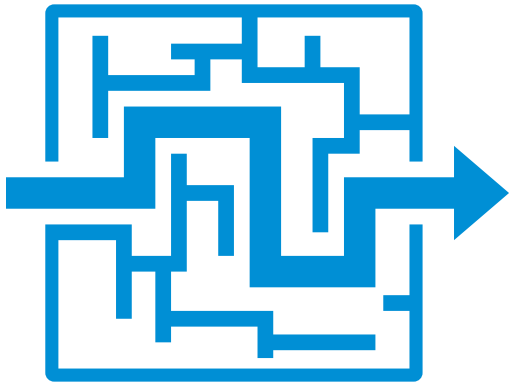




CREATING A POSITIVE CANDIDATE & NEW- HIRE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

Creating a positive candidate and new-hire experience has become an essential part of attracting and retaining top performers. Generally, the better the experience, the more likely an organization can attract the best hire because top talent demands a compelling experience in the workplace *and* in the hiring process.

This report is based on data compiled through the NorthCoast 99 program, which focuses on recognizing organizations that excel at the attraction, retention, and engagement of top performers. Each organization that applied for the NorthCoast 99 award was required to choose and randomly select 3 employees hired in the past year to complete the New-Hire Survey. New-hires were asked to rate the effectiveness of their organization's recruiting, selection, new-hire engagement, and on-boarding initiatives on a 6-point scale measuring their degree of agreement. New-hires were not asked to provide any demographic information. A total of 448 new-hires participated in the survey.

Various analyses were conducted on new-hires' responses including: an analysis of patterns of responses on the questionnaire to determine the primary factors of candidate and new-hire experience; a comparison of the differences in survey responses between the most satisfied and least satisfied new-hires; and various regression and correlation analyses used to identify relationships between variables. Significant findings of these analyses are summarized throughout this white paper, which explores the following topics:

- What is Candidate & New-Hire Experience?
- What Variables Affect Candidate & New-Hire Experience?
- What Differentiates an Exceptional and Poor Experience?
- What Creates a Positive Candidate & New-Hire Experience?
- Research Implications & Recommendations

What is Candidate & New-Hire Experience?

Candidate experience refers to impressions and perceptions that are created by the experiences a job candidate has as he or she applies for and is considered for a job, while new-hire experience refers to impressions and perceptions that new-hires have after they accept a job offer throughout on-boarding. These impressions and perceptions often are formed based on the information they obtain, communication they receive, and interactions they partake in during the hiring, selection, and on-boarding processes. Additionally, what job candidates and new-hires see, feel, and hear seems to greatly affect their impressions and perceptions of the organization.

Both candidate and new-hire experience can influence an individual's overall perceptions of an organization and its work environment, whether they will reapply for another job at the organization, if they will refer other employees, and their performance and engagement within their first months on the job. In general, positive experiences have been found to increase engagement and positive perceptions of the organization, while negative experiences may lead to the opposite, such as decreased engagement and many other adverse consequences (Source: ERE Media, Inc.).

For these reasons, creating a positive and engaging candidate and new-hire experience is critically important for employers of choice and any organization that wants to maintain a competitive edge in attracting, retaining, and engaging top performers.

What Variables Affect Candidate & New-Hire Experience?

An analysis of how new-hires responded to the survey identified three primary factors that affect candidate and new-hire experience, based on statistical patterns in new-hires' survey responses. Please note that these factors and variables are only indicative of candidate and new-hire experience as it was measured on this particular survey. The following factors emerged as three core aspects of candidate and new-hire experience, as measured on the survey, and are listed in order of those that most strongly affect candidate and new-hire experience:

- Hiring process timeline and expectations
- On-boarding and new-hire engagement
- Communication during the selection process

Additionally, below are the variables which most influenced these factors in the survey, ranked in order of those most strongly correlated with the factor. The rankings are intended to help

reduce the data to provide insight regarding which variables most affect perceptions of each factor. The specific correlation coefficients between each variable and each of the three factors are in parentheses. Variables with higher correlation coefficients are more strongly related to the factor and therefore more significantly affect perceptions of that factor, while variables with lower correlation coefficients are less strongly related to the factor and less significantly affect perceptions of that factor.

While all of the variables in the table below were strongly related to the “hiring process time and expectations” factor, the strongest variables were whether the hiring process followed a reasonable timeline, the degree to which the candidate felt frequently updated and well-informed, and whether the candidate understood and was communicated with at most stages of the hiring process.

