

INSIGHT

How to Create an Exceptional Candidate Experience



Introduction

Candidate experience is no longer a secondary part of recruitment.

It is now a direct reflection of:

- leadership quality
- organisational culture
- operational maturity
- and employer reputation

Every interaction during a hiring process shapes how candidates perceive an organisation.

This includes:

- communication speed
- interview structure
- responsiveness
- professionalism
- transparency
- and decision-making quality

And in modern recruitment markets, perception matters enormously.

Strong candidate experience does not simply improve hiring outcomes.

It improves:

- employer reputation
- offer acceptance rates
- long-term brand perception
- and the organisation's ability to attract high-quality talent repeatedly over time

This is particularly true in competitive sectors like Facilities Management, where strong candidates are often evaluating employers just as closely as employers are evaluating them.

Candidate Experience Starts Before the First Interview

Many organisations assume candidate experience begins during the interview process.

In reality, it begins much earlier.

Candidates form opinions based on:

- job adverts
- response times
- recruiter communication
- website quality
- LinkedIn presence
- leadership visibility
- and market reputation

By the time an interview begins, perception is already forming.

Every Hiring Process Sends Signals

Whether intentional or not, recruitment processes communicate messages about the organisation.

Candidates quietly assess:

- how organised the business appears
- how leadership behaves
- how decisions are made
- how communication flows
- and whether the organisation feels stable and professional

Strong candidate experience creates confidence. Weak candidate experience creates doubt.

Leaders are
remembered for
the teams
they build



Communication Speed Matters

One of the biggest frustrations candidates experience is slow or inconsistent communication.

Delayed feedback, unclear timelines and poor responsiveness often create:

- uncertainty
- disengagement
- and reduced trust

In competitive hiring markets, communication speed often directly impacts whether organisations secure strong talent.

Silence Creates Anxiety

Candidates invest significant emotional energy into recruitment processes.

When organisations go silent:

- trust weakens
- assumptions grow
- and engagement drops

Even when decisions are delayed, proactive communication usually protects candidate confidence far more effectively than silence.

Strong Communication Builds Trust

Strong candidate communication is usually:

- clear
- timely
- respectful
- and transparent

This does not mean organisations must have all the answers immediately. It means candidates feel informed and respected throughout the process.

Small communication improvements often create disproportionately positive candidate experiences.

—
Quietly
building
exceptional
teams
—



Interview Process Design Matters

Many organisations unintentionally damage candidate experience through poorly designed interview processes.

Common issues include:

- excessive interview rounds
- unclear structure
- repeated questioning
- disorganised scheduling
- stakeholder inconsistency
- and delayed decisions

Candidates often interpret these problems as signs of internal dysfunction.

Simplicity Often Creates Better Experiences

The strongest hiring processes are usually:

- structured
- professional
- efficient
- and easy to navigate

This does not mean removing rigour. It means eliminating unnecessary friction.

Strong candidates generally value:

- clarity
- decisiveness
- professionalism
- and operational maturity

Candidate Experience Reflects Leadership Quality

Senior candidates frequently judge organisations through the behaviour of leadership teams during recruitment.

They observe:

- communication quality
- alignment
- professionalism
- emotional intelligence
- and decision-making capability

A poorly managed interview process often damages confidence in leadership itself.

Trust Building Is Central to Recruitment

Strong recruitment is fundamentally a trust-building process.

Candidates are asking themselves:

- Can I trust this leadership team?
- Can I trust this organisation?
- Will I be supported here?
- Does this environment feel stable and well-led?
- Are expectations realistic?

Strong candidate experience helps answer those questions positively.

Employer Perception Is Built Through Small Moments

Employer branding is not built only through marketing campaigns.

Specialist
recruitment
is not about
volume

It is about
understanding



It is built through:

- conversations
- responsiveness
- professionalism
- behaviour
- and candidate treatment

Small interactions compound over time. The organisations that consistently create strong candidate experiences often develop stronger reputations naturally.

Rejection Handling Matters More Than Most Organisations Realise

One of the biggest missed opportunities in recruitment is rejection handling.

Candidates who are rejected still leave with an impression of the organisation.

Handled poorly, rejection creates:

- frustration
- reputational damage
- negative word-of-mouth
- and long-term distrust

Handled professionally, rejected candidates often remain advocates for the business.

Respect During Rejection Creates Long-Term Reputation Value

Strong rejection handling usually includes:

- timely communication
- professionalism
- honesty
- appreciation
- and respect

Candidates do not necessarily expect positive outcomes. But they do expect respectful treatment.

Feedback Should Be Handled Carefully

Candidate feedback should be:

- constructive
- measured
- and thoughtful

Poorly delivered feedback can damage trust quickly.

—
Reliability
is a leadership
skill
—



Strong organisations ensure feedback feels:

- fair
- professional
- and considered

Even difficult conversations can strengthen employer reputation when handled well.

