CAHRS Virtual Working Group Series: Talent Management During the Post-Pandemic Transition

Session 1: Improving the Candidate Experience
September 9, 2021

Attracting top talent has always been among the strategic priorities for most organizations. However, with the pandemic shaking up the job market and disrupting the recruitment process, the competition for talent has become more intense than ever. To differentiate themselves from the competition, organizations now need to focus on identifying key talents quickly and delivering a distinctive candidate experience. **In this first working group, participants shared and discussed what their organizations were doing to improve candidate experience, what worked for them, what the challenges were, and how they measured success.**

DISCUSSION TAKEAWAYS

1. Understand Candidate Expectations

- **International vs. Domestic Candidates:** Candidates from different markets and regions might have very different expectations. Moreover, even though the pandemic has reached almost every country in the world, each has responded very differently (e.g., some countries have opened back up while the others might still be under lockdown). Therefore, it is important to take the impact of the pandemic on the candidates' current locations into account.
- **Internal vs. External Candidates:** Many companies develop different recruiting processes for internal and external candidates.
- **Candidates from different generations:** Each generation of candidates comes with their own set of expectations, and effective recruiting strategies are usually those that can reflect their unique needs. For example, millennials and Gen-Z might be more comfortable with the whole recruiting process conducted online. They also tend to look for job postings on social media in addition to traditional channels.

2. Design Application Questions and Pre-Interview Assessments

- **Keep the Application Short and Simple:** It is key to keep job applications short, simple, and less time-consuming for candidates. One way to do this is to include only important questions in the application. In addition, companies should not ask candidates questions when the answers can be found on the candidates' resumes. Rather, questions should be designed in a way that allows candidates to demonstrate their strengths and uniqueness.
- **Avoid Unnecessary Assessments:** Not every role needs a pre-interview assessment and under some circumstances, a good score on an assessment does not necessarily translate into high work performance. Given the competitiveness of the labor market and candidate resistance to assessments, unnecessary assessments can be very costly to organizations.

13 participants from 13 CAHRS Companies:

Boeing
CDW
Colgate-Palmolive
CUBIC
Ecolab
Johnson & Johnson
Manulife
Medtronic
Merck
Otis
Procter & Gamble
Samsung Electronics America
Terex

- **When Assessments Are Necessary:** Pre-interview assessments can be critical for some particular jobs and positions (e.g., Information Technology jobs). In this case, a good way to improve candidate experience is to insert human touchpoints along the way, making the assessment be their first personal interaction with the company.

3. Communicate with Candidates

- **Clear Recruitment Process:** Candidates should be provided with clear information about the recruiting process such as where they are now in the process and what the next steps are.
- **Pros and Cons of Automation:** There are pros and cons of using automated responses. For example, automation can mitigate human errors and reduce workload for HR recruiters. However, automation can also impede organizations from adapting to changes and different hiring situations, thus increasing the chances of missing out on great talent. To add more flexibility into the hiring process, it is sometimes better for the recruiters to hold back on automation when interacting with candidates.
- **Response Time:** Companies should keep the response time as short as possible and be transparent about it with candidates. One way to reduce the response time is to regularly communicate with hiring managers about the recruiting process as well as their responsibilities and impact on the process.
- **Feedback:** Some companies only provide feedback to internal candidates. The feedback is usually focused on fit issues, the candidates' current skills, and how those skills can be further developed through coaching or development opportunities.
- **Candidate experience survey:** Candidate experience surveys can help companies get insights straight from candidates and make informed decisions about how to better manage the recruiting process. Some companies also use this platform to learn more about the comparative strengths and weaknesses of virtual versus physical interviews.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications in the Recruiting Process

- **Leverage Virtual Interviews:** Video interviewing platforms have been well-received in many labor markets. They also enable companies to reach out to a larger, more diverse pool of candidates. However, the AI functions of those platforms should be used with caution, especially if organizations do not know how the decisions are made. In addition, there is a risk of application fraud and cheating. For example, candidates can hack the questions before the interview, or have someone else do the interview or the assessment for themselves.
- **Match Candidates with Job Openings:** Machine learning algorithms can be used to match external, internal, and even past candidates with current job openings. Companies can also use AI technologies to distribute job ads to various websites.
- **Reduce Bias in Job Descriptions:** Several AI-powered tools can be used to reduce bias and racially charged language in job descriptions. For example, one CAHRS partner company has developed an AI writing tool called 'Ideas' which provide intelligent suggestions to make the writing inclusive and concise.
- **Train Recruiting Teams:** With video interviewing platforms, companies can access the recordings of past interviews and review the interviewers' behaviors. The recordings can also be used for training purposes.