Factor 1: Hiring process timeline and expectations

Variables most related to perceptions of the "hiring process timeline and expectations"

1. Hiring process followed a reasonable timeline (.95)
2. Candidate was frequently updated and well-informed (.90)
3. Candidate understood where they stood at most stages (.87)
4. Candidate was communicated with at most stages and informed of next steps (.85)
5. Hiring process was efficient and respectful of candidate's time (.81)
6. Hiring process appeared well-organized (.77)
7. Organization was flexible and accommodating (.68)
8. Hiring process appeared streamlined and seamless (.63)
9. Candidate was made aware of clear steps in the hiring process (.63)

The following are variables that most influenced participants' views of the second factor, the organization's “on-boarding and new-hire engagement” efforts. The variables are in order of those most strongly affecting the factor. Variables related to training and development emerged as very influential of participants' views regarding on-boarding and new-hire engagement. Receiving mentorship and the appropriate resources needed to their job were also variables that were strongly related to this factor.

Factor 2: On-boarding and new-hire engagement

Variables most related to perceptions of "on-boarding and new-hire engagement"

1. New-hire was given sufficient on-the-job training to be successful on the job (.94)
2. New-hire had opportunities to access the training and development they needed (.88)
3. New-hire was encouraged to seek training and development (.88)
4. New-hire was provided with a mentor or buddy to help them get acclimated (.79)

Variables most related to perceptions of "on-boarding and new-hire engagement"

5. New-hire was provided with all of the resources, information, and technology needed to do their job (.72)
6. New-hire was provided with clear job performance expectations (.64)
7. Most people were open to addressing new-hires' questions and concerns (.58)
8. New-hire had the ability to meet leaders of the organization (.52)
9. The organization tried to make the new-hire feel comfortable and welcome in their role (.53)
10. New-hire's supervisor took time to get to know them (.49)
11. New-hire was provided with an orientation or briefing on the organization's policies and procedures (.42)

Finally, the following are variables which most influenced the third and least strong factor, participants' views of "communication during the selection process." Once again, they are listed in order of those most strongly affecting the factor.

Factor 3: Communication during the selection process

Variables most related to perceptions of "communication during the selection process"

1. Candidate felt that the organization showed they were looking for the best fit for the job (.97)
2. Candidate felt that the organization knew what they were looking for in terms of skills, competencies, and characteristics during the hiring process (.88)
3. Candidate was provided with clear and honest answers to their questions (.75)
4. Candidate was provided with an honest and realistic perspective of their job (.70)
5. Candidate felt the organization balanced evaluating cultural and personality fit with skills and qualifications in the selection process (.69)
6. Candidate received information about the organization's culture and their job (.66)
7. Organization helped candidate understand the position and business (.63)
8. Organization responded to candidate's questions in a timely manner (.60)
9. Organization's hiring staff was responsive, professional, and friendly (.42)

What Differentiates an Exceptional and Poor Experience?

To determine the variables that most commonly contribute to an exceptional or poor candidate and new-hire experience, an analysis on the most and least satisfied new-hire survey participants was conducted. A sum score was calculated for each new-hire survey participant and the least satisfied new-hires were categorized as those scoring in the bottom quartile of satisfaction on the survey. The most satisfied new-hires were categorized as those scoring in the top quartile of satisfaction on the survey.

The table below shows the percentages of positive responses (rating of “agree” or “strongly agree”) that the least satisfied and most satisfied new-hires provided on the survey. In a comparison of mean scores, statistically significant differences were observed between the most and least satisfied new-hires on every survey item. Additionally, the most satisfied new-hires provided 100% positive responses on nearly every survey item except one. Meanwhile, the least satisfied new-hires provided significantly fewer positive responses on a number of survey items.