—
If search
is not the
answer,
we say so
—



Offer Management Is Often Mishandled

Many organisations relax once an offer is accepted.

In reality, the period between offer acceptance and onboarding is often one of the highest-risk stages of recruitment.

Poor offer management can lead to:

- counter-offers succeeding
- candidate withdrawal
- uncertainty
- and reduced engagement

Strong Offer Processes Maintain Momentum

Exceptional candidate experience continues through:

- offer communication
- onboarding preparation
- leadership engagement
- and pre-start communication

Strong organisations maintain excitement, clarity and connection during this stage.

Candidate Experience Directly Affects Offer Acceptance Rates

Candidates are significantly more likely to accept offers when they feel:

- respected
- valued
- informed
- and confident in leadership

This is especially true for senior hires where emotional trust plays a major role in decision-making.

Reputation Protection Matters

In modern hiring markets, candidate experience spreads quickly.

Poor recruitment experiences are often discussed publicly through:

- LinkedIn
- peer networks
- Glassdoor
- recruiters
- and industry relationships

Strong organisations understand that every hiring process affects wider market perception.

The Best Organisations Understand Recruitment Is a Brand Experience

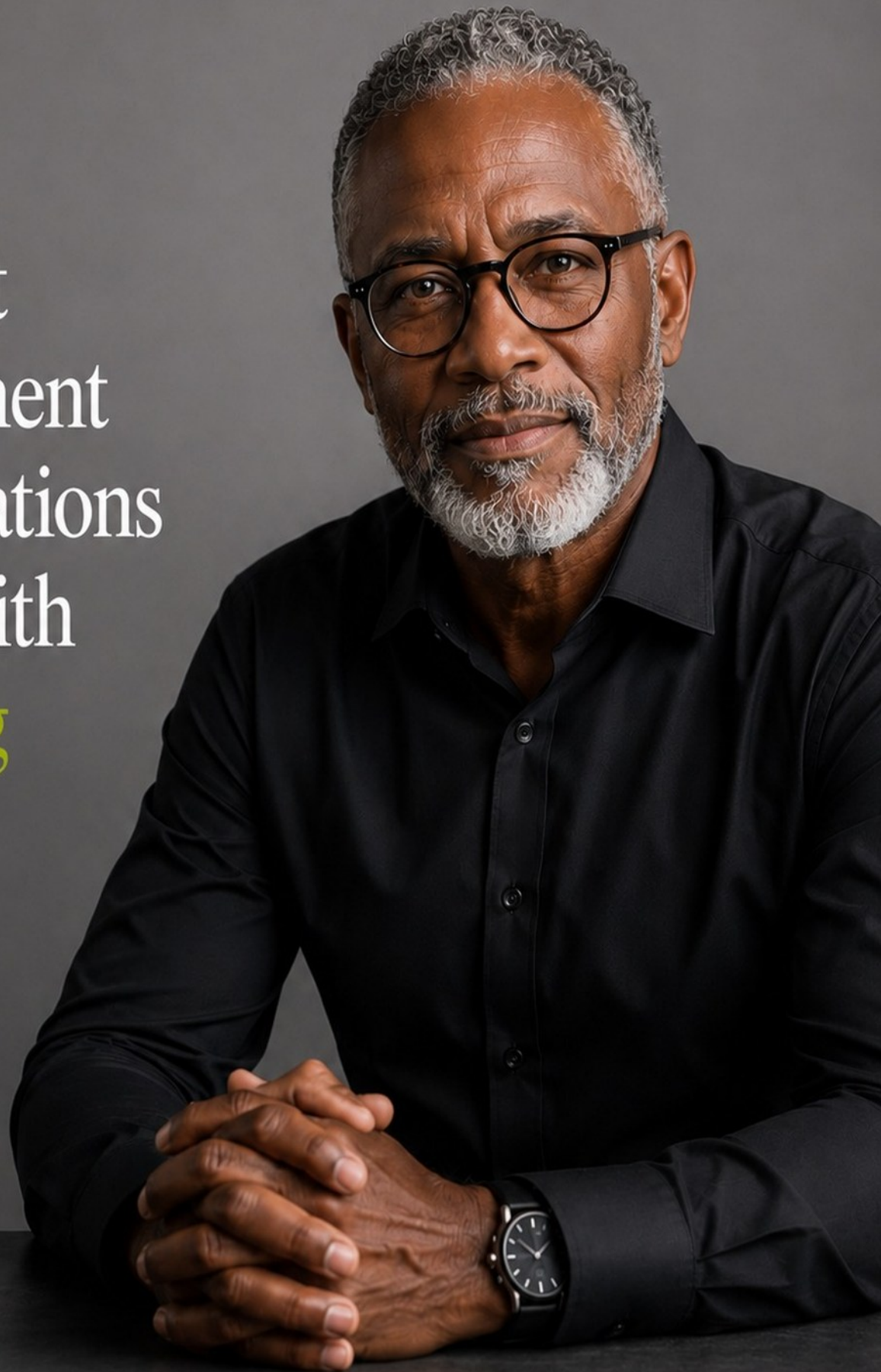
Recruitment is no longer simply a hiring function. It is a brand experience.

