



A quick guide to:

Building A Better Digital Candidate Experience

How to use UX principles to bullet proof your talent pipeline

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WHY CARE ABOUT THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE?

Grabbing great talent fast is on the top of everyone's agenda - yet tougher than ever.

We have helped 200+ companies around the world to solve some of their biggest recruitment challenges, and in this guide, we want to help you master a “secret” to scalable talent acquisition, so fundamental it is often forgotten: improving the candidate experience.

We know your to-do list is likely overflowing. You need to fill hundreds of vacancies by the end of yesterday, competitors are picking off your talent pool left, right and centre and too many suppliers want to showcase too many silver bullets.

So, who on earth has time to care about something as abstract as the candidate experience?

Well, you do! Because there are two inescapable truths in talent acquisition at scale:



To get more relevant candidates, you have to make your candidate experience work for them.

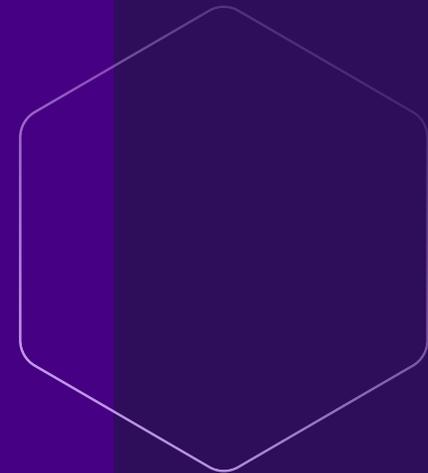
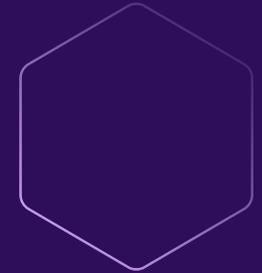
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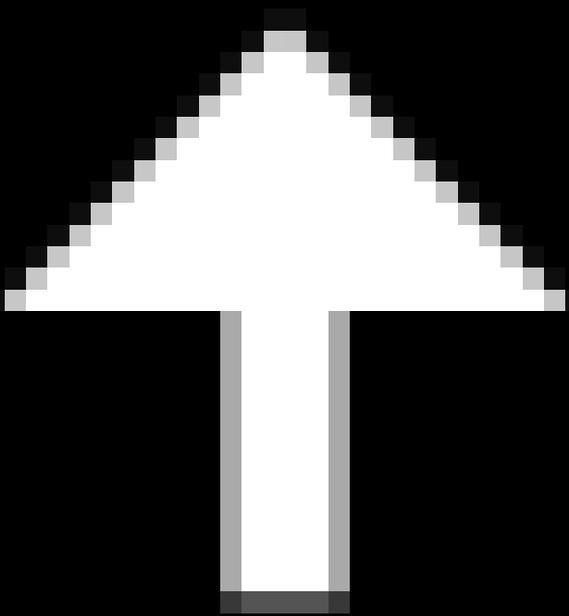


To WIN those candidates, your candidate experience needs to be BETTER than the competition.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Yet most companies struggle with these crucial principles, and invest in everything but this, often due to a lack of time, funding, and internal know-how.

This guide will help you remedy the lack of know-how and hopefully, help you make the business case for prioritising resources towards a better candidate experience.





A good candidate experience (CX) is proven to



Strengthen your employer brand



Improve candidate conversation rates



Lower the cost of hire...



...while increasing the quality of hires.

In short, **investing in the candidate experience directly benefits your business's bottom line.**

And yet, few companies make that experience a priority. Which leaves you, our savvy talent acquisition professional, a clear opening to win the competition for talent.

THE INGREDIENTS YOU NEED

There is a single key to great and sustainable CX: deliver a seamless **user** experience.

How do you create that seamlessness in practice? You design a smooth funnel by leveraging social media, automation, and the power of user experience (UX) design.

In practice, this means:

- Designing a high converting experience using UX strategies
- Implementing an “always-on” candidate experience on social media
- Automating your candidate funnel for smoother, personalised journeys
- Avoiding the most common CX pitfalls.

In this guide, we want to give you some key tools to unlock UX strategies for your talent pipeline - along with pitfalls to avoid.

And we can't help but tell you a little bit about our own software for implementing the “always on” automation, that can tie it all together without any further effort on your part. But don't worry, the insights are fully actionable on their own!