Differences in percentage of positive responses

Survey Item	Least Satisfied	Most Satisfied
I was provided with a mentor or buddy to help me get acclimated in the organization.	49%	100%
My organization's hiring process appeared streamlined and seamless.	53%	100%
I was given sufficient on-the-job training to be successful on the job.	55%	100%
I had opportunities to access the training and development that I needed.	57%	100%
I was frequently updated and well-informed throughout the hiring process.	60%	100%
My organization's hiring process appeared well-organized.	61%	100%
I was provided with clear job performance expectations.	61%	100%
I understood where I stood at most stages of the hiring process.	62%	100%
I was encouraged to seek training and development as a new-hire.	62%	100%
I was provided with opportunities to shadow, meet, or talk to current employees.	64%	100%
I was provided with all of the resources, information, and technology I need to do my job.	65%	100%

Survey Item	Least Satisfied	Most Satisfied
I was able to meet the leaders of the organization.	66%	100%
My supervisor took time to get to know me.	66%	100%
My organization's hiring process was efficient and respectful of my time.	68%	100%
My organization made me aware of clear steps in the hiring process.	68%	100%
My organization's hiring process followed a reasonable timeline.	72%	99%
I was provided with an honest and realistic perspective of my job and the organization during the hiring process.	75%	100%
I was communicated with at most stages of the hiring process and informed of next steps.	77%	100%
My organization helped me understand the position and business during the hiring process.	78%	100%
The organization tried to make me feel comfortable and welcome in my new role.	79%	100%
I received information about the organization, its culture, and the job during the hiring process.	80%	100%
Most people were open to addressing my questions and concerns.	80%	100%
I was provided with clear and honest answers to my questions during the hiring process.	82%	100%
My organization showed they were looking for the best fit for the job.	83%	100%
My organization balanced evaluating cultural and personality fit with skills and qualifications in the selection process.	84%	100%
My organization was accommodating and flexible during the hiring process.	84%	100%
I was provided with an orientation or briefing on the organization's policies and procedures.	85%	100%
My organization knew what they were looking for in terms of skills, competencies, and characteristics during the hiring process.	91%	100%
My organization's hiring staff was responsive, professional, and friendly.	91%	100%
My organization responded to my questions during the hiring process in a timely manner.	93%	100%

Differences in average scores

Survey Item	Least Satisfied	Most Satisfied
I was provided with a mentor or buddy to help me get acclimated in the organization.	3.98	5.96
I was given sufficient on-the-job training to be successful on the job.	4.34	5.92
I had opportunities to access the training and development that I needed.	4.38	5.96
My organization's hiring process appeared streamlined and seamless.	4.41	5.93
I understood where I stood at most stages of the hiring process.	4.41	5.96
I was provided with opportunities to shadow, meet, or talk to current employees.	4.42	5.91
I was frequently updated and well-informed throughout the hiring process.	4.46	5.95
I was provided with clear job performance expectations.	4.46	5.92
I was encouraged to seek training and development as a new-hire.	4.50	5.96
My organization's hiring process appeared well-organized.	4.53	5.99
I was provided with all of the resources, information, and technology I need to do my job.	4.55	5.96
I was able to meet the leaders of the organization.	4.64	5.96
My organization's hiring process was efficient and respectful of my time.	4.66	6.00
My organization made me aware of clear steps in the hiring process.	4.66	5.98
I was communicated with at most stages of the hiring process and informed of next steps.	4.68	5.99
My organization's hiring process followed a reasonable timeline.	4.69	5.94
I was provided with an honest and realistic perspective of my job and the organization during the hiring process.	4.69	5.97
My organization helped me understand the position and business during the hiring process.	4.73	5.98
My supervisor took time to get to know me.	4.75	5.98
I was provided with clear and honest answers to my questions during the hiring process.	4.81	6.00

Survey Item	Least Satisfied	Most Satisfied
I received information about the organization, its culture, and the job during the hiring process.	4.85	5.97
Most people were open to addressing my questions and concerns.	4.85	6.00
The organization tried to make me feel comfortable and welcome in my new role.	4.90	6.00
My organization was accommodating and flexible during the hiring process.	4.98	6.00
My organization balanced evaluating cultural and personality fit with skills and qualifications in the selection process.	4.99	5.98
I was provided with an orientation or briefing on the organization's policies and procedures.	5.04	5.98
My organization showed they were looking for the best fit for the job.	5.08	5.99
My organization responded to my questions during the hiring process in a timely manner.	5.08	6.00
My organization's hiring staff was responsive, professional, and friendly.	5.08	6.00
My organization knew what they were looking for in terms of skills, competencies, and characteristics during the hiring process.	5.16	5.98

Survey items with less significant differences observed, though still significant, were typically related to the organization's approach to selection, interactions with hiring staff, timely responses to questions, receiving an orientation, and experiencing flexibility and accommodation in the hiring process. Meanwhile, the survey items that showed the largest differences in positive responses were related to support, mentorship, and training received during the on-boarding process; and the organization, timeline, and communication of updates and steps within the hiring process.

