since the unemployment rates are very low, in the last few years (as mentioned in chapter 2 Employer Brand).

But the low employment rate is not the only reason, why is the approaching passive candidates more popular. We have now all new technologies and platforms for recruiting available, which are helping with targeting the right candidates. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

That is no secret that the best candidates are usually already employed. This is the reason why sourcing the passive candidates is so popular. (Holzman, 2020)

The massive growth of platforms such as LinkedIn providing a new pool of talents of all kinds and levels. *„In the world where you can reach out to everyone with a job opportunity via LinkedIn and other social platforms, everyone becomes a potential hire, not just those who are actively seeking a move.“* LinkedIn has created and opened new ways for recruiters, how to proactively map the talents, and plan the hiring strategy. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

There are no boundaries, as digital tools offer great opportunities to connect with people from all over the world. People are moving to other countries for jobs. It is a proof that the right talent attraction and employer brand makes everything possible. (Docherty & Wasdin, 2007)

3.2 Talent Attraction Techniques

The talent and attraction techniques, which are used by companies are:

1. Sourcing
2. Job boards
3. Social media
4. Career sites
5. Talent relationship management

6. Referral programs
7. Colleague recruiting

(Adler & Dinnen, 2017; Breaugh, 2009)

3.2.1 Sourcing

„Sourcing is the proactive searching for qualified job candidates for current or planned open positions; it is not the reactive function of reviewing resumes and applications sent to the company in response to a job posting or pre-screening candidates. The goal of sourcing is to collect relevant data about qualified candidates, such as names titles, and job responsibilities.“ (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Sourcing is a helpful technique to hire people who are hard to find. LinkedIn is a good source of the candidates and it is used very often. But the experienced recruitment team can use other resources, too. As digital tools and social media are having a big impact, it is a known fact that we all create a digital footprint on the internet. There are information about who we are, where we are, what are we doing and it creates the space for the recruiter to hunt the talents. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

To be different from the competitors the company needs to hire the best talents on the market. This is the reason why implementing an effective sourcing strategy is an absolute must. (Kandefer, 2020)

The big helper in approaching the candidates is a paid extension from LinkedIn³, called LinkedIn recruiter, which is helping to tailor your search and use the keywords, location, skills, or job title, to make your search more detailed and receive the better potential candidate. By using the recruiter license the recruiters/sourcers can send the InMail message to the candidates and offer them the position.

The quality of the approaching style and the message is playing a major part, the so-called quality over quantity; It is easy to send the same message to the 10, 20, or more candidates. But it's always a general message and the chances of getting the response becomes lower. A good recruiter will have a look at the profile and will try to make the message more personal. It will have a bigger

³ LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network (LinkedIn, 2020)

value for the candidate and the chance of receiving a response will be higher.

Companies started to realize that in order to attract the best talents on the market, the company needs to secure the good employer brand well connected with social media, as people do share the information and it makes the information more accessible. (Törnwall, 2018)

On the other hand, it will be much harder to get attention if the reputation and the company brand doesn't look good.

The market mapping areas are an important part of sourcing as well. LinkedIn (LinkedIn recruiter) and other digital tools in market mapping don't take as much time as it used to. Market mapping is used to map the talent in the market (it could be in one country, or more specific, as part of the country, etc). Thanks to that, you can map the competitors and see where the potential candidates are currently working. This technique could be used before the company opens the position to see if there are enough candidates on the market. It can save time rapidly.

3.2.2 Job Boards

The popularity of the job boards is dropping in the last few years due to new digital tools. But they used to be the dominant channel how to attract the talents since the late 1990s. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Using job boards means that the company is being supported by the job board agencies and they are promoting the position on their websites. It increases the chances of people seeing the advert.

The job boards can be categorized in terms of:

1. Location (local X worldwide)
2. Focus area (general X industry-specific)
3. Salary

(Breaugh, 2009)

3.2.3 Social Media

It may seem that the world is overloaded by social media, however social media are not useful just for approaching the talent, but also to support the image and the company brand. The company or

the employees can share interesting topics which are helping to show what it is like to work in the company on daily basis.

There are two strategies how the companies use to attract talents on social media. The first strategy is to place a paid advertisement on social media such as Facebook, or Instagram (so called sponsored stories). The second strategy is more targeted and the companies use social media to filter (based on location, experience, education), find and approach the best talents, the typical example is LinkedIn. (Breaugh, 2009)

It is proven that companies are realizing that using social media to search and approach candidates is much quicker than using other recruitment methods and the quality of the candidates is better. (Koch & Gerber & De Klerk, 2018)

As mentioned in the Sourcing chapter (3.2.1 Sourcing) LinkedIn is the number one choice for recruitment activities, it is also known as the primary professional social network. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The paid extension LinkedIn recruiter is offering the many more opportunities to search for the talents. The sourcer/recruiter can filter the candidates by job titles, locations, or skills. Also, there are no limitations with messaging as it is with the unpaid version.

Companies may use the LinkedIn Insights (in paid version as well) which is a tool for mapping the market. We can select the skills and the tool will filter the companies and cities, where people with these skills can be found. It does not show the names of a potential candidate, the tools are primarily for mapping the competitors.

Facebook is becoming a much bigger competitor, as the audience and engagement is bigger. In 2016 they launched the Workplace tool to support internal communication and collaboration and we can expect that they are working on something new to launch soon. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

3.2.4 Career Sites

Effective corporate career sites are also having a big impact on talent attraction and in the persuasion process. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

However, the companies may not use them in the best way and it could be the reason for not seeing the best talents applying. The reason may be that sites are too corporate, unengaging, and not showing the employer brand. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

It is more and more popular to use a mobile phone to apply to the job, as it is saving the time of the applicants, which is always beneficial. (Dyson, 2020)

The career site should:

1. Catch the attention (design and colors)
2. User-friendly - easy navigation
3. Include important information for potential candidates (such as job location and responsibilities)
4. Be easy to apply
5. Notify that the application was submitted
6. Describe the next steps of the hiring process

(Breaugh, 2009)

3.2.5 Talent Relationship Management

Since the recruitment team is building the talent pool with every position, they have access and the ability to stay in touch with unsuccessful candidates, too.

The principle of the talent relationship management is that we have a candidate and we are looking for the perfect position for him/her, not the opposite. (Trost, 2014)

The applying tracking system allows the recruiter to keep on track with potential hires. The recruiting teams started to realize that the database is an excellent source of the candidates. It allows the recruiter to track the hiring data, identify the highly qualified candidates keep them in touch for future hiring. (Docherty & Wasdin, 2007)

Companies are realizing that focus on good candidate experience and building the relationship with candidates is the practice to use. The talent relationship management focuses not only on external candidates but also on internal ones. For external employees, talent relationship management can be described as every interaction before the candidate gets hired and it is necessary to build a positive relationship. For internal employees, it is described as creating a positive relationship, once the candidate is in the company (onboarding, all information the new hire may need, „buddy“ in the team, etc.) it all can help to develop the relationship. (Madeline, 2019)

Creating and sending the candidates newsletter has been proven as a good practice to support the relationship between the company and the potential candidates. It is recommended to set up the freque-

ncy and inform the candidates what is new in the company. The relationship is supported even more as the companies show that they are thinking of these candidates - *they are hiring new candidates?*.

(Matolin, unknown year)

Since recruiters are in touch with many candidates, it is important to focus on the bigger picture. It is crucial to ask the candidates what their aspirations are and build that the relationship with them and keep them in the pipeline⁴. (Docherty & Wasdin, 2007)

The candidate will highly appreciate staying in touch with the company for possible future opportunities if the candidate experience is good.

Recruiters benefit from that as well, because keeping the talent in the pool is cutting their time.

3.2.6 Referral Programs

The next talent attraction technique is a referral program, it means that current employees are encouraged to refer the friends, formal colleagues, family members (we need to take care that it is not the conflict of interest), and other people, they may know. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The referral programs are a valuable source of the candidates because the current colleagues know the company culture and they can approach someone who fits the company and the position. In terms of formal colleagues, those people were working together so the employee has a personal experience with the person. (Breaugh, 2009)

Many companies have the referral programs now and they offer a bonus for recommending a suitable candidate, which helps to motivate people to refer the right talents.

Compared to other methods or techniques on how to attract talents, the referral program tends to bring better qualified candidates. (Breaugh, 2009)

Reasons, why to focus on the referral programs:

1. The current employees value their reputation in the company, they refer only candidates, who fit the company needs

⁴ The pipeline is a recruitment term of the candidate pool, these candidates are interested in the company and they are available, but the company doesn't have a suitable position for them at the moment

2. They have realistic expectations, how the referred candidates work, they have personal experience
 3. The current employees will most likely to help the referred candidates in the onboarding phase
 4. The referral program can bring the attention of people, who are not actively looking for a new job
- (Braugh, 2009)

3.2.7 Colleague Recruiting

The term describes the collaboration between the universities and the companies, it is the unique opportunity to find the best talents in the early stage and make them interested in the company. It is important to target the right universities and then target the right potential candidates and engage with them for example the company's internship programs, trainee programs and career opportunities. (Braugh, 2009)

Ideally, it is recommended to start to build a relationship with the universities to access the new pool of candidates. Internship opportunities are more and more popular these days, it is beneficial for both sides. The student will get the opportunity to start to build their career and they get a good view of what working for the company would be like. (Braugh, 2009)

The companies will help to bring the theoretical knowledge into a real work environment and they can help to train the student to get the experience, the company needs. (Pavlou, unknown year)

If the internship goes well, there is a high possibility that both parties would be open to continue in the collaboration.

4 Candidate Journey

It is key to describe the candidate journey, as it influences the image brand or candidate experience. It will help us to understand the candidate needs and be able to identify the improvements.