You don't have to be a UX professional to be successful, and you can start building momentum **today**. The end result we want to help you create? An impressive, easy experience that generates more high value applications.

WHAT IS THE COST OF NOT CARING?

With so much sweat invested in getting the best candidates into the funnel, why do **92%** never actually complete their application?

Because most application processes don't work. They leak like a sieve, losing the best and brightest applicants very early on. Too many talent acquisition teams are afraid to take a hard look at this truth.

And when they do - often by the time it's too late - they struggle to fix a candidate experience that has become time consuming, user unfriendly, and far behind current candidate expectations.

78%

of candidates believe their candidate experience is a solid indicator of how a company values its people, and what they'll be treated like as a future employee.

62%

of job applicants report having a poor candidate experience...

69%

of those who had a poor experience won't apply with you again.



In short, a negative candidate experience hurts talent acquisition efforts - in the short term as well as long term.



Conversely, a positive candidate experience is a key competitive advantage in today's tight talent market. In fact, a positive candidate experience makes candidates **38% more likely** to accept your job offer!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

EMBRACE YOUR TALENT PIPELINE AS AN E-COMMERCE FUNNEL



Today: Enticing ad about a dream hotel in the Maldives



3 Days: Inspirational ad showing how beautiful Maldives are



7 Days: Ad with a traveler testimonial that's relevant to the target audience (i.e. honeymooners, families, singles, etc.)



14 Days: Ad with a final offer: 20% off if you book today

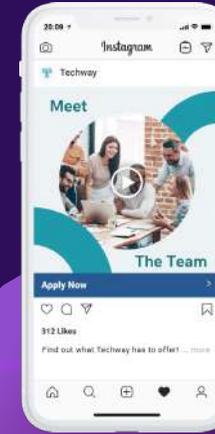


10 Days: Ad featuring a five star, glowing review on Booking.com

EMBRACE YOUR TALENT PIPELINE AS AN E-COMMERCE FUNNEL



Today: Enticing job ad about an open position at your company



3 Days: Inspirational ad showing your upbeat, inviting company culture



14 Days: Ad with a final offer and posting for the open position, noting the application period is closing soon



10 Days: Ad featuring a five star, glowing review from Glassdoor.com



7 Days: Ad with an employee testimonial that's relevant to the target audience (i.e. a worker with a spouse and children, a recent-grad, a soon-to-be retiree, etc.) and department of the open position (i.e. tech, marketing, operations, etc.)

We know that social recruitment marketing is the most effective way to engage with the full talent pool - this is the reason our own product delivers such great results. Yet even seasoned professionals get an A-ha! experience when we compare their talent attraction pipeline to actual e-commerce.

Embracing e-commerce thinking to create a great “shopping experience” for talent works - because seducing your candidate pool to grab their interest, and keep them engaged throughout the application funnel, is not much different from selling a lifestyle product.

The competition is just as stiff, the expectations just as high, and the attention spans just as low. And, as with e-commerce, passively waiting for your candidates to come through boards or disjointed campaigns just won't cut it.

You need to be present 24/7, top of mind when it counts, and make the journey as friction free as the “product” is attractive. In short - you need to deliver a great candidate experience.



Remember, even with social media at your disposal, the best candidates aren't anxiously waiting for your job ad to pop up in their feed. You need to grab and earn their attention, from a click on social media down to final application submission.



Where to Begin?

Where do you even begin? What does a great candidate experience look like?
And how can you map out the changes to make?

Let's dive in. 🙌

APPROACH THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE LIKE A UX DESIGNER

To create an attention grabbing funnel that doesn't leak, you need to think like a UX designer. Which begs the question: WWUXD (What Would a UX Designer Do)?

To begin, it's helpful to know **why** well-executed UX is so important.



Every dollar invested in UX brings \$100 in return on average. (That's an ROI of **9,900%**!)



A well-designed user interface can raise a site's conversion rate by up to **400%**.



79% of users place the highest level of importance on the overall usability of a site or app.

“That sounds great, but does it really apply to my candidate experience?” Yes! Yes, yes, and yes.

You can have the most brilliant EVP and a well funded recruitment marketing initiative, but unless you smooth every step of the process through great design thinking, we can guarantee you are leaving the majority of your talent pool on the table... to be scooped up by a competitor.