Survey items where a larger difference between the most and least satisfied new-hires is found indicates a more common poor experience among the least satisfied new-hires. Meanwhile, survey items with narrower differences between the most and least satisfied new-hires suggest a less common poor experience among the least satisfied new-hires. As such, survey items with a larger difference between most and least satisfied new-hires can be considered more significant differentiators of an exceptional or poor experience, based on this study.

What Creates a Positive Candidate & New-Hire Experience?

In addition to rating statements, new-hires were also given the opportunity to describe their impressions of and experiences in their organizations' hiring and on-boarding processes on the survey. This section contrasts themes that were derived from analyzing the responses of the most satisfied and least satisfied new-hire survey respondents.

Experiences of Most Satisfied New-Hires

All of the most satisfied new-hires described extremely positive experiences in their organizations' hiring and on-boarding processes. The following themes emerged among new-hires who were most satisfied.

1. They felt welcomed.

The most satisfied new-hires felt welcomed throughout the recruiting and hiring process. Recruiters and managers who were engaged in the hiring process were described by the most satisfied new-hires as professional, personable, helpful, friendly, and attentive to them.

2. They were given an honest and realistic preview of the job.

The most satisfied new-hires say that their organizations provided a consistent and realistic message during the hiring process. They felt that their organizations were honest and upfront about their expectations and presented an accurate preview of the job as well as the skills and talent they desired.

3. They felt well-informed about the organization and job.

The most satisfied new-hires felt sufficiently informed by their organizations. They felt that they were provided with a great deal of information about the company, what it does, and how it operates. They also said they were given an appropriate amount of information about the position.

4. They were treated respectfully and accommodated.

The most satisfied new-hires said their organizations treated them professionally and respected their time. They were more likely to say that their organizations accommodated their schedules, were willing to work around their circumstances, and were flexible to their needs throughout the hiring process.

5. Their questions were answered fully and promptly.

The most satisfied new-hires felt that their questions were answered fully and in a timely manner. Their organizations' quick feedback, updates, and responses to all of their questions were perceived favorably and contributed to their satisfaction.

6. They were updated throughout the hiring process.

Not only were they given an overview of the hiring process and timeline, but the most satisfied new-hires also felt that their employers kept them updated throughout the hiring process by informing them of next steps and providing feedback on their status.

7. They believed the process was efficient and well-orchestrated.

The most satisfied new-hires felt that their organizations' hiring processes were well-orchestrated, efficient, and seamless. They also believe that their organization's hiring practices seemed comprehensive, thorough, and detailed. Hiring processes seemed to move along in a timely manner with time between stages generally kept to a minimum.

Similarly, new-hires who were most satisfied also cited positive impressions of their organizations' on-boarding practices.

1. They felt their organizations were prepared and organized.

The most satisfied new-hires say their organizations were well-prepared and had an organized approach for their arrival. New-hires who were more satisfied felt that their workplaces provided them with the necessary tools, resources, and technology to do their jobs. This contrasts to the least satisfied new-hires who more often said their organizations were less prepared and organized.

2. They felt encouraged and supported.

New-hires who were most satisfied felt supported by their organizations. They commonly alluded to managers and coworkers who were easily approachable, encouraged them, responded to their questions, checked in regularly, and exceeded their expectations in helping them gain familiarity in their new role.

3. They were trained and developed.

The most satisfied new-hires felt that their workplaces did as much as possible to prepare and help them be successful in their new role. They cited that their workplaces invested significant time and resources in their training and development, learning, and mentorship over their first several months with the organization.

4. They were welcomed and accepted

Above all, new-hires felt warmly welcomed by their organizations. They believe that their organizations went to great lengths to make them feel welcome and comfortable in their first days at the company and made honest attempts to get to know them. New-hires felt as though their organizations valued them and were excited to have them on-board.