"The candidate journey facilitates a holistic approach in order to manage the candidate experience. It includes every touchpoint between the candidate and the employer." (Mortsiefer, 2017)

The candidate journey is also mapping the interactions between candidate and company brand. (TalentLyft: What is Candidate Journey?, unknown year)

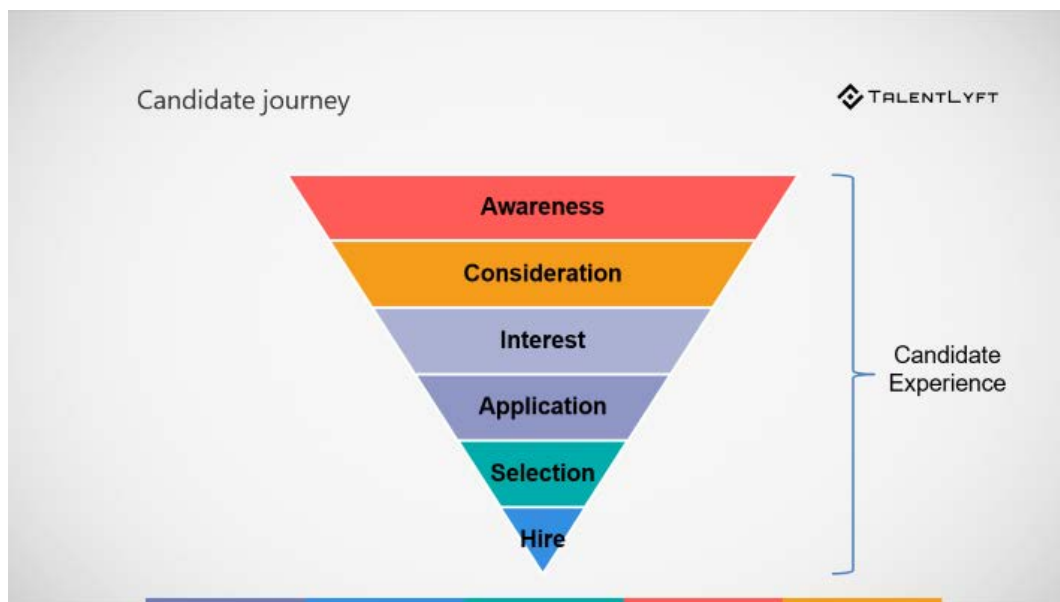


Figure 4 - Candidate journey

(Zojceska, 2018)

The recruitment process has two objectives:

1. To Hire the talents
2. To ensure a good candidate experience

(McCamey & Miles, 2018)

Every candidate journey is individual, we should be focussing on the touchpoints which are dividing the candidate journey into 6 stages: **Awareness - Pre-application stage, Consideration and interest, Application, Selection, Hiring (the candidate is hired or rejected), and Onboarding.** (Mortsiefer, 2017)



Figure 5 - Candidate journey touchpoints

(TalentLyft: What is Candidate Journey?, unknown year)

4.1 Awareness - Pre-application Stage

This stage covers everything that happens before the candidate officially apply for the job. The major factor is talent attraction. (Alder & Dinnen, 2017).

At this level are candidates asking: "What company is this?" (Glasdoor team, 2016)

This is the way, how candidates are informed about the job opportunity. It all begins the way before the candidate applies to the job. (Zander, 2020)

It may be by seeing the opportunity in social media, career pages, company job pages, being referred, or being approached by the recruitment team via various channels, etc.

Since the recruitment itself is going through the changes over the years, we may face a lower number of active applicants and recruitment teams are actively sourcing and approaching the candidates and offering the job. To attract people who are not actively looking for a job, but may consider interesting offers, is difficult but possible. *"High-quality content, communication, and engagement are critical throughout the process but particularly at this early attention and attraction stage."* (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

4.2 Consideration and Interest

People will go through the websites and will search information about potential employer prior to the formal application, this is the reason why it's important to focus on the company brand, so people can understand who we are, what kind of values, behaviors and company cultures we have and why they should consider working in our company. As companies see the importance of having the brand, they may ask the current employees to update the review on Glassdoor and share their own experience from the recruitment process in the company or from the company itself.

"In fact, Glassdoor estimates that as many as 70% of applicants look at these sorts of reviews before making a career decision." (Zander, 2020)

Candidates are asking themselves: "What is it like to work in this company?" (Glassdoor team, 2016)

4.3 Application

The application stage is probably the most important because the candidate will express serious interest.

As this stage is crucial for further steps in the recruitment process, we may face an issue called: "recruiting black hole". (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

"The recruiting black hole is what candidates can fall into after they press the apply button or give the recruiter permission to actively consider them for the role." (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The term is describing the candidate's frustration when the recruitment team is slow in response and reviewing their application or in the worse scenario, they never hear back from the employer. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Too much complicated and time-consuming job application systems will detract the candidate's interest. One in 20 people experience technical issues due to applying. (Zander, 2020)

It is recommended to keep the application process simple, not having it too much time consuming, but it is necessary to include all the information and bare facts.

"People want clarity. They want to expect and how strenuous your recruitment process is. That's why rounding off your job ad with what's to follow is always a good idea. f.e., what happens after they send their application, right the way through to if they're hired." (Zander, 2020)

4.4 Selection

During the selection process is a potential employee and the employer gathering more detailed information in the interview. In most of the cases, it is a stage where a potential candidate meets the hiring manager. The first impression is pivotal. After the interview, candidate is able to say whether they would like to continue in the process or not. It is very important to be transparent and clear regarding the next steps and timelines. (Galli, 2019)

It is no coincidence, that this stage is often highlighted as the most problematic in terms of delivering good candidate experience. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

During the interview process it is recommended to be as detailed as possible, take the time to describe not only the position and job responsibilities but also the company culture and team or teams of people, who will be collaborating with this person. We are selling the position. As well as the selling points we should describe the challenges, the candidate may face. (Galli, 2019)

But the interview should not be only the interviewer asking the questions, giving the candidates a chance to ask the questions can help to have a better understanding of the position and the company as well as better feeling from the interview and increase candidate experience.

4.5 Hiring (Candidate is Hired or Rejected)

The selection process can have two outcomes - the first is that candidates are being hired (offer) and second that candidates are being rejected.

4.5.1 Offer

The way how is the candidate led to this stage will have a big impact. The decision is made by both the employer and by the candidate.

It is possible that during the hiring process company may face some unexpected delays, but honest and transparent communication between the hiring manager and recruitment team with the candidates will prevent losing them and will increase the image of the company.

4.5.2 Rejection

Not all candidates who are participating in the interview are hired in the end. The fact is, that more candidates are being rejected than hired. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

The way, how is the recruiter communicating the rejection, will make a big difference in whether or not the candidates apply again or refer the company to other people. (Sanz, 2019)

"When we consider the potential employer (and consumer) brand damage that can be done by poorly treating unsuccessful candidates it should be pretty clear that this is an unacceptable approach for a direct employer to have." (Adler & Dinnen, 2017).

There are practices, which can help to reject the candidate in the right way, it is recommended:

1. To call directly
2. To share the bad news as soon as possible
3. To provide the detailed feedback
4. To ask for their feedback
5. To stay in touch

(Zojceska, unknown year)

4.6 Onboarding

„Onboarding helps to build, sustain, and perpetuate high-performing teams." (Bradt & Vonnegut, 2009)

It may seem that hiring the candidate is the end of the candidate experience, but onboarding is also an important part of the candidate experience because you want your new hires to stay. When onboarding goes as it should, the new hires are much more motivated to start and they are engaged with the company brand. But in case they experience poor candidate experience in the onboarding stage, their future productivity in the company can be affected. (Zander, 2020)

Onboarding is important and unfortunately often underrated, which can cause serious issues, not only reputational but also financial. The companies need to take a serial look at how they are providing the onboarding trainings. (Christiansen & Stein, 2010)

5 How We Can Influence The Candidate Experience

As much as the recruitment team is looking for the perfect fit for the position and company, candidates are also looking for the best fit for them.

In competition with other companies, there is no space for poor candidate experience, which can be caused by delays, complicated processes (application or hiring, or worse, both), or by lack of engagement between company and candidate.

"In fact, nearly four out of five job applicants believe that the candidate experience serves as a solid indicator as to how a company values its people. Even further, 83% of talent says that a negative interview experience can destroy their perception about a role or company they once liked, while 87% of candidates say that a positive experience can change their mind about a role or company they once doubted." (Erika, 2017)

Let's go back to the candidate journey and focus on every stage and what we can improve in each one.

Candidate journey:

1. CE at awareness - Pre-application stage
2. CE at the consideration and interest stage
3. CE at the application stage
4. CE at the selection stage
5. CE at hiring (the candidate is hired or rejected)stage
6. CE at the onboarding stage

5.1 CE at Awareness - Pre-application Stage

At this very first stage are candidates considering the official application.

They are aware of the job opportunity. As mentioned in chapter 3., there may be different channels where candidates see the position, or they may be in contact with someone already working in the company.

48% of the applicant has previous interaction with the company, for example, they have a friend working in the company, they are

the company's customer or they know the brand of the company. (Zander, 2020)

At the very beginning the candidates will go through the job description to see, if they are matching the company needs as well, as they are considering the interest in the position.

"The aim is to attract just the right job seekers, and save both recruiter's and job seeker's time." (Juntunen, 2018)

In the job description, we need to be detailed enough to catch the interest, try to be specific but don't overkill it with too many words.

It is recommended to use a video job description which is more and more popular these days. The potential candidates don't need to read the job description but they will just play the short video in which the hiring manager or the team members are describing the role. It will catch more interest and the candidates will see the potential team members and managers.

Therefore, it is advised to include practical information such as job title, location, and basic requirements. It is also good to mention a few details regarding the company culture, so the candidates have the whole picture.

Specification in the job title is important, the company may use internal job titles, but external applicants may not be familiar with it and it may be the reason of low applicant numbers and you may lose the suitable candidates. (internal materials of the XY Company)

If there is any skill or experience, which is crucial to have, it is good practice to highlight it in the job description. (Juntunen, 2018)

It is recommended to include the company benefits - to receive more applicants, the company may offer something special which can differentiate them from the competitors. (Juntunen, 2018)

5.2 CE at the Consideration and Interest Stage

In the second stage, candidates research the company about its values and behaviors. They are going through websites for better understanding of why they would join the company.

An important part of this consideration and interest stage could be reading the reviews of current, ex-employees, or people who were applying to the company before.

"In fact, Glassdoor estimates that as many as 70% of applicants look at these sorts of reviews before making a career decision."
(Zander, 2020)

5.3 CE at the Application Stage

The application is the stage where candidates express the serious interest and they apply officially.