One that didn't put candidates through unclear ads, slow loading landing pages and cumbersome applications that had them pop back onto Instagram to scroll for funny cats instead.

So how do you approach the candidate experience like a UX designer?

A talented UX designer approaches their work by asking two questions.

👉 “What do they **need**?”

And

👉 “What **obstacles stop them** from completing the next step in the journey?”

- 👉 Are you giving your candidates the info they need, so they feel safe to venture further down the hiring funnel?
- 👉 Are you making it clear what that next step is?
- 👉 Are you making it easy to take that next step?



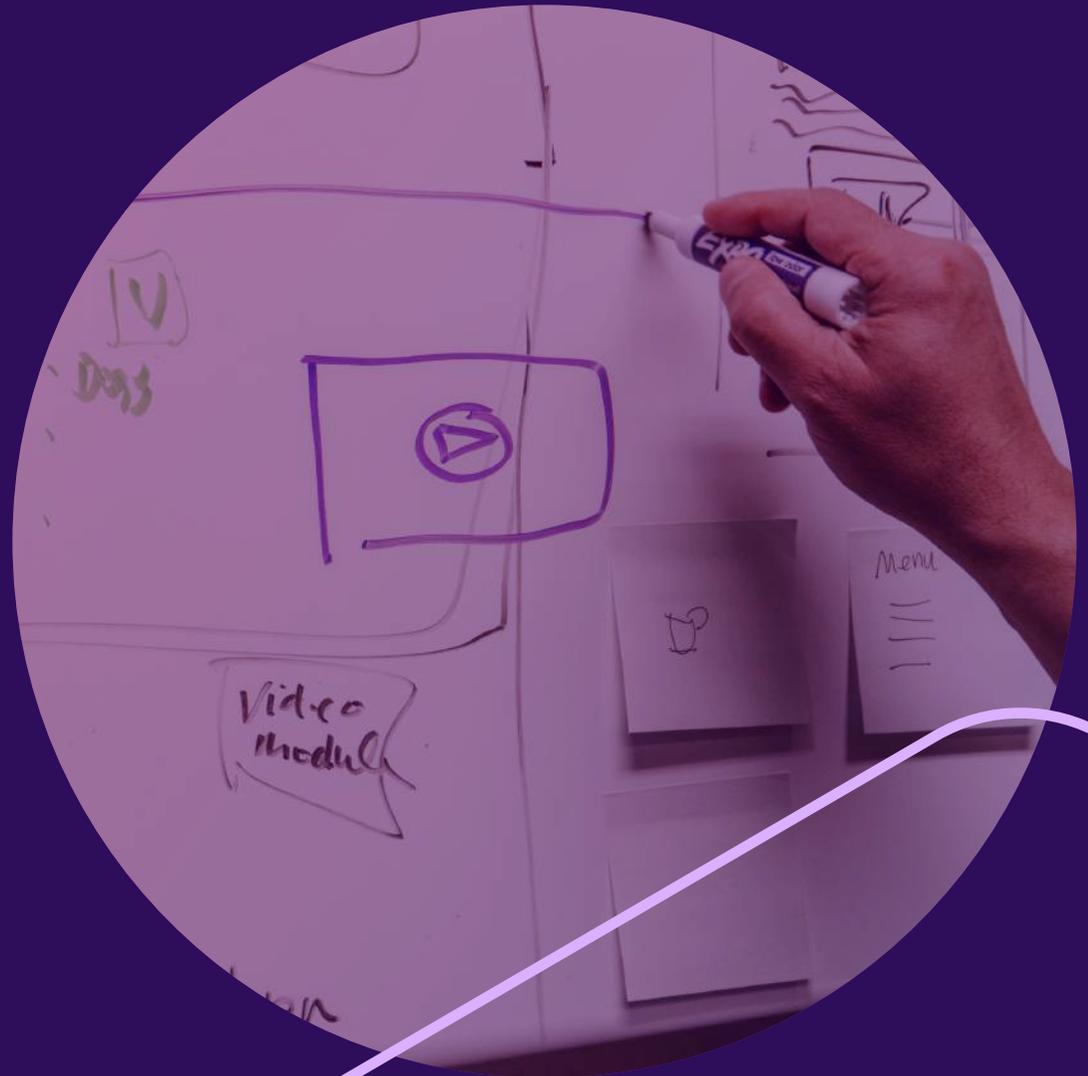
Is there any organisational roadblock that's stopping you from making the necessary changes? A tip is to assign an owner to the CX update project, and give them the mandate to call on the resources they need.



