

GROWERTALKS

Features

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R-E-S-P-E-C-T

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Aretha Franklin famously spelled out what people want most: R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Nearly 60 years later, that message remains just as relevant in the workplace, especially in the hiring process.

Recruitment continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Artificial intelligence is streamlining administrative tasks, accelerating candidate screening and helping organizations move more efficiently through the hiring cycle. Yet while technology receives much of the attention, some of the most impactful improvements in recruiting have nothing to do with software.

One of the most powerful—and often overlooked—drivers of providing candidates with great experience is transparency. When transparency is combined with a thoughtful, well-structured hiring process, organizations create a candidate experience that reflects respect for people's time, effort and career aspirations. The result is not only better hires, but also stronger employer branding and lasting goodwill among candidates, including those who aren't selected.

Why transparency matters

Organizations that consistently practice transparency throughout the recruitment process often experience significant benefits due to the positive experience candidates have:

- Higher-quality candidate pools
- Increased offer acceptance rates
- Faster onboarding and productivity
- Improved long-term retention
- Stronger employer brand reputation

These outcomes are interconnected. Candidates who clearly understand the role, interview process, compensation range and company expectations are more likely to remain engaged from initial conversation through final offer. Transparency reduces uncertainty, builds trust and enables candidates to make informed decisions.

Compensation transparency is a prime example. When salary ranges and benefits are discussed early, candidates can assess alignment before investing substantial time in the process. This minimizes surprises, increases efficiency and often leads to higher offer acceptance rates because expectations have already been established.

Transparency also pays dividends after hiring. When candidates understand onboarding expectations, performance goals and career development opportunities before accepting an offer, they typically reach productivity faster and are more likely to remain with the organization long term.

Transparency begins before the first interview

Effective hiring starts long before candidates enter the interview process. Organizations should begin by setting realistic expectations regarding both the candidate market and hiring timeline. Understanding the availability of qualified talent helps hiring teams develop achievable goals and avoid unnecessary delays.

A successful candidate experience should be structured, documented and repeatable. Hiring teams should clearly identify:

- Who will participate in interviews
- How many interview stages will occur
- The purpose of each stage
- The timeline for decisions and feedback

In most cases, three interview rounds are sufficient. Extending the process beyond five rounds often creates candidate fatigue and increases the likelihood that top talent will pursue other opportunities.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T-I-N-G candidates' time is one of the simplest ways to demonstrate professionalism and build credibility.

Create job descriptions that reflect reality

Many hiring challenges begin with poorly written job descriptions. Candidates are often discouraged by postings that contain endless responsibilities, unrealistic requirements or conflicting priorities. Organizations frequently create wish lists in search of the mythical "purple squirrel" candidate—someone who possesses every qualification imaginable.

The reality is that such candidates don't exist.

Instead, job descriptions should focus on the responsibilities that truly matter and clearly define what success looks like in the role. Prioritizing responsibilities helps candidates understand where they'll spend their time and energy.

One effective practice is establishing three key performance indicators (KPIs) that define success during the first year. A useful test for determining whether a KPI is meaningful is to ask: "If this goal is not achieved after one year, would we have to fire this person?" This question helps organizations eliminate unrealistic metrics and focus on outcomes that truly matter and are achievable.

Help candidates prepare for success

Transparency also means equipping candidates with the information they need to perform at their best. Organizations should communicate:

- The complete interview timeline
- Names and titles of interviewers
- Interview format and expectations
- Any assessment tools being used
- Presentation requirements, if applicable

- Organizational charts for leadership roles

Sharing this information doesn't eliminate the candidate's responsibility to conduct research. Rather, it creates a more balanced and productive process where both parties can evaluate fit more effectively.

Most importantly, hiring teams should honor the timelines they communicate. While business priorities and scheduling conflicts may occasionally require adjustments, candidates should be informed promptly when changes occur.

Consistent communication builds trust. Silence destroys it.

Make interviews conversations, not interrogations

Transparency is most effective when interviews become genuine conversations rather than scripted exchanges. Organizations should be willing to discuss both strengths and challenges. No company is perfect and candidates appreciate honesty regarding areas that require improvement, obstacles they may encounter and expectations associated with the role. Authenticity creates credibility.

Similarly, heavily scripted interviews often produce heavily scripted answers. While standardized questions have their place, hiring managers frequently gain deeper insights when candidates are encouraged to engage in natural dialogue. Conversations reveal problem-solving approaches, communication styles, adaptability and emotional intelligence far better than rehearsed responses.

The objective shouldn't be to identify why not to hire a candidate, but why to hire a candidate! Focus on identifying where there's mutual alignment between the individual and the organization.

Want to improve your hiring process and deliver a best-in-class candidate experience? Visit bhcagroup.com to receive Best Human Capital's free Interview Process Strategy and Position Strategy worksheets.

Follow up quickly and thoughtfully

One of the most valuable forms of transparency is timely feedback to both candidates AND your recruiting partner. Candidates who invest significant amounts of time interviewing deserve timely communication regarding next steps. Providing meaningful feedback within 48 hours whenever possible helps maintain engagement and demonstrates R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Top candidates often have multiple opportunities under consideration. Extended periods of silence can cause organizations to lose highly qualified talent simply because another employer provided that candidate with a better experience.

Quality feedback should also include honest updates about where candidates stand in the process. Please don't default to vague statements such as, "We're interviewing several other candidates." If there are several candidates, say so. If there's one competitor, say so. If there are no other candidates currently being considered, communicate that honestly as well.

Transparency builds trust. Generic responses do not.

Equally important is providing constructive feedback to candidates who aren't selected. Those conversations can

help individuals grow professionally while leaving a positive impression of the organization. By contrast, ghosting candidates or providing impersonal rejection messages can significantly damage employer reputation.

Candidates talk—and word travels quickly.

Compensation transparency is no longer optional

Compensation transparency has become an increasingly important component of modern recruiting. Many candidates now expect salary ranges to be included in job postings and discussed early in the interview process. Organizations that withhold compensation information often experience lower application rates and longer hiring cycles.

Transparency requires organizations to understand the market value of their roles and establish compensation ranges that are competitive, equitable and sustainable.

Hiring managers should know:

- The target compensation range
- The minimum acceptable offer
- The maximum approved offer
- Applicable bonus opportunities
- Benefits and incentive programs

These details should be communicated early enough to prevent unnecessary surprises.

Candidates also have responsibilities in this process. Before interviewing, they should evaluate their own compensation expectations and determine a realistic range based on experience, skills and market conditions. When both parties engage openly and honestly, discussions become more productive and outcomes improve.

The bottom line

Technology will continue to reshape recruiting, but some principles never change. Candidates want clarity. They want honesty. Most importantly, they want R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Organizations that combine transparency, efficient hiring processes and timely communication create stronger candidate experiences, make better hiring decisions, improve retention and strengthen their employer brand. In today's talent market, transparency is no longer a best practice, it's a competitive advantage.

Transparency + Process + R-E-S-P-E-C-T = Better hires, stronger relationships and a more powerful employer brand. **GT**

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