At this stage, we as a company should focus on a user-friendly application system which is not time-consuming, if the application process is too much difficult, the candidates will give up. (Zander, 2020)

The instructions on how to apply should be as simple as possible. (Juntunen, 2018)

It is recommended to avoid duplicate manual work, for example, some of the application systems are asking to fill the same information, which is described in the resume.

It is advised to include the information what the next steps are and what can candidates expect. The timeliness is crucial here. (Zander, 2020)

5.4 CE at the Selection Stage

Stage 4 called the selection process consists of the interviews. The company may have more than one interview rounds. Communication is key, so it is always good to inform the candidates on how many rounds should they expect.

The interview stage is called the most problematic when it comes to delivering a positive candidate experience. It is the stage where more people not only the recruitment team are involved. The managers or potential peers are meeting the candidate and the more people are involved the more issues we can face. The interviewers need to work closely with the recruitment team to make sure the high quality of the interview, the logistics, and do not cause delays. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

If you are meeting the candidate in the office for face to face interview, it is recommended to send them the address with the instructions where they can park the car or which public transport to use to get to the office. Candidates are often stressed attending

the interview, so it will help them to receive this information from the recruitment team. (Zander, 2020)

Also is useful to send the short itinerary to the candidates with details of the interview, such as how long is the interview planned or who will be leading the interview. It will give them the possibility to research the interviewers. (Zander, 2020)

As we are living in the world which is more and more digital, is also useful to consider the video interview. Sometimes it can save time, the candidates or hiring managers may travel and the video interview can save time for both parties, it may cut the days of hire and in the end the new hire can be onboarded in a much shorter time. Offering the alternative to attend a face to face or video interview helps the reputation of the company because candidates are deciding on their preferences.

As I was describing the video interview, there are companies which are replacing the prescreening calls⁵ or the first stages of the interview with a recorded video interview. The candidate receives the questions from the recruitment team or the hiring manager and then creates the video answering them. The benefit of the recorded interview is that the candidates can decide when they have time to create the video, which is positively influencing the candidate experience. The company can benefit from that, because once the hiring team receives the video they can forward the video to the hiring manager, to the peers in the team, and also to the other stakeholder and receive the feedback from them altogether. This practice saves time as during the screening call or the first interviews as it is necessary to schedule a time suitable for both parties, which can be difficult. Using the recorded video the candidate will decide when to create it and the recruitment team will play it and review it when they are free. Having everything recorded is also useful for internal and external audits and it may decrease the bias connected with the hiring process if any. (Adler & Dinnen, 2017)

Of course, the core of the interview is having the conversation and asking the questions. For that the team needs to know who is the company looking for in terms of experience, culture fit, team fit, or personality.

⁵ The prescreening call is the first contact between the company (presented by the recruiter or the sourcer) and the candidate. The candidate is getting more information about the position and the company is getting more information about the candidate and his/her experience; it is done mostly via a mobile phone

It is expected to review the candidate resume and profile before the interview. Thanks to that, we can tailor the questions, it will help to get more information about the candidate and it can help the credibility. (Zander, 2020)

The interview should be seen as a conversation, the recommendation is to give the candidates the space for them to ask questions, it can tell more about themselves and they will feel more comfortable. (Zander, 2020)

During the last part of the interview, it is recommended to set the timeline when can the candidate expect the feedback.

5.5 CE at the Hiring Stage

Hiring is the stage of the candidate journey when is decided if the candidate is being hired or rejected.

In both scenarios is the best practice to inform and share the feedback as soon as possible after the interviews. Nearly 23% of applicants will never receive the rejecting note. (Zander, 2020)

Not letting the candidates know that they are rejected has a detrimental impact on the company's reputation and the candidate's frustration. It may affect their future application to the company. It is recommended to reject the candidates at least by personalized email or calling them directly to discuss the feedback and reasons, why they were not selected. It will help them to improve. (Zander, 2020)

It may also happen that the unsuccessful candidates will be silver medalist⁶ so it is good to keep them in the pipeline for the future. The candidates won't be angry that we did not select them, they will appreciate the time in providing them the feedback and possible consideration in the future.

The good practice also is to ask all the candidates who were in the hiring process to provide the feedback, which can have big value for the company and can help to influence the positive candidate experience. (Erika, 2017)

When the final candidate is being presented with the offer, it is good to guide her/him and describe the next steps including

⁶ The silver medalist is the recruitment term describing the candidate who is the second runner-up to the person that is receiving the offer (Williams, 2018)

contract, onboarding and administration connected with it (more details described in the next chapter.)

5.6 CE at the Onboarding Stage

As the hiring team spends a lot of time to hire someone, they would like to ensure that this person stays in the company in the long term. This is the reason why the last stage of the candidate experience is not the hiring stage, but the onboarding stage.

The onboarding stage includes: extending the offer with the candidate, the paperwork (on both sides) and the first days or weeks in the company. (Zander, 2020)

If the onboarding goes well, the candidates will be sure that they have made the right choice to join the company and they will be motivated to start.

Understandably, hiring someone new will increase the paperwork, but the recommendation is to cut the paperwork as much as possible. The ideal situation is to send it electronically to the candidates, so they have time to go through it at home, no one wants to spend the first day to fill all the documents under stress and time pressure. (Zander, 2020)

It is recommended to ensure that all the new hires have all the information they may need. The first days are always challenging and this information will help new employees to feel more settled. It is also good to choose the senior member from the team to be "buddy" for the new joiner. The new employee can be shadowing him the first days and ask her/him questions related to the job. The new person will be feeling more welcome because there will be someone, who will have time for her/him.

There are also other recommendations which can have a big impact on the candidate experience.

5.7 Other Aspects How to Improve CE

Other ways how to improve the candidate experience during the selection process:

5.7.1 Communication

Communication is the key factor influencing the whole process and the candidate experience. Companies and the recruitment team should be focusing on good communication during all stages of the recruitment process. The applicants will often spend the hours of the preparations, so it is fair to inform them about the process. Well-managed communication between the company and potential candidates can have a positive impact on the image of the company. (Juntunen, 2018)

According to Juntunen (2018) it is recommended to provide the information and the contact person responsible for the hiring. It is good practice to inform the applicant that we have received the application and what they can expect in the next stages with timeliness.

It is clear that recruiters do not have time to write or call every single candidate and inform them that the application was submitted. But the least that can be done is to send an automated email with confirmation.

There may be a lot of people involved in the hiring process, so it is important to be clear who is the contact person to avoid including everyone they meet in the communication. Honest and transparent communication is recommended to keep within every stage of the hiring process. (Erika, 2017)

As mentioned before, the active communication between the company and applicant plays a big role in candidate experience. It is not only sending the information but it also includes the active interaction in various stages of the process between the recruitment team and candidate. The active communication will keep the candidate interested in the job. (Juntunen, 2018)

Even if we are not hiring the candidate it is advised to express that you are not taking their time for granted and tell them how we appreciate the time and offer to stay in touch for future roles. The candidates will appreciate the human approach.

If we have already filled the position, it is necessary to inform all the candidates who applied that the position is closed. As we may receive a lot of applications, we can use the automated emails as well. (Erika, 2017)

5.7.2 Timelines and Scheduling

Timelines are connected with the communication, it is recommended to inform the candidates what to expect in the next stage and when we need to have the person fully onboarded.

When we are planning the interview or screening call, being late never looks good. There may be situations we need to reschedule the interview, but it is preferred to eliminate it. (Erika, 2017)

5.7.3 Implement the Candidate Survey

To know what areas of the candidate journey you need to improve to influence the positive candidate experience, we need to have feedback from the candidates.

As they were participating in the hiring process, they are the most competent people to provide feedback. (Pawlak-Dobrzáńska, unknown year)

It is highly recommended to implement a short survey for people who were at the final stages of the interview and also for new hires.

PRACTICAL PART

6 Purpose of the Candidate Experience Study in the XY Company

The XY Company currently focuses on the candidate experience of the candidates which are hired. From my experience, this is not enough since the negative candidate experience can have a big impact and influence the image of the company and also volumes of talents applying to the company.

I work as a TAS Business Partner, which is an internal job title for recruiters. I cover the hiring of commercial roles (mainly sales and marketing) for the Czech Republic and Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark).

I am in everyday touch with candidates and I can see that candidate experience is playing a big role in today's recruitment world.

This is the reason why I chose this topic with the focus on candidates from Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark) and more specifically on those, who were not selected in the final stage of the interviews or on those who decided to reject the offer.

6.1 The aim of the Study in the XY Company

The study aims to map the current candidate experience in Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark) in 2019. The study is focusing on the candidates, who were not selected in the final round of the interviews and on the candidates who rejected the offer.

The aim of the study is not only to map the current candidate experience but also suggest the improvements, to support the positive candidate experience which is well connected with the employer brand.

6.2 The Research Questions

In my opinion, the XY company's hiring process can be a little bit chaotic, because as described in chapter 10 XY's Company hiring process, there are many people involved in the process, and the more people involved, the more difficult it can be. Also as it is not

only the recruiter who is involved, waiting for the answer from the hiring manager (or other interviewers) can cause delays. The interviewers have 24 hours to share the interview feedback with the recruiter, but very often it takes more time to receive it, so the candidate is waiting.

But I think that the brand of the company is very strong and the majority of the candidates would like to be contacted again and join the XY Company.

I was having phone conversations with the candidates and the questions are divided into two parts, the first part consists of the open questions and the second is focusing on the ratings.

The research questions:

1. Are the candidates interested to be contacted again and join the XY Company?
2. Did the candidates receive the interview feedback? Is it delivered on time?
3. How satisfied were the candidates with overall hiring process?

7 XY Company

XY Company is a pharmaceutical company and was created in 1996. More than 250 years is XY Company and the predecessor companies focusing on the development of innovative products. Over 1 billion patients all over the world are using the XY company treatment and the XY Company is always trying to reach more patients and expand access to the latest treatment.

The XY's Company headquarter is located in Basel, Switzerland. The company has over 109 000 employees working all over the world and more than 140 nationalities are part of the company.

The history of the XY Company started in the 18th century, but first, they were not focusing on drugs. They started to produce synthetic dyes then turned to chemicals and eventually they began to focus on pharmaceutical products.

The passion for the development and the sales of new products that will help to treat people and the development of science and health persists in the company and number one priority.