Remember, every day your talent pipeline leaks due to poor CX, is a day that all other talent acquisition investments are returning far less value than they could.

CX INVENTORY CHECKLIST

Let's make this actionable!
Look at your current CX and inventory
it for the following 🙌



Top of funnel

Attraction stage

Does your job ad provide enough for a candidate to find it relevant?

- ✓ Is the ad attention grabbing?
- ✓ Is the role clear enough?
- ✓ Is the work location spelled out?
- ✓ Is there an explicit or implicit reason it is attractive?
- ✓ Are EVP campaigns currently running for the same audience?

Does your job ad make it easy to click to find out more?

- ✓ Is the CTA visually clear? Does it pass the “[squint test](#)”?
- ✓ Does the CTA use actionable copy?
- ✓ Is it obvious to the candidate where they will end up on click?



Scroll for more



Middle of funnel

Engagement stage



Scroll for more

Does your job landing page make it easy for qualified talent to apply?

- ✓ Is the job description concise?
- ✓ Does it help talent self-qualify?
- ✓ Does it make the next step very clear?
- ✓ Is it visually and technically easy to take that next step?
- ✓ Is the landing page experience mobile friendly?

Do you provide multiple touchpoints?

- ✓ Is there retargeting in place for those who don't convert?
- ✓ Do you have role specific EVP campaigns running?
- ✓ Is the experience on mobile as easy as on desktop?
- ✓ Is it easy to find the application page again?



Bottom of funnel

Application stage



Scroll for more

Does the jump to application feel friction free?

- ✓ Is the jump from landing page to application page quick?
- ✓ If on a separate page, does the jump feel visually consistent?
- ✓ Do you provide an estimate of how long the process takes?
- ✓ Do you provide a list of what the candidate will need?
- ✓ Is there a way to save the application for later, if needed?
- ✓ Do you send reminders to complete the application?

Are there any barriers to application submission you can remove?

- ✓ Can you remove the CV or cover letter requirements?
- ✓ Do you force applicants to register?
- ✓ If so, do you provide login via social platforms?
- ✓ Can you reduce the questions applicants have to answer?
- ✓ Are any of the questions difficult to answer quickly?
- ✓ Is any part of the application difficult to complete on a mobile?
- ✓ Is any part of the application process “slow”?

ASSESSING YOUR FUNNEL FROM START TO FINISH

When you assess a candidate experience through the lens of conversion focussed UX, it becomes simpler to spot the bottlenecks that can arise. Let's look at each part of the funnel in more depth.



TOP OF FUNNEL: ATTRACTING CANDIDATES

A NOTE ABOUT SOCIAL RECRUITMENT MARKETING

The top of your application funnel should rely not on job boards, but on active recruitment marketing using a mix of channels. If you struggle to reach a specific talent pool due to 90% of it being passive, then 90% of your talent acquisition budget needs to be invested in social media.

Many of our customers used to rely on marketing agencies or overworked in-house teams for activating paid job ad campaigns ([our solution automates social recruitment marketing from end to end](#)), but regardless of your approach, most understand and harness social media recruitment marketing today.



Already on top of it?
Feel free to skip this section!

If not - let's look at why you need social recruitment marketing to fill the top of your applicant funnel with relevant candidates.

If you are still focussed on job boards as the primary channel to meet talent, know that your competition is **not**. In the competition for talent, investing in active marketing to reach all relevant candidates, before they even know they are about to become one, is a must.

The fastest way to get brilliant results from recruitment marketing is by harnessing the power of social media to tap into your **full** talent pool. Worldwide, only 30% of the total candidate pool consists of active job seekers, with that number lessening by the day in the wake of the "Great Resignation". 100% of your potential candidates are on social media, every day and every hour.

To fill the top of your candidate funnel, you need to be where they are.

Every day, and every hour.

Reach out to candidates where they are, and tailor that reach.

Engaging with talent where talent is, not where you prefer to be, with a relevant message is, the first step to creating a great candidate experience. And to fully engage, you simply need a paid 24/7 presence on social media - where your outreach to candidates can be tailored to each platform and talent pool.