Candidates often experience leadership, culture, communication, and organisational maturity for the first time during recruitment:

- leadership
- culture
- communication
- and organisational maturity

The hiring process becomes a direct representation of the company itself.

The best
recruitment
conversations
begin with
listening



Candidate Experience Is Not About Perfection

Exceptional candidate experience does not require:

- perfect processes
- endless resources
- or unrealistic levels of communication

It requires:

- professionalism
- clarity
- responsiveness
- empathy
- and operational discipline

Most candidate frustration comes not from rejection — but from confusion, silence and poor communication.

Strong Candidate Experience Improves Hiring Outcomes

Organisations with strong candidate experience often benefit from:

- stronger talent attraction
- higher offer acceptance rates
- improved reputation
- better referrals
- and stronger long-term hiring performance

This is because trust compounds. And trust influences hiring outcomes enormously.

Candidate Experience Reflects Organisational Culture

Ultimately, candidate experience is rarely separate from company culture.

How organisations treat candidates often reflects:

- how they communicate internally
- how leadership behaves
- how decisions are made
- and how people are valued

Candidates often recognise this quickly.

—
Better
judgement
beats more
activity
—



Conclusion

Exceptional candidate experience has become a strategic advantage in modern recruitment.

The strongest organisations understand that hiring is not simply about evaluating candidates. It is also about creating confidence, trust and professional credibility throughout the process.

Strong candidate experience is built through:

- communication
- clarity
- professionalism
- responsiveness
- respect
- and leadership maturity

Every interaction shapes perception. And in competitive hiring markets, perception increasingly influences who secures the best talent.

About Maxwell Stephens

Maxwell Stephens is a specialist Facilities Management recruitment consultancy supporting organisations across the UK.

We recruit Facilities Management professionals across:

- Facilities Management
- Workplace Management
- Estates
- Property Operations
- Building Services
- and FM Executive Leadership

Our recruitment approach focuses on operational understanding, leadership assessment, and long-term hiring quality.

For more information: www.maxwellstephens.com

What the Data Says

The candidate's view in numbers: what UK research shows about silence after applying, ghosting in hiring processes and why offers are rejected.

- Two in three (66%) UK candidates don't hear back beyond an automated acknowledgement when they apply.
Source: [Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026](#)
- 42% of UK candidates have been ghosted during a hiring process, Greenhouse found in 2024.
Source: [Greenhouse Candidate Experience Report 2024](#)
- UK candidates' top reasons for rejecting offers: salary below expectations (48%), a better offer elsewhere (32%) and limited flexible or remote working (21%).
Source: [Greenhouse Candidate Experience Report 2024](#)
- UK applications submitted are up 16% and interviews needed to land a single role are up 18%, Totaljobs found in 2026.
Source: [Totaljobs Hiring Trends Update, 2026](#)
- 92% of the 497 FM vacancies Maxwell Stephens advertised from 2023 to 2026 showed a salary figure, giving candidates pay clarity up front.
Source: [Maxwell Stephens analysis of 497 advertised vacancies, May 2023 – September 2026](#)

Sources were checked in September 2026. Select a source to open the original research. Maxwell Stephens figures are drawn from our own published vacancies and placement records.

See It in Practice

Executive Facilities Management Recruitment for Paddy Power Betfair

Paddy Power Betfair (now Flutter Entertainment) appointed Maxwell Stephens to recruit three senior workplace, corporate real estate and health and safety leaders to support its international expansion. We ran a targeted executive search across the UK and Europe, assessing technical capability, stakeholder influence and cultural alignment. A candidate testimonial highlights excellent communication, regular updates, detailed interview preparation and valuable advice at every stage.

The candidate feedback shows how communication, preparation and regular updates create an exceptional experience at senior level.

[Read the full case study at maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/paddy-power-betfair](https://maxwellstephens.com/case-studies/paddy-power-betfair)

Related Reading

- **Why Candidate Experience Matters in Modern Recruitment**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/what-is-candidate-experience-worth-in-the-digital-age
- **How Recruitment Consultants Can Deliver a Better Candidate Experience**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/the-candidate-briefing-what-more-can-the-recruitment-consultancy-do
- **The Ghosting Epidemic in Recruitment**
maxwellstephens.com/blog/the-ghosting-epidemic-in-recruitment

Talk to Maxwell Stephens

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A FINE POSITION TO BE IN



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Recruitment

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