In general, the company is reimagining medicine, improving, and extending the patient's lives. As a leading global medicine company, they are using innovative science and digital technologies to create and deliver treatment in various areas.

The company is investing in research and development located in Europe, the USA, and Asia to find a new medicine.

The company is divided into 2 divisions. The focus and products consist of innovative treatments, oncological therapies, and generics for adult and pediatric patients in the following therapeutical areas:

1. Innovative medicine areas:

Cardio-Metabolic and Respiratory

- Cardiology
- Diabetology
- Pneumology

Neuroscience, Immunology, and Dermatology

- Neurology/psychiatry
- Immunology/dermatology/rheumatology/transplantology
- Ophthalmology

Oncology

Haematology-oncology

2. Generic areas

- Antibiotic therapy
- Treatment of cardiovascular diseases
- Treatment of allergies
- Treatment of gastrointestinal disorders
- Treatment of neurological diseases
- Treatment of mental illness
- Biosimilars

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

8 The Brand of the XY Company

8.1 The Strategy

The company's strategy is to build a leading medicines company powered by advanced therapy platforms and data science.

The strategy of the company consists of 5 strategy points to keep the value for our company and society.



1. **Unleash the power of our people** - To focus on the employees, who can show the talent and energy, they are creating the environment, where all the people can be inspired, curious and unbossed



2. **Deliver transformative innovation** - To be keen on finding the new medical possibilities to cure diseases and improve the patient's lives



3. **Embrace operational excellence** - To rethinking the ways of working and increasing productivity, which can be used and invested in innovation



4. **Go big on data and digital** - To focus on the digital revolution, advanced analytics, and artificial intelligence to help drive innovation and increase efficiency



5. **Build trust with society** - To build trust with society through our efforts, values, and integrity to find new ways of treatment

Figure 6 - The strategy

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

(internal materials of the XY Company)

8.2 The Mission and Vision

The mission of the company is to reimagine medicine to improve and extend people's lives.

The company is using innovative technology and science to find a cure for society's most challenging diseases.

Their medicine is available in 155 countries all over the world. The company's goal is to be number one in the pharmaceutical industry, to ensure it, it is necessary to be professional in all aspects and efforts.

As the trust between the company and the stakeholder is key for the company's business, they need to assure to treat all people with respect in ethical, social, and environmental manners.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

8.3 The Values and Culture

The culture is defined by values. The values are describing the behavior the company expects from the employees, it also has a big impact during the hiring process and development of the internal talents.

The values are also helping the company to deliver the strategy. The cornerstone of success is built by talented, curious, and courageous people. The company is providing equal opportunities to grow for development and potential. They care about the work-life balance.

To secure the motivating workplace, they offer the rotations, internships, or various educational programs.

The key values are defined as:







-  1. **Innovation** - to encourage to take small risks, the innovation is what they do
 -  2. **Quality** - The quality of medicine is a key aspect to ensure, the company is improving and extending people's lives. Learning from mistakes is also important.
 -  3. **Collaboration** - To encourage the employees to collaborate in the teams and put the team success first
 -  4. **Performance** - Even during the taking small risks the ethical standards come first
 -  5. **Courage** - To be encouraged to do the right things and have the courage to take the challenges
 -  6. **Integrity** - To treat the people, patients, and customer with the highest ethical standards
- (Internal materials of the XY company)

Figure 7 - The values

(Internal materials of XY Company)

8.4 Corporate Responsibilities

Corporate responsibility is the key pillar of the business the XY company.

The strategy supports the company purpose and is divided into 4 areas: holding ourselves to the highest ethical standards, providing access to medicines, helping solve global health challenges, and being a responsible.

Key areas of corporate responsibility:

1. **Expanding Access to Healthcare** - to develop the ways how to extend the medicine to the lower-income counties
2. **Ethics, Risk & Compliance** - to follow the XY company's Code of Ethics
3. **Environmental Sustainability** - to minimize the environmental impact of the company's products and processes
4. **Culture and Employees** - To support the well-being of the employees and ensure a healthy working environment for them to gain our strategy
5. **Corporate Responsibility Reporting and Disclosure** - to be transparent
6. **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** - To follow the highest standards of sustainability and ethical business practices

(Internal materials of the XY company)

8.5 Choice with Responsibility

In July 2020 the company implemented the new ways of working called „Choice with responsibility“. The employees can decide how, when, and where they work. They are taking the responsibility to align with the team member to ensure the collaboration and inform the manager.

The company's most valuable resource is built by people in the organization, this is the reason, why the company wants to support the employees and give them more flexibility to be the best selves.

The company is also offering the country-specific support to build a good remote working environment and will be providing the health resources to deliver the tips for mental health and ergonomics.

(Internal materials of the XY company)

8.6 Employee Value Proposition (EVP) of the XY Company

To achieve the company's goal to improve and extend the lives of the patients, they need to hire and onboard highly motivated, curious, and unbossed talents. To support that they have created the approach, how to communicate, and attract the talents. It will make the recruitment process easier as much as the reputation of the company will increase as well.

The EVP of the company is created by:

- The creative ways of communication
- The messaging of the stories and content the company wants to tell

Purpose, Innovation, Unbossed, Collaboration.

These are key aspects of the XY Company in engaging with talent, the XY Company brings authentic stories of the employees or patients to connect with the talent on why they should join the company.

Job adverts

„60% of job applications are made via mobile devices with a 7-second window to attract a candidate. Our Job Posts are essential to engaging with the right talent.“ (Internal materials of the XY company)

Since there is a limited time to attract potential candidates, every job advert starts with an engaging sentence with the number.

For example: *„3! 3 products, one purpose. Be part of the exciting launch for Multiple Sclerosis. Join our neuroscience team and participate on a phenomenal journey of the new innovative product.“*

The reason, why the XY Company uses the engaging sentence:

1. It differentiates the XY Company from the competitors
2. It will catch the interest of the candidate – the number should be specific and linked to the position, for example, the number of the project, the number of the people in the team, number of the products, etc.
3. It creates the Employer brand, the number is creating the validation in what the XY Company is saying

Why it is recommended to add video into a job description:

1. Job adverts with Videos are 50 times more likely to show up on a google search
2. According to the internal statistics, the job advert with videos brings 36% more applications
3. Video creates 1200% more shares than images and text

(Internal materials of the XY company)

9 The Talent Attraction Techniques in XY Company

In this chapter I would like to focus on the talent attraction techniques that is XY company using to attract and get the best talent as possible.

They are answering the following questions:

Why do people join the company, why do people stay? How do we differentiate from our competitors?

The talent attraction techniques are:

1. Sourcing
2. Job boards
3. Social media
4. Career site
5. Talent relationship management
6. Referral program
7. Colleague recruiting

(Adler & Dinnen, 2017; Breaugh, 2009)

9.1 Sourcing in the XY Company

Sourcing is having an important role in the hiring process and talent attraction. As the XY company is focusing on medical positions, they need to attract the candidates with experience from various therapeutical areas.

The company has a sourcing team all over Europe and every sourcer has some specialization (the area of focus).

The recruiter will request the sourcing support and the sourcing team lead will check the availabilities and experience of the sourcer and let the recruiter know who will be supporting him/her. There may be cases that someone from the scheduling team was previously working on the position, he/she knows the profile and have already the pipeline of the candidates. It is beneficial for everyone.

The ideal situation is when the sourcer is available to join the recruiter at a Recruitment strategy meeting with the hiring manager. During this meeting the recruiter and hiring managers to discuss the profile, the company is looking for including the job

requirements, job responsibilities, experience, personal skill, the interview process (how many rounds and who will be interviewing), the possible start date, etc. It is a great opportunity to hear the information from the hiring manager and also ask questions if any.

If it is not possible, the recruiter will connect with the sourcer and share the notes and all the information regarding the position. They will also agree on sourcing strategy and timelines.

As the company has the internal database, with the potential candidates, the sourcer will start with searching in the database.

Then he/she will explore the other platform for sourcing the candidates. The sourcing team is using the LinkedIn recruiter license on a daily bases. They are creating the projects there, adding the potential candidates, and sharing them with the recruiter to get a review.

After the recruiter's review, the sourcer approach the candidates via InMail message.

The sourcing team is well educated and using personalized messages to catch the interest of the candidates.

The candidates who express the interest are shared with the recruiter. The next step is a screening call with the candidate to share more details about the role and process and asking the candidate question related to his/her experience.

The sourcer is also sharing the sourcing update every week with the recruiter to update him/her.

The sourcer is not sourcing only at LinkedIn, he/she is finding also the other way, where to find the possible candidates for example at google, job.cz database etc.

(Internal materials of the XY company)

9.2 Job Boards in the XY Company

The XY company is collaborating with various job boards to increase the visibility of the advert.

Since the XY company is not hiring people all over the world, it is always important to consider the location and their local job boards. Sometimes the job advert in the local language can also increase the number of applicants.

The application process should be as simple as possible, candidates don't want to spend hours to fill the application.

The XY company is for example collaboration with job.cz, prace.cz (Czech Republic), Monster.se (Sweden), Finn.no (Norway), and many others.

As the company wants to make the process as easy as possible. The candidate will start to apply on the job board page (for example job.cz) but after filling the name it will be redirected to the XY company's career site to finish it there.

Also, the recruiter has all the applicants in one place, so there is no need to check the company's system and all the job boards separately.

The XY company is tracking the source of the candidate, so the system is tracking if they are applying from the job board. They are using the statistics to find out where the candidate found the job.

(Internal materials of the XY company)

9.3 Social Media in the XY Company

The company is active on social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube with an active Youtube channel, where they are sharing the videos of scientists sharing the information about the research and patients are sharing their stories with the XY company treatment.

As well as they started to share the stories of the employees describing what it is like to work for the company.

The company started to focus more on videos also they are encouraging the hiring manager to share the video job description, which can be shared across social media.

„72% of our applications are influenced to apply through our activity on LinkedIn. Hiring Managers should share their roles/video/relevant content with their connections and build their network connecting with potential talent.“

(Internal materials of the XY company)

9.4 Career Site of the XY Company

The company is having the user-friendly career sites divided into:

1. **Career search** - Candidates can search the positions with keywords or select the location, division, and function
2. **Working in XY company** - describing what it is like to work in the company
3. **Employee benefits**
4. **Employee development**
5. **Awards and recognitions of the company**

This is the external career site, but the company also has career sites for internal employees and referral purposes.