We know talent acquisition teams are wary of opening the floodgates to less than relevant candidates in this step.

Usually, it only means more time spent weeding out irrelevant applicants further down the line. Adway prevents this issue by using AI to target very specific talent pools and increase fit over time.

But even if you don't use Adway today, remember that **achieving relevance in the last step requires volume in the initial stage** - and use this to your advantage by nurturing your EVP across vacancies

Three types of social media recruitment ads

Because social media ads can feel the most “visible” and easiest to fix, this part of the application funnel tends to get the most love. Rightfully so!

In this first phase of the funnel, you can use three types of social media paid ads to attract your candidate audience:



EVP ads prepare the way for everything else to work. An “always on” employer branding campaign - on the same platform as your job ads, and nurturing the same audience - will always make your vacancy campaigns more effective.

✗ Don't skimp and try to put the full stress on job ads alone! A strong employer branding campaign convinces your talent pool that you are an attractive place to work - so that job ads only have to tell them the good news about a great fit vacancy being available.



Organic job ads are geared toward candidates that are already somewhat familiar with your company, and conduct their own research to learn more about your employer brand.

✗ A surprisingly common mistake we see is thinking that organic job ads are somehow enough. They are not - you need the reach and the specific talent pool insights that paid advertising provides. Organic company and employee support on your paid ads, however, is a fantastic boost.



Paid job ads are geared toward targeted candidate audiences, and designed to engage them across multiple social media platforms with tailored messaging for each step of their journey.

✗ As always, think e-commerce, not one-off vacancy pushes. Plan for different messaging at each step of the experience: when your candidates first encounter the amazing opportunity you offer, while they are considering it, and the nudge for when the timing is right.

✗ Then tailor that message depending on the platform and talent pool! A tech developer campaign on Reddit should not sound the same as a sales support role on Snapchat.

Paid ads on social media are the cornerstone of an “always-on” strategy. They allow you to create a 24/7 talent journey that tells talent the story of your company, showcases ads for open positions, highlights testimonials from current employees and kickstarts a rich and engaging candidate experience.

Remember, we are creating an experience - and that experience needs to have multiple touch points to be effective.

Hang on - why can't I just focus on job ads here?

75% of job seekers are more likely to apply to a job if the employer actively manages its employer brand. This means, among other things, developing a consistent identity and value proposition for your brand that greets candidates across multiple platforms.

Remember our insistence on e-commerce thinking? With job ads, we are always selling a great career opportunity. With employer branding ads, we sell a great work culture to back that claim up, inspiring talent to take a chance on us as their next step in their professional life.

MIDDLE OF FUNNEL: ENGAGING CANDIDATES

Once the candidate has heard about your company and decides to engage with you further, they'll be ready to visit your website, career page and job ad landing pages.

At this stage, the next UX-minded question is: how will you greet them there? If you gave some love to your wonderful job ads, spend twice that love on a tailored landing page for each. If you have an attention grabbing EVP campaign, make sure your career site follows through.



Never create a disappointing experience in the next step.

It is easy to dismiss this step, especially if your recruitment marketing works in a silo from other parts of your talent acquisition ecosystem - career sites and job landing pages might not be as easy to tweak, and often have multiple stakeholders.

Our advice is to invest in software that can help you create custom pages at speed, whether that software is Adway or not, and to explore the options your ATS gives you to automate as much of the work as possible.

Create an engaging career page

Your career page is one of your company's biggest windows into your lived culture and day-to-day work life. It should feature team photos and videos, employee testimonials, amazing perks and benefits, how you give back to the community, and opportunities for learning and career growth.

We talk a lot about UX and conversion in this guide, but great **content** is just as important. You wouldn't waste your valuable time browsing an online store with drab images and poor information quality - why put your candidates through the same?

Aim for your career pages and job landing pages to:

👉 Give meaningful insight into the culture you "sell"

👉 Inspire candidates to imagine themselves as part of that culture

👉 Provide enough information for them to evaluate if the "product" is for them

Keep in mind that career pages can serve two purposes in the overall CX:

1. A place for the candidate to **validate** whether this would be a good fit
2. A place to **apply** to relevant vacancies.

In the science of Conversion Rate Optimisation, it is usually a bad idea to have any landing page serve two masters - that is, trying to fulfill two objectives in one. So take a step back and define what primary role your career page serves, and always aim to funnel applicants to the application part - while making the rest of the career site accessible for exploration.



