RETHINK YOUR CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE OR RUIN YOUR BRAND
By Amy Hirsh Robinson, Interchange Group (www.interchange-group.com)

Chances are, your current hiring process is ruining your employer brand. Consider these statistics:

- 60% of job seekers report a negative candidate experience with the employers they engage.

- 72% of job seekers report sharing their negative candidate experiences online.

- 55% of job seekers report avoiding certain companies after reading negative online reviews.

Job seekers begin to form an opinion about a company, as an employer AND as a business, the very moment they begin the application process. One negative candidate experience creates a ripple effect as applicants vocalize and post their dissatisfaction with how they were treated and discourage others from applying. Millennials, who represent three-fourths of active job seekers, are especially quick to share their experiences online and pay particularly close attention to reviews from their