The internal career site has more detailed information, as the name of the hiring manager or band of the position⁷. Also, there may be positions open only for internal candidates.

The referral gateway is looking similar to the internal career site and there is a button „refer a friend“ and the employees can send it directly to the friend, formal colleague, and everyone, whom they would like to refer to.

(Internal materials of the XY company)

9.5 Talent Relationship Management in the XY Company

The company's environment is constantly developing, this is the reason, why the recruitment team needs to be prepared for the various changes.

⁷ The band of the position is an internal term describing the level of seniority, each position in the XY Company has the band; it is described as a number from 1 to 8 (1 - the highest seniority, 8 - the lowest seniority), it is linked to salary and benefits (Internal materials of the company)

As the company is developing new drugs, there always needs to be hired someone who will support the product from a medical or commercial perspective.

But the drug development takes years, so the recruitment team can prepare in advance. The recruitment team is working closely with the stakeholders to be prepared for such cases and map the market before the position is being created.

Of course, there are unexpected cases such as maternity leave covers or someone will decide to leave the company.

The recruitment team is having the database, where you can find all the candidates who applied globally in the last 12 months. Unfortunately after 12 months, the information about the candidates is deleted due to legal reasons.

The XY Company is creating the newsletters on quarterly bases and it is sent to the candidate's email address captured in the database to inform that about the news. It is a good way, how to keep them attracted.

In terms of searching the talents, the best practice is to search the database first. It is a great resource because in the database you can see the resume of the candidate, direct contact details as mobile phone and email address, and the feedback from the interview could be captured there.

So it is very simple just call the candidate. But as these candidates were previously applying to the system, it is important to inform them that the position was being closed and share the proper feedback with them.

Imagine the situation that you are applying to the job. Nobody from the company is contacting you and after for example 2 or 3 months someone reaches out to you and offer you a different position. Would you be interested to work for such a company?

The image of the company is damaged and it makes attracting and engaging the talents very hard.

To prevent that the XY company is using the automated email, to inform the candidate, that the position was already closed, but they would like to stay in touch. There are other options for the automated email such as auto-reject email and also „please be patient email“. Some unexpected situations can cause delays in the hiring and this email will inform the candidate, it is better to inform them than silent.

As you can imagine, it is impossible to call every candidate and tell them that the position is being closed. But every candidate who was attending the interviews with the hiring manager or someone from the team deserves to hear the feedback. It is highly recommended

to call these candidates and share with them the reason for the rejection and offer them another position if possible.

These candidates will appreciate the time and the feedback and they will most likely apply again. It will increase the image of the company and support the candidate experience.

You can call them in the future and offer them something else. The conversation can be like that: "Hi, I am calling from the XY company you were previously applying to the position _____ unfortunately, we selected someone else, but as I have shared with you the positive feedback from the interview, we are now hiring _____ would you be interested?"

I can guarantee that the candidate will be impressed that you „remember“ he/she applying to the role and they will appreciate the approach. It is building the relationship between the company and the candidate.

It will also save time because the company already has the resume and feedback from previous interviews, so there is no need to recruiter screen the candidate, etc.

From my experience, they may be cases that people are satisfied in the current job and they are not considering the change at the moment. But still, they appreciate the call and since the recruiter is talking to them it is so easy to ask if they know someone, who may be interested.

In 2020, the XY company started to use a new CRM system called „Avature“. It is a recruitment tool for pipelining. Imagine that you are actively looking for a job, as you are interested to work in XY company you search the career site first. Unfortunately there is no open role, which is mapping your interest. But you can send your resume with your aspirations and preferences to the avature tool and the sourcing team will reach out to you once the XY company opens the position, which is mapping your interests.

From my experience, talent relationship management is a must when it comes to recruitment.

I was hiring for a senior position and I was in touch with several candidates. Unfortunately, there were some organizational changes, and the hiring was stopped. I have informed the candidates and promised to go back to them, if the situation changes, they appreciate that. After almost two years we have hired the person I was previously in contact with. He also told me: "After almost two years of our contact, I am finally here, it is so great, thank you, I am happy to meet you in the XY company in person!"

For me, as a recruiter, these hires are the most valuable.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

9.6 Referral Program in the XY Company

The company is aware that a referral program can bring many well-experienced candidates, this is the reason, why is a company offering the referral bonus to encourage the employees to refer friends, formal colleagues, or other people.

The bonus is currently 1200 dollars and it is paid after the probation period of the referred candidate.

The referral needs to be done correctly, which means that the company has the referral gateway and the referral needs to be tracked in the system also for audit purposes. By clicking on the „refer a friend“ button the current employee will send the position to the referee. If the referee is interested he/she is finishing the application and the current employee's email address will be visible in the system.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

9.7 Colleague Recruiting in te XY Company

The company is well aware that attracting talents at an early stage can bring many benefits. This is the reason why is the XY company also active with universities. The XY Company is attending regular job fairs for students to inform that, what it is to like to work in the XY Company, what values, behaviors, and possibilities the company has.

The XY Company is offering trainee programs as well. The students are hired for 6 months and they are rotating and developing in more than one area (marketing, sales, compliance, legal, communication, etc.). At the end of the program, the XY Company decides, who will be offered a permanent role in the company (It can vary, but in most of the cases three people are offered.)

(Internal materials in the XY Company)

10 XY's Company Hiring Process

In this chapter I would like to describe the step by step hiring process in the XY company including the people, who are involved in the process.

10.1 People involved in the hiring process in XY company

1. **Hiring manager** - the future manager of the person, who is being hired
2. **Talent Acquisition and Staffing team (TAS)** - represented by:
 - a. **TAS Business partner (recruiter)** - The recruiter responsible for the overall hiring process supported by the sourcer and scheduler
 - b. **Sourcer** - Responsible for sourcing activities connected to the position
 - c. **Scheduler** - Covering the scheduling of the interviews between the candidate and interviewers including sending the confirmations
3. **HR Business Partner** - responsible for the development of internal candidates, supporting the hiring manager during the interview to covering the HR topics
4. **HR Services** - responsible for contract creating
5. **Compensation and Benefits** - Providing the information about the salary and benefits, we are offering for the role

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2 The Hiring Process

The hiring process of the XY company can be divided into **5 stages**:

1. Position planning
2. Talent attraction
3. Assessment and selection
4. Offer and hire agreed
5. Pre-onboarding/onboarding

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2.1 Position Planning

It all starts with position planning. The first discussion is between the hiring manager and HR business partner and they are together considering the need for a new position. If they both agree, there is a need for a new position, the position needs to be approved by one over one manager and the finance department.

HR business partners are also responsible for identifying internal talents to support succession planning. If there is an internal candidate who will be promoted to the role, the TAS team is not involved and the HR business partner is covering the internal move together with the hiring manager.

But the most common practice is that the company wants to open the position externally and also internally (no internal move, but the internal candidate can express the interest in the position and it is her/his initiative). In that case, the hiring manager opens a position in the system. Then the Compensation and Benefits team confirms the level of seniority of the position, which is connected to the salary and benefits.

TAS team lead allocates the recruiter, who will be responsible for the recruitment process. The recruiter receives the notification.

Then the recruiter contacts the hiring manager to set up the recruitment strategy meeting to discuss the details, who we are looking for, the reason of the opening (new position or replacement), the requirements and experience the company need, and the next steps, such as the interviews (how many rounds will be planned, who will be interviewing the candidates, etc).

After receiving all the information the recruiter completes the advert and puts it on the internal and external websites, so the candidates can apply.

The position is being advertised on internal and external websites and also on the referral gateway, so the internal candidates can refer a friend or ex-colleague. Also, the company is having an agreement with LinkedIn, that every position is being automatically advertised on the LinkedIn.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2.2 Talent Attraction

The recruiter collaborates with the sourcer who is using the various tools and social media to search and approach the candidates and get their attention.

It also means that the recruiter (or the sourcer, depends on the agreement) goes through the pipeline and database the company already have and he/she also considers the silver medalist from other hirings.

The position is posted on internal and external websites, on the referral gateway, and LinkedIn. There are other channels the company uses for advertising, it is mostly country-specific, in the Czech Republic for example job.cz, prace.cz, for Sweden monster.se, etc.

The recruitment team collects the candidates who come from active sourcing, from previous pipeline/database, apply directly on career websites (internal, external and referred candidates), or the candidates, who will use the other channels used for advertising.

The recruitment team prescreens the candidates by checking the resume.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2.3 Assessment and Selection

The recruiter prepares a long list of the candidates by collecting the suitable one mentioned in chapter 10.2.2. and will schedule the screening calls with them. The recruiter has a short conversation (around 30 minutes) with each of them, it is mostly done via phone.

The structure of the screening call can be described as:

1. **Introduction** - Introduction of the recruiter and sharing the structure and purpose of the call with the candidate
2. **Screening** - The recruiter asks about the motivation and experience of the candidate. The recruiter may ask some questions related to the job
3. **Job description** - Recruiter shares the job description and responsibilities with candidates including the team structure, benefits, and opportunities to develop (if any)
4. **Next steps** - Recruiter describes the next steps of the hiring process with candidates, for example, who will be interviewing,

how many rounds of the interviews will be scheduled, and possible timelines related to that.

5. Questions – time for questions, that candidates may have

The recruiter fills the form during the interview covering all the important information and experience that needs to be shared with the hiring manager.

The screening call is the first contact of the candidate and recruiter, who is representing the company. Having the conversation will provide more information about the candidate. After the call it is up to the recruiter, to decide if the candidate is matching the requirements as well as personal skills and if the candidate is on the shortlist, which will be shared with the hiring manager.

It may also happen, that after the screening call the candidate won't be interested to continue, maybe the position is not matching her/his expectations, etc. So he/she will decide to step out of the process.

The recruiter shares the shortlist of the candidates, who are recommended to the interviews with the hiring manager so he/she can review the candidates (go through the resumes and screening notes provided by the recruiter).

The hiring manager reviews the candidates and comes back to the recruiter with the list of candidates to be rejected (by a recruiter) and the ones who will be invited for the interview with the hiring manager and/or the other team members.