Tip: Upgrade your CX to the next level by working with specific, tailored career landing pages for each talent pool. The look, feel, and copy of a career in your tech team **should** be different from one in customer support!



Emphasise the team culture: at Adway, our techies love the collaboration and team speed. For you, it might be more of a rebel hacker culture.



Emphasise talent pool perks: do you find that your tech talent look for flexible work schedules more than they do a free gym card? Highlight the relevant perks! (Kidding - Adway tech developers reading this, we know you hit the gym more than we do.)



Highlight the actual team: you know who your future applicants will be working alongside - why not highlight their amazing future colleagues?

Create relevant landing pages for each job ad

Have you done your homework when it comes to your ideal hire? What's attractive to them as an audience? Do they value an inclusive and diverse company culture? Flexible work benefits? A lively social scene?

Whatever it is that catches their eye and compels them to apply, **this** is what should be featured most prominently in your job ad landing page.

There are very good reasons to take a tailored approach:

- **Inconsistency kills conversion.** This is a universal truth and applies the more so in talent acquisition. If our job ad manages to catch the eye of tech developers for its futuristic brand and inspiring culture, but we then throw them to a very different looking page, we will lose the vast majority simply because we could not deliver on expectations.

Imagine applying to work at Google and be met by an industrial warehouse filled with rusty tools for your interview - if you were a brilliant candidate with 10 other job offers pending, would you bother to walk in the door?

- **Impersonal touches weaken employer brands.** Put yourself in the shoes of your prospective talent. You cared enough about them to hook them in with a great job ad, but did not care enough to make them feel seen once they did what you asked and clicked? Data backs this up: candidates use the application experience as a predictor for how the company will treat them as employees, and react negatively to impersonal, one size fits all communication.

Psst... Optimise for mobile

There's a good chance that a candidate will engage with your recruitment funnel from the palm of their hand. So, just as in e-commerce, think mobile first. We all know we should, but it's easy to forget when our own interaction with our company sites usually happens through comfortable full size screens.



There are practical implications to this beyond design. Since **53%** of mobile users will abandon a page that loads in more than three seconds, it's important to ensure your entire CX is not just mobile-friendly, but fast-loading. You don't want to give that fantastic applicant time to look away from what you're offering!



Retarget, retarget, retarget

Social media retargeting is one of the most successful strategies for re-engaging leads, or in our case, prospective applicants. Retargeting means we acknowledge that not every visit to our career or application pages will result in an application.

In fact, few will! It is not always the right timing, and often, prospective applicants need further information and nurture. They need to get to know us better and they need emotional arguments as well as social proof to take the plunge. This is where we have a chance to continue the dialogue through retargeting - triggering a different set of ads to nurture applicants onwards in their journey.

Again, it's important to avoid pinning your CX on one-and-done ads, or falling into a one-size-fits-all strategy. At this step of the funnel, it means not just pushing more job ads for the sake of it, but taking candidates deeper with **different** information through employer branding ads layered in through retargeting.

Employee testimonials shine here, by helping candidates see what a "day in the life" is like at your company, making them much more willing to go the full stretch the next time they are exposed to an actual job ad from you.

Common pitfalls:

How you lose candidates in the “Engagement” stage

A stagnant, outdated career page

Candidates aren't just landing on your career page to look at job ads! They want to see the benefits of working at your company. Why should they choose you? What does your company stand for? What makes you stand out? And if the answer to all of the above is “we had an answer to that, five years ago” - you are not likely to hear from that candidate again.



Tip: Implement a process and an internal stakeholder responsible for regularly reviewing and freshening up your career pages.

Slow loading pages

A landing page that's slow to load can create a serious lag in a candidate's ability to get to that "next step." In fact, **BBC** found that, for every extra second of page load time, 10% of users will leave altogether. **An ideal page load speed** should be less than 2-3 seconds (although Google aims for under a half-second) and an ideal mobile web page should load in under three seconds.



Tip: Try to apply for one of your vacancies - and time it.



Not enough visual content

Using visual content like videos on landing pages can improve conversions by **86%**. It's important to strike a balance between written content and vivid images or videos to break up text and inspire further movement towards application. Remember, you are selling your company and vacancy to candidates - don't stop just because they are close. "Sell" smarter and better through a great visual experience.



