

Rebooting Recruiting

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Two organizations share how they made significant improvements to their candidate attraction and selection processes through technology.

By Debbie Bolla

[Hilton Grand Vacations \(HGV\)](#) is in the business of providing memorable experiences to its guests, and it strives to do the same when it comes to candidates who are looking to grow their careers with the organization.

“HGV is always focused on what is next and how we can continue to evolve based on today’s competitive environment and the candidate’s expected experience,” says Laura Schmidt, vice president of talent acquisition. “HGV’s mobile-first approach to the careers website makes the content brief and consumable, allowing users to expand or dig deeper into an opportunity, creating an immersive, personalized job search experience with enhanced job descriptions.”

And this is exactly what today’s leading candidates are looking for. In fact, according to CareerBuilder, 89 percent of job seekers report that an employer’s career site is an important tool for getting key information and 75 percent say their candidate experience is an indicator of the broader employee experience at that company. Schmidt says a combination of AI-enabled technology and personalized content results in a steady pipeline of talent that is engaged with HGV’s brand.

For example, the organization leverages AI for its careers site to learn and understand the digital

behaviors of visitors in order to customize content, job, news, and events that align to their activity and interests. Schmidt says HGV also creates immersive experiences by utilizing personalized video, video testimonials, and interactive job searches to highlight its employer brand story.

The company's efforts in career website personalization have landed some impressive ROI: The apply-attempt rate is 135 percent higher, the average session duration is 70 percent higher, the number of pages visited per session is 35 percent higher, and the bounce rate dropped 56 percent.

Personalization is certainly an effective strategy for increased candidate engagement. Gary Cook, chief technology officer of [WilsonHCG](#), says that tech tools can make this a reality for organizations by building a customized candidate experience.

“As the competition for talent becomes increasingly challenging and employment brand and values become more important in career choices, there is a greater drive towards long-term candidate engagement through talent pooling and building candidate communities,” he explains. “Candidate relationship management (CRM) and candidate engagement technologies are enabling more effective candidate segmentation and better levels of engagement through content that is hyper-personalized around what is of most interest to the applicant based on their skills and role.”

Having a focused strategy has fostered a real difference in HGV's recruiting and hiring processes. In today's market, it can be easy for TA leaders to get distracted by what some new technologies promise. But if the promised benefits are not aligned to the end goal, little progress will be made.

“There are a lot of technologies that can be effective in the recruiting process, but what's been most effective is having a strategy about how to use them,” says Adam Godson, senior vice president of global technology solutions for [Cielo](#).

For example, investing in an engaging, mobile-first careers site was critical to HGV's talent strategy, and Godson agrees that having a truly mobile recruiting process is essential in today's competitive landscape.

“TA leaders should assess how mobile friendly their process and channels are to identify gaps and fill them to ensure a great candidate experience,” he says. “For many candidates, the phone is the only computer that they own. If your process requires a desktop computer, the drop-off rates are astronomical.”

Godson advises that all steps of the process, including video interviews, assessments, and forms, be accessible on a phone. Today's candidates also are looking to be able to communicate with recruiters via text message.



“Voice control activation is slowly entering our everyday lives and is becoming the new user interface. We're not quite at the 'Alexa, find me a new job' level yet. But with increased access to voice-activated personal assistants to facilitate tasks such as scheduling meetings or reviewing emails, this will be the next addition to the HR process and its tech stack.”

—Gary Cook, chief technology officer, Wilson

Cook says that more and more candidate interaction is being facilitated through mobile devices. “Mobile technology is frequently seen in outdoor recruitment advertising where candidates are asked to text to confirm their interest, and organizations are also using QR codes to direct candidates to online applications,” he explains.

With 6,000 hires per year, IT services provider [Cognizant](#) is also leveraging technology to provide an interactive and positive candidate experience.

“Cognizant talent acquisition has gone through a significant transformational journey,” says NN Srinivas, head of management recruitment for the Americas. Once a volume recruiter or white-glove treatment provider, he says the organization now leverages intuitive technology and machine learning to drive the candidate experience through engagement and assimilation. Srinivas says the company engages with candidates through multiple channels, including social media and live recruitment events. Relevant and tailor-made content is also key: Cognizant provides candidates what it deems a “recruiter eminence” through videos, vignettes, podcasts, and public speaking clips.

To measure and track the candidate journey through its new approach to candidate engagement, Cognizant leverages a candidate experience (CX) index, which is based on a Likert scale. Since launching in 2017, the overall CX score has increased from a 3.5 in 2017 to a current CX score of 4.7. Other benefits include better control of data, broader digital footprint, improved conversation rates, and increased diversity of candidate demographics.



BY THE NUMBERS

By utilizing AI technology in its recruiting efforts, Hilton Grand Vacations has experienced several benefits, including:

- **increased conversion rates of media (including email marketing and paid ads) to hire;**
- **an increase in the media-attributed app-to-hire ratio (up from 41:1 in 2015 to 15:1 today);**
- **a decrease in media cost per hire (down from \$370 in 2015 to \$173 today); and**
- **an increase in media percentage attribution (up from 28 percent in 2015 to 56 percent today).**

The Recruiter Experience

HGV hasn't only taken steps to evolve the candidate experience; it has also made efforts to improve how recruiters cull the best talent. Schmidt says that AI-enabled technology moves the best candidate profiles to the top of the list. This prevents the inconvenience of facing an endless list of potential hires by delivering only the most relevant candidates to recruiters.

“This process has saved both recruiters and hiring managers significant time and effort,” Schmidt reports.

Godson agrees that AI-matching tools can review resumes faster and more accurately, and improve other traditional process flaws, benefiting recruiters and candidates alike. “We can use AI to get deeper insights into a person through analyzing writing samples, vocal biomarkers, facial recognition, or anything else in order to save candidates from dreadful 45-minute assessments or irrelevant conversations for jobs that weren’t a good match,” he says.

Chatbots are also a time-saving tool for recruitment teams. “They can screen candidates, ask them questions, and provide answers to their queries,” says Cook. “They can speed up the recruitment process while providing a much better candidate experience as applicants get prompt responses. Chatbots are increasingly being used further down in the recruiting funnel now too for onboarding and training. This not only speeds these processes up as candidates get real-time feedback, but also ensures compliance standards are met.”

Organizations also now have the ability to program their chatbots to have personalities that align with company values and missions, Cook adds. “This helps to ensure consistency of messaging, while also ensuring objectivity into how candidates are treated.”

In the world of HR technology, there is always something on the horizon. “There are lots of new technologies being applied to the hiring process—new assessments, chatbots, voice technologies, data insights,” says Godson. “But the fundamentals remain the same: Provide a better experience to hire better people faster. That has to be the litmus test that we measure technologies around.”