The recruiter rejects the ones who are not invited. Then he/she sends the scheduling request to the scheduling team and ask them to schedule interviews for the candidates, who were shortlisted by the hiring manager with the following details:

- 1. Job title**
- 2. Dates for the interview (if provided by interviewers)**
- 3. Names of the candidates**
- 4. Names of the interviewers**
- 5. Length of the interview**
- 6. Face to face / virtual interview**

The scheduler connects with candidates and interviewers and sends the invitation for the first round to both parties. Interviewers receive the resume of the candidates with screening call notes. Once the scheduler receives the confirmation from the interviewers, he/she sends the confirmation email to candidates with instructions.

Interviewers have 24 hours to share the interview feedback with the recruiter, it could be done via email or the debrief call could be scheduled. The recruiter shares the feedback with the candidate, in all of the cases, the recruiter is the contact person for the candidate and leads the candidate through the process.

There are possible scenarios, that may happen after the first round of the interview:

1. The interview was successful and there is no need to schedule more interviews
2. The interview went well, but the hiring manager or HR business partner would like to schedule another round

In most cases, the hiring manager wants to have more than just one round of the interview. The hiring manager is mostly supported by HR business partners during the interview but there are also other options, for example, it could be a team member or one over one manager. Or other employees, who will be working closely with the person. A common practice is to have the second round more practical, the interviewer is preparing the task to complete or the business case.

After both scenarios, we need to ask: **"Is there a selected candidate to make an offer to?"**

1. **NO** - It is necessary to go back to the sourcing and approach more people and also have a look at the applicants and people in the pipeline, so the recruiter can schedule new interviews with the hiring manager as soon as possible
2. **YES** - In this situation, the hiring manager is the right person to confirm that the recruiter can start to offer preparation

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2.4 Offer and Hire Agreed

The recruiter prepares the compensation offer for the candidate, which needs to be approved by the hiring manager, one over one manager, and the HR business partner. In exceptional cases, the company needs to involve the compensation and benefits team, for example when the company wants to prepare the offer above the salary benchmark.

After receiving all the approvals, the recruiter calls the candidate and presents the offer to him/her. After discussing the offer via phone, the candidate receives the written offer via email.

There are two options:

1. **Offer is accepted** - the recruiter informs the hiring manager and HR Business partner and collects the forms, that needs to be filled by the candidate
2. **Offer is declined** - if there is a silver medalist candidate, the company is going to prepare an offer for him/her. If not, it is necessary to go back to the sourcing and approach more people and also have a look at the applicants and people in the pipeline to ensure to find the replacement as soon as possible

If the offer is accepted, the recruiter is ready to notify all the external candidates. If there is an internal candidate in the process and they are not being offered, the hiring manager is the one sharing the feedback.

The recruiter initiates the employment background check, which is necessary for the candidate to pass.

The recruiter shares the filled forms with HR services and asks them to prepare the contract for the candidate. HR services are sharing the contract directly with the candidate

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

10.2.5 Pre-onboarding/Onboarding

If the contract is signed and the employment background check is successful, the recruiter closes the role in the system and notifies all the other candidates, that position is being filled.

The hiring manager and new hire are going to receive feedback form with the question related to the hiring process. This is the stage, where the company is collecting not only candidate experience but also customer experience because also the hiring manager is involved.

The candidate is contacted by HR services regarding the start date and the onboarding trainings.

(Internal materials of the XY Company)

11 Candidate Experience Study in XY Company

As mentioned in the chapter 6 Purpose of the Candidate experience study in the XY Company, I am focusing on the candidates, who were rejected in the final stage of the interview or who decided to reject the offer. The data I am using is internal data of the XY Company and the study is focusing on candidates from Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark), who applied in 2019.

At first I was sending them an email below, to check if they are interested to provide the feedback.

EMAIL:

SUBJECT: XY Company wants to know what you think about us!

Hi _____,

You have had recent experience interviewing with our company for the _____ position.

Even though you declined the offer / you were not selected for the role, I would love to hear your feedback on how we were doing the hiring process.

I will call you next week to have a 15-minute discussion. Please let me know if this is OK with you and If you have any time preferences.

Thank you in advance and have a lovely day.

With those who were interested to share the feedback I was having phone conversations (10-15 minutes).

I have prepared the form (in the attachments) with questions related to the candidate experience and I was asking the candidates to know their experience and feelings from the hiring process, as their experience can differ from people, who were hired. The questions consist of open questions and questions, where is a need to select the option. I was asking about the exact situation as well as ratings of the process. The questions are mapping the hiring process from the start to the end.

The question can be divided into 5 groups:

1. The overall impression from the hiring process
2. The first contact from the XY Company

3. The satisfaction with an interview with the hiring manager and/or team members
4. The feedback of the interviews
5. How did it impact your interest in applying again

Based on the conversations with candidates I am suggesting the options (in the chapter 12), how to improve the candidate experience in the XY company.

I have received the 85 candidates, who were fitting the requirements for the study (candidates, who were rejected candidates in final stage or candidate, who rejected the offer).

As mentioned, at first I was sending them the email, to check whether they are interested to share the feedback with the XY Company. 72 from the 85 agreed to provide the feedback, which means that 85% of the approached candidates agreed to provide the feedback.

Summary of the numbers:

- 85 candidates are fitting the study requirements
 - 82 candidates were rejected by the XY Company
 - 3 candidates rejected the offer
- 72 candidates are interested to provide feedback
 - 70 candidates were rejected by the XY Company
 - 2 candidates rejected the offer

Only 3 candidates from the list rejected the offer, the rest of the candidates was rejected by the company. It is good to see that numbers of the rejected offers are really low, proving the strong company brand.

I was also talking to these 2 candidates, who decided to decline the offer. Both these candidates accepted the offer from the XY's Company competitors because the process was taking so long.

As the conversation consists of the closed and open questions, I would like to focus on these results separately.

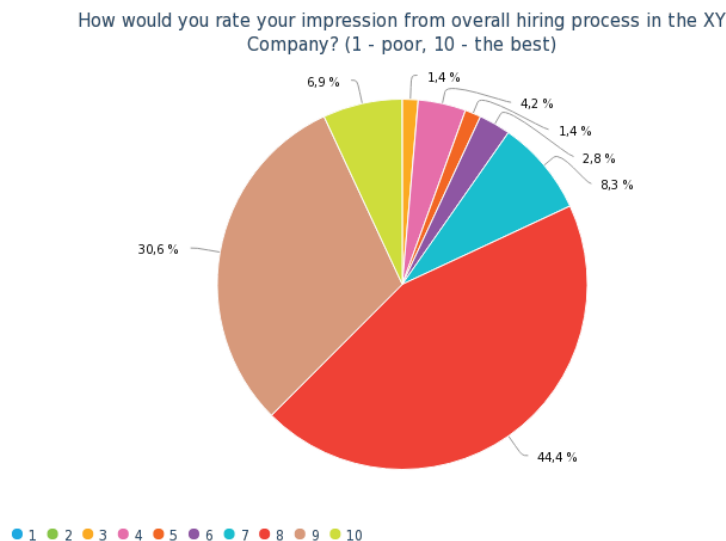
11.1 Closed Questions – Study results

At first, I would like to map the closed question related to the study. This part consists of 5 questions related to the hiring process in the XY Company.⁸

In the first 4 questions candidates provided the ratings of each step of the hiring process.

As the last question, I was asking whether they are still interested to join the XY Company in the future.

1. How would you rate impression from overall hiring process in the XY Company? (1 – poor, 10 – the best)



Graph 1 – Overall hiring procees

The overall impression from the overall process was rated well, to be more specific 44,4% (32 respondents) of the candidates rated it as 8, which is the biggest number of responses. The second-largest group of responses as rated as 9, it was 30,6 % of the candidates (22 responses).

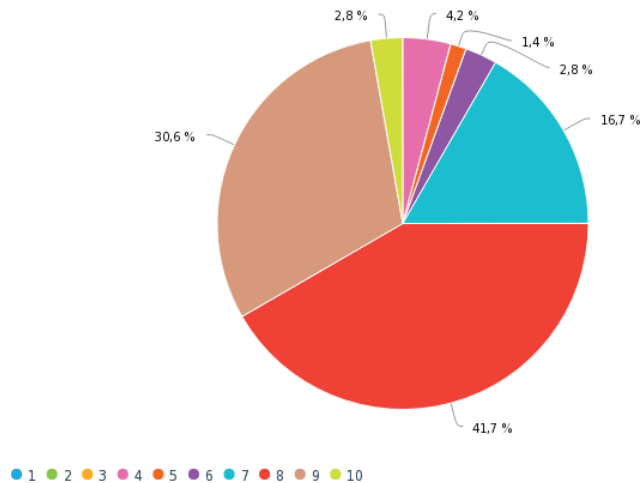
No responders rated the overall process as 1 or 2 and only one candidate rated the process with 3 (1,4%).

Also, the highest rating is pretty well presented in the graph, 5 candidates (6,9%) rated the process with 10.

⁸ All the results from Chapter 11.1 were analyzed within the survio application <https://app.survio.com/U9S9G3W4Q8O3D1R3H0J4/data/index>

2. How would you rate your first connection with the XY Company during the process (the first contact with sourcer/scheduler)? (1 - poor,10 - the best)

How would you rate your first connection with the XY Company during the process (the first contact with sourcer/recruiter)? (1 - poor, 10 - the best)

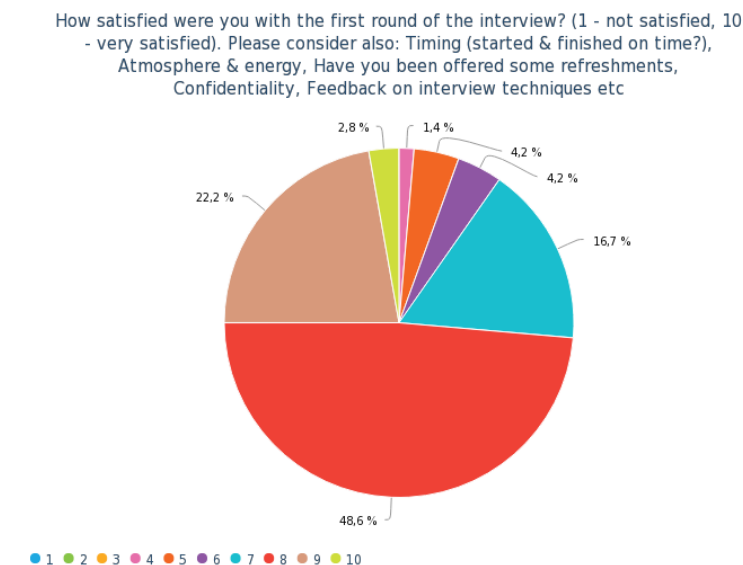


Graph 2 - First connection with the XY Company

The first contact between the company and the candidates has a big impact and can influence the candidate experience and image of the company.