Unclear calls to action

The call-to-action (or CTA) is what keeps the candidate moving forward in the candidate journey. Its importance cannot be overlooked! Your candidates should always know what you want them to do, how they're supposed to do it, and, most importantly, what's in it for them? Replace the ubiquitous "Read more" with "Yes, let's talk!"



Bad application process?

👋 Say goodbye to most of your future talent

- **72%** of hiring managers say they provide clear job descriptions... yet **only 36%** of candidates say the same
- **9 out of 10** potential candidates drop out because the application process was “too lengthy or complicated”
- **59%** of candidates admitted to having left job applications because of technical issues (technical bugs, slow websites, or poor UX)
- Processes with 30 screening questions reduce applications by **50%**.
More than 45 questions? Expect an abandonment rate of nearly **90%**

BOTTOM OF FUNNEL: CONVERTING CANDIDATES

Here it is! The time has finally come for your courted talent to click “apply.” Yet this is the most sensitive step and where it is easiest to lose your most qualified applicants along the way.

When it comes to converting candidates, you’ve come too far to experience the dreaded dropoff now! This is the time to ensure smooth sailing for the applicant. No unnecessary screening hurdles, overcomplicated application processes, lagging load times or mobile experience glitches.

Due to silos, lack of resources, or a general fear of rocking the boat, whatever the reason, the actual application is the **least** loved part of the candidate experience in most pipelines - for applicants and talent acquisition professionals both.

The upside? Get the application process right, and you are well on your way to distinguish your employer brand and net more high quality applicants.

In this section, we want to give you one simple guideline and three of the most common pitfalls (for more, refer to the assessment checklist earlier in this guide).

Are you ready? Here is the key to a great application CX:



Remove every single step you can. That's it.

Does this sound too simplistic? It isn't. It's the harsh truth most application processes need. The more steps, the more requirements, the more hassle you put applicants through - the more candidates you will lose.

And those you lose? They will be the most high value ones.

Because great talent has great options, and no time for a 20 step outdated application website that asks for their mother's birth certificate or a three page essay on why they love your product. There, we said it.

Embrace the tough love and demand better from your application process. Unsure where to start? Focus on the three biggest pitfalls below.

Embrace the tough love and demand better from your application process. Unsure where to start? Focus on the three biggest pitfalls below.

The best way to lose your best candidates

✗ An overly complex application process

If your application process has so many steps that a candidate can't complete it in **five** steps or less, or in **three** minutes or less, it's time to ask yourself: What is reasonable to demand from the candidate here? Which steps are essential to submit their application? And what can you trim out to make the process less involved? The harsh truth is that we slave over our recruitment efforts, but our best candidates simply won't pause their day to give us that cover letter nobody else asks for.

✗ Too many screening requirements

We're not saying screening for relevancy or industry-specific skills isn't important, but you can implement it without overcomplicating the entire process. A few upfront qualifiers is fine, but resist the urge to ask for the candidate's entire background before they've even decided if they're interested in applying. Separate "mandatory" from "preferred", and distil even the mandatory ones into a single checkbox.

✗ Too difficult to apply from a mobile

If they can't apply from their phones, they might not apply at all. Make sure your application process is optimised for mobile users, and that each stage loads in three seconds or less.

The radical solution to easy application

Take inspiration from the simplicity of Adway Apply and let candidates apply with **one click** — directly in the job ad itself, on the same app they found you, without having to switch devices.

The next best thing? Ask for an email address or mobile number only in the first step, and auto-populate this information through their social login. Rely on nudging via SMS or email to help them add more info as they go.

Create the Optimal Candidate Experience With Adway

Implementing your own seamless CX starts with effective social recruiting and ends with an easy application process. At Adway, we help talent acquisition teams excel at both.

Our fully automated platform generates on-brand paid ads across social media, the second a new vacancy is posted in your ATS. But our true competitive advantage lies in our AI. It gets to know your talent pools over time and optimises great candidate experiences for each audience, while Adway Apply builds on these results to ensure great candidates apply in droves.

Simply put: we empower talent acquisition teams around the world to spend their time meeting great candidates, not chasing them or managing agencies, webmasters, and creatives.

**Way simpler. Way smarter.
And way more talent.**

[GET IN TOUCH!](#)

Book your 15 minute consultation!