Experiences of Least Satisfied New-Hires

Meanwhile, new-hires who were the least satisfied generally did not have very positive impressions of their organization's hiring and on-boarding process. Common themes among least satisfied new-hires were:

- Perceptions of disorganization and inefficiency
- Lack of timeliness and delays in responses to questions
- No feedback or delayed feedback from their interview or other steps in hiring process
- Lack of information about the position and its expectations
- Slow or rushed process (i.e. too many steps, long gaps between stages, etc.)
- Unfriendly, unwelcoming, or impersonal hiring staff
- Lack of training and personal attention in their on-boarding

The most predominant impressions cited by least satisfied new-hires were dissatisfaction related to the timing of the process (too slow or too rushed), lack of information about the position or organization, lack of timely feedback at various stages of the hiring process, and unfriendly or unwelcoming hiring staff. Perceptions of disorganization and inefficiency were also common among new-hires that were least satisfied.

A Relationship between Perceptions

The analysis not only showed stark differences between the described impressions and experiences of the most satisfied and least satisfied new-hires, but also illustrated the relationship between positive perceptions of the hiring and on-boarding process and positive overall perceptions of the organization. In general, new-hires who were more satisfied with their organization's hiring and on-boarding processes, had more positive perceptions of their organization and work environment.

In contrast, new-hires who were least satisfied also reported less favorable perceptions of their organization based on their experience as a new-hire when compared to new-hires who were most satisfied. They were more likely to report various complaints about their overall organization than new-hires who were most satisfied.

These anecdotal findings support other research cited earlier in this report which suggests that a positive on-boarding experience generally leads to higher employee engagement and more positive perceptions of the work environment.

Research Implications & Recommendations

These research findings suggest that certain factors affect candidate and new-hire experience: the hiring process timeline and expectations, on-boarding and new-hire engagement, and communication during the selection process. They also suggest that certain variables are more strongly correlated with these factors than others. This information can be used to prioritize certain variables to create better candidate and new-hire experiences.

The research findings also identified key differences in the experiences and impressions of the most satisfied and least satisfied new-hires who responded to the survey, which helps to a) identify areas in need of improvement for a more positive candidate and new-hire experience and b) identify key differentiators of an exceptional and poor candidate and new-hire experience to help employers avoid poor experiences and create exceptional ones.

Based on these research findings, there are several practices that employers can take to improve the experiences of job candidates and new-hires. Below are some recommendations, based on the research we conducted in the study:

1. **Inform candidates of your timeline and plan for hiring.** Outline stages of the hiring process and when you expect them to occur, including an anticipated timeframe for when you expect to make a final decision.
2. **Provide immediate feedback** to candidates at various stages of the hiring process, and especially when they submit a resume. Delays in feedback or follow-up consistently result in a negative experience for job candidates.
3. **Respond to their questions quickly and honestly.** Job candidates value honest and transparent answers to their questions. They also expect timely responses to their inquiries. Make honesty and responsiveness a priority with candidates and new-hires.
4. **Give the new-hire enough information about the position, your culture, and the organization.** Make sure the information is detailed enough for them to evaluate whether or not the job is a good fit.
5. **Be friendly and welcoming.** Job candidates should have positive interactions with your staff. Make sure your hiring staff is friendly, positive, and welcoming with job candidates. Similarly, encourage staff members (especially coworkers and managers) to warmly welcome new-hires. Every candidate is a potential customer of your business or employee.

6. **Provide enough training.** New-hires are most satisfied when they receive sufficient on-the-job training and numerous opportunities to access training and development that they need to be successful on the job.
7. **Equip them with the right resources.** Make sure new-hires are set-up for success and provided with all of the resources, information, and technology needed to do their job from day one.
8. **Offer a buddy or mentor.** Mentors or buddies can help acclimate new-hires to the organization. They often serve as an informal support system for a new-hire to access for questions.

Finally, measure candidate and new-hire experience at your organization. Gather feedback through in-person meetings, surveys, and/or focus groups to gauge their experiences and perceptions about the hiring and on-boarding process.

Conclusion

Candidate and new-hire experience are critical differentiators in attracting top performers. The results of the analysis identify the variables which affect candidate and new-hire experience and those that differentiate between a positive and negative experience to help organizations create better experiences for job candidates and new-hires.

Not surprisingly, nearly all of the most satisfied new-hires who responded to the survey were from NorthCoast 99 winning organizations. Other research conducted through our NorthCoast 99 program finds that the best workplaces like NorthCoast 99 winners are creating positive experiences which engage new-hires and candidates and foster positive perceptions of the organization.

For more information about the NorthCoast 99 winners and their practices, please visit www.northcoast99.org.