Described in the graph, the most frequent answer was rated by number 8, it was answered by 41,7% of candidates (30 respondents). The second biggest group was rated by 30,6 % candidates (22 responses) by number 9. 12 candidates (16,7%) rated the first contact by number 7. No respondents evaluated the first contact by 1, 2, or 3.

3. How satisfied you were with the first round of the interview? (1 - not satisfied, 10 - very satisfied). Please consider also: Timing (started & finished on time?), Atmosphere & energy, Have you been offered some refreshments, Confidentiality, Feedback on the interview techniques, etc.

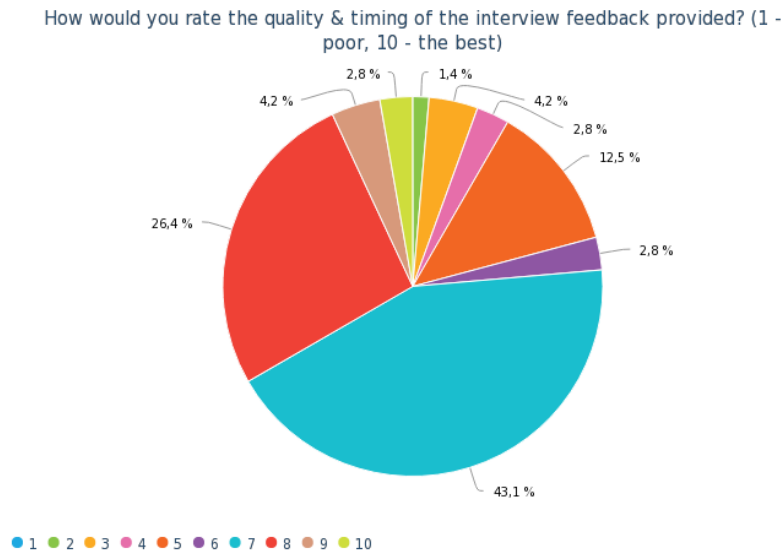


Graph 3 - First round of the interview

Almost half of the respondents rated the first interview by number 8, more specifically it was 48,6% of the candidates (35 answers). The second most frequent response was rated by number 9 with 22,2% of the candidates (16 respondents). Also, number 7 was rated by quite a lot of candidates, more specifically it was rated by 16,7% of the candidates (12 responses). In total, 63 candidates rated the interview stage by high numbers like 7, 8, and 9).

No respondents rated the quality of the interview by lowest numbers as 1, 2, and 3, only one candidate rated the interview process by 4 (1,4% of candidates).

4. How would you rate the quality & timing of the interview feedback provided? (1 - poor, 10 - the best)



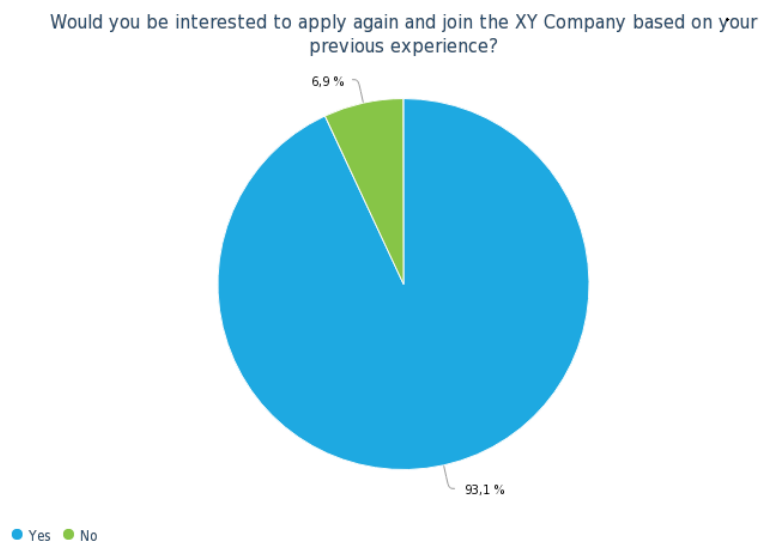
Graph 4 - Feedback

When it comes to feedback and the timing and the quality, the numbers are slightly worse than in previous ratings. The most frequent response to evaluate the quality and timing of the feedback was 7, more specifically it was provided by 43,1% of the candidates (31 responses). The second-largest group of the feedback was provided by 26,4% of the candidates (19 responses).

Nine candidates (12,5% of the candidates) rated the quality and timing of the feedback by number 5.

Although it is good to see, that nobody rated the feedback by number 1.

5. Would you be interested to apply again and join the XY Company based on your previous experience?



Graph 5 - Interest to apply / join the XY Company

Question 5 is very important in mapping the candidate experience in the XY Company. Since I was focusing on the candidates, who were not selected or on those, who decided to reject the offer, it is the main goal of the company to approach these candidates again. 99,1 % of the applicants (67 people) answered, that they would like to be contacted again and they would like to join the XY Company in the future.

Only 5 candidates (6,8% of the respondents) are not interested to be contacted again.

It is a great result and it is proving the high standards of the brand and talent attraction in the XY Company.

11.2 Open Questions - Study results

In this chapter, I would like to highlight the most frequented responses I have received during the conversations with the candidates. I am focusing on the good feedback as well as on the space for improvements. The most frequent responses are captured in the tables.⁹

1. Please, describe your overall impression from the recruitment process

THE CANDIDATES STATEMENTS	Frequency (number of candidates)
Well informed about the process	62
Well informed about the position	65
Professional and kind attitude	60

Table 1 - Overall hiring process

a. Positives

The majority of the candidates are evaluating the overall experience from the recruitment process very positively. They were well informed about the process and the next steps. They are evaluating the process clear. The people involved are professional and kind. The process was similar to other companies, they were not surprised.

„I was well informed about the next steps of the hiring process, everyone I talked to was professional and the discussion was kind. I have received detailed information about the position.“

(Candidate A, internal materials of XY Company)

b. Space for improvements

But there were also candidates who did not receive the full information about the process and the timeliness.

⁹ All tables in chapter 11.2 were created by myself based on the information provided by the candidates

„The process was unclear, the hiring manager was based in Sweden, and but I was talking to someone from Prague, there was no explanation.“

(Candidate B, internal material of the XY Company)

2. What was your first connection? And what is your feedback?

THE CANDIDATES STATEMENTS	Frequency (number of candidates)
Effective conversation	60
Natural approach	58
Asking relevant questions	65
Well informed about the process	60

Table 2 - First connection with the XY Company

a. Positives

The most frequent feedback is that the first contact with the company represented by the sourcer or the recruiter was well handled. It was an effective and natural conversation and discussion about the position, which has a positive impact on the motivation of the candidates. The recruiter/sourcer was asking the relevant questions. The first call started with the introduction and relevant information regarding the process.

„I was recommended by my friend, who is working in the XY Company, he has shared a positive experience with the company. The first conversation was over the phone with a sourcer, who has described the process and the next steps. After that, she shared the information about the position, the company itself, the team members, and benefits. In the last part of the interview, she was asking the questions regarding the experience.“

(Candidate C, internal materials of the XY Company)

b. Space for improvements

The minority of the candidates have shared that the sourcer/recruiter did not provide the key information about the position.

„The recruiter was not able to answer my questions and provided me only limited information about the job responsibilities. I did not have a clear picture of the job.“

(Candidate D, internal materials of the XY Company)

3. How satisfied were you with the first round of the interview? Please consider also: Timing (started & finished on time?), Atmosphere & energy, Have you been offered some refreshments, Confidentiality, Feedback on the interview techniques, etc.

THE CANDIDATES STATEMENTS	Frequency (number of candidates)
Well prepared Hiring manager	61
Natural approach	59
Sharing detailed information about the role	63
Professional Hiring managers	63
Pleasant atmosphere	57

Table 3 - First round of the interview

a. Positives

The impressions from the first round of the interview mostly done by the Hiring manager are mostly very positive. The candidates shared that the interview with the hiring managers was natural and they were well prepared. They provided detailed information about the role including the challenges.

„The interview with the Hiring manager was better than I expected. She picked me at the receptionist and offered me refreshments. The atmosphere was pleasant, there were space fo my questions.“

(Candidate E, Internal materials of the XY Company)

b. Space for improvements

Some of the candidates shared that the interviewer was late for the interview which was not making the great picture.

Also, two candidates have experiences with organizational changes in the company during the process, the hiring manager was changed.

Unfortunately, one candidate shared very negative feedback regarding the interview. She was asked by the hiring manager about the very personal questions related to the family and marital status, which is unacceptable.

„The interview was very good, I was impressed by the job responsibilities and the team collaboration. Unfortunately at the end of the interview, I was asked personal questions regarding the marital status and children, it damaged the impression.“

(Candidate F, internal materials of the XY Company)

4. How were you informed about the result of the interviewing process? How would you rate the quality & timing of feedback provided?

THE CANDIDATES STATEMENT	Frequency (number of candidates)
I did not receive the feedback	16
The feedback was too general	45
I was waiting several weeks to get feedback	20
I received the auto-reject email	10

Table 4 - Feedback

a. Positives

The minority of the candidates shared, that the process was smooth and quick.

„The recruiter was calling me the day after the interview and she shared the feedback and next steps. It was great.“

(Candidate G, internal materials of the XY Company)

b. Space for improvements

The majority of the candidates shared the negative experience connected with receiving the feedback or with the quality of the feedback. The process was taking long. Also, they shared that the quality of the feedback was not detailed, it was more general feedback and shared by the recruiter, who was not attending the interview.

„I was waiting for about 6 weeks without the feedback, so I decided to call the recruiter, unfortunately, he did not share the proper feedback.“

(Candidate H, Internal materials of the XY Company)

5. How did it impact your interest in applying again - eventually - joining the XY Company?

As shared in chapter 11.1 Closed Questions - Study results, 99,1 % of the applicants (67 people) answered that they would like to be contacted again and they would like to join the XY Company in the future.

Only 5 candidates (6,8% of the respondents) are not interested to be contacted again.

The reasons why they would like to be contacted again are:

- Knows people in the XY company, who are constantly sharing positive feedback¹⁰
- The products and therapeutical areas are interesting
- The benefits
- Brand of the company
- The knowledge and performance of the hiring managers

11.3 Answers to The Research Questions

In chapter 11.3 I would like to answer the research questions mentioned in chapter 6 and share more detailed results summary.

1. Are the candidates interested to be contacted again and join the XY Company?

Yes, they would like to be contacted again and join the XY Company.

As mentioned in chapter 11 Candidate Experience Study in XY Company, 99,1 % of the applicants (67 people) answered that they

¹⁰ The recommendation from the current employee was the most frequent reason of the application. The pharmaceutical market in the Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark) is very small and people know each other and share the feedbacks and reviews. It is an important thing to be considered.

would like to be contacted again and join the XY Company in the future.

It is a great result and it shows that the company brand and talent attraction is strong.

2. Did the candidates receive the interview feedback? Is delivered on time?

Yes, the majority of the candidates received the feedback and it was delivered on time. The feedback delivery and quality is the trigger part here. The numbers, which were evaluated in chapter 11.1, are the lowest in comparison to other questions.

The candidates shared mainly negative experience with feedback quality and delivery in most of the cases.

To be more specific, 16 candidates never received the feedback and 10 candidates received an auto-reject email, which is unacceptable. Auto-reject emails are used for rejecting the applicants which won't be considered for the next steps of the hiring process (screening call, interview, etc.). The auto-reject email is not providing the feedback, it will only inform the candidates about the rejection.

3. How satisfied were the candidates with the overall hiring process?

The majority of the candidates are satisfied with the overall hiring process. To be more specific, 62 of 77 candidates evaluated the overall hiring process impression from 8-10 points, which are very positive results.

The impression of the overall hiring process is, in most cases, rated very positively.

Nearly 60 candidates said that they received relevant information about the hiring process and the position.

I was expecting that candidates will be interested to be contacted again in the future, but I was surprised by the high rating numbers. The candidates see the XY Company as one of the top pharmaceutical companies and they would be happy to join the company. The pharmaceutical market is not so wide, that people know each other for example from the conferences, etc., and those people are also the reasons why they are interested.

The overall impression of the hiring process and the first contact with the company is evaluated as mostly positive. The candidates

received the information they needed, such as detailed job responsibilities, challenges they may face, benefits and the next steps.

The interviews were evaluated positively, too.

What I see as the area which needs to be improved is the feedback delivery, not only the feedback itself but the timing to provide it. Most of the candidates did not receive detailed feedback, but only general information. They are interested to know the detailed feedback because it will help them to improve in the future. Also, the timing of the feedback delivery was not handled well. Some of the candidates were waiting for several weeks to get the feedback.

12 Suggestions for Improvement

I would like to suggest the possible improvements, how to positively influence the candidate experience and the brand of the company to support the attraction in the XY Company.

Based on the informal phone call with the candidates and the knowledge gained from the theoretical part, I am dividing the suggestion into 3 groups:

1. Time and timelines

Time and timelines are important and they can influence the overall hiring process. Twenty of 72 candidates were waiting several weeks to get feedback. The recruiter is responsible for sharing the feedback, it means that hiring managers or other interviewers need to provide the feedback to the recruiter. They have 24 hours to share feedback. Unfortunately in most cases, it takes much longer. So it depends, if the feedback is not provided in time because the recruiter is not sharing it with the candidate or if the hiring managers/other interviewers are not sharing it in time. But unfortunately, I had no chance to find out, because candidates don't have this information.

As mentioned in chapter 10, the XY Company has a scheduling team that is responsible for scheduling the interviews. They are sending the invitations to managers/interviewers and the candidates. My suggestion is to schedule the extra time right after the interview, so the interviewers have time to summarize the feedback and send it back to the recruiter. In my opinion, 30 minutes would be enough and it could save time and ensure that the candidates receive the feedback in time. I think that writing the feedback right after the interview will also secure, that the impression will be fresh and feedback more detailed. So in practice, it would mean, for example, that the interview is scheduled for one hour, but the interviewers receive the invitation for 90 minutes, to have extra time for feedback.

2. Communication and feedback

Sharing the feedback, more specifically the negative feedback, is never easy. It was really hard for me in the beginning because I did not want to deliver the bad news. But now I understand that sharing the feedback with the candidates is important and most

candidates will happily accept the feedback when it is detailed. Simply because they can learn from it.

I would recommend the same practice as I mentioned above to schedule the extra time for interviewers, so they can summarize the feedback and send it to the recruiter.

But there are people, who prefer to have a call, in these cases I am advising is to have the debrief call with the hiring manager or other interviewer to discuss the feedback in more detail, ask about the strengths and development areas, so we can share it with candidates. It is important to ask because the recruiter is not participating in the interviews, but he/she is responsible for sharing the feedback with the candidate. The advantage of this call is, that the recruiter can ask the hiring manager/interviewers.

Candidates who are rejected after the first round of the interview most likely spent the time reading about the company, editing the CV, applying, having the phone screening call with the recruiter, and having the interview with the hiring manager. They invested the time, therefore they deserve to know why they are not selected.

I recommend to call them with the feedback and discuss their future interests and keep the candidates in the pipeline for any future hiring.

Do not reject the candidates who were attending the interviews via auto-reject email. It won't make a good impression.

3. Education of Hiring managers

The sources/recruiters are trained to lead the interviews, it is their everyday practice. On the other hand, the hiring managers may not have the knowledge and it can damage the impression and the reputation of the company.

I recommend preparing the trainings for the hiring managers to provide them the best practice on how to lead the interview, what are the forbidden questions, how to engage with the candidate, etc.

As I mentioned in chapter 11.2., a hiring manager was asking candidate personal questions such as her marital status and family (children), and as it is illegal to ask these questions, it can damage the brand, the talent attraction, and also the candidate experience.

Also one of the candidates shared that during the hiring process the hiring manager was changed. The new hiring manager was a new employee and he did not have much information about the

position, products, and the company in general. It could be an exceptional case. But I would recommend focusing on hiring manager training to avoid these situations.

Summary

The thesis aimed to map current candidate experiences with a focus on Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark), who applied in the year 2019. The study was focusing on the candidates who were not selected in the last round of the interviews or on those, who decided to reject the offer.

The XY Company is currently mapping the candidate experience submitted by people who are hired. The feedback of the people who are not hired is also very valuable and I would recommend to tract also their candidate experience.

The data I was using in this thesis was filtered from the database of candidates. It was very interesting to have these conversations with the candidates and to hear their direct feedback.

I don't think it is possible to implement these calls into the process because it would take too much time. But I do recommend to send the automated form to these candidates as well.

I was not surprised that the rejected candidates would like to apply again in the future and join the XY Company. But I did not expect that it will be 99,1 % of the applicants (67 people). It is an excellent result and the company needs to continue to support branding activities and talent attraction techniques to keep the numbers high.

On the other hand, the results evaluating the feedback delivery were not so satisfying. Sixteen candidates never received the interview feedback, but some of these candidates are still interested to join the company in the future. The reasons are: the brand of the company, professional hiring managers and pharmaceutical experts. Ten candidates received the auto-reject email, which is unacceptable at this stage of the interview since the feedback is not provided.

The majority of the candidates described the overall hiring process very positively. More than 60 candidates said that they received the relevant information about the hiring process and the position and the people involved were professional and kind.

The results from the first connection with the company and the first interviews are also on the high level. In both cases, the majority of the candidates described the connections as professional and pleasant. They received detailed information about the process and position.

To improve the candidate experience and support the talent attraction I suggest focusing on 5 main areas. The first area is to be sure who we are looking for, so the recruitment team can share

this information with the candidates. The second recommendation is to share the details about the process and the next steps. The third suggestion is linked with time and timelines, I advise to set up the timelines and share them with candidates, inform them when something unexpected happens. The next recommendation is to focus on feedbacks, it should be the XY's priority since the results are not very good and it can influence the candidate experience and the talent attraction. I highly recommend sharing detailed feedback (strengths and development points) as soon as possible. The last recommendation is to educate the hiring managers to engage with the candidates during the interviews and recommend them what type of questions they can and cannot ask.

The results are shared with the XY's Company hiring team and suggestion on how to improve the candidate experience is being discussed.

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CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE FORM

Candidate Name	
Interviewed for?	
Position number	
Band	
Country	
ITW Stage	Offer declined / final stage of the ITW

<p>1.</p> <p>a. How would you rate your impression from overall hiring process in the XY Company? (1 - poor, 10 - the best)</p> <p>b. Please, describe your overall impression from the recruitment process.</p>	
<p>2.</p> <p>a. How would you rate your first connection with the XY Company during the process (the first contact with sourcer/recruiter)? (1 - poor, 10 - the best)</p> <p>b. What was your first connection? And what is your feedback?</p>	

<p>3.</p> <p>a. How satisfied were you with the first round of the interview? (1 - not satisfied, 10 - very satisfied)</p> <p>b. How satisfied were you with the face to face ITW?</p> <p>- Timing (started & finished on time?) - Atmosphere & energy - Have you been offered some refreshments? - Confidentiality - Feedback on interview techniques</p>	
<p>4.</p> <p>a. How would you rate the quality & timing of the interview feedback provided? (1 - poor, 10 - the best)</p> <p>b. How were you informed about the result of the interviewing process?</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>Would you be interested to apply again and join the XY Company based on your previous experience?</p>	<p>YES/NO</p>

Comments			
Name	Radka Skrabova	Date	—

Attachment 1 - Candidate experience form

List of Borrows

Declaration:

I give my permission to borrow this master's thesis. The user confirms with his/her signature that he/she will properly quote this work in the list of references.

Name: Radka Škrábová

In Prague: 09. 09. 2020

Signature:

Name	Workplace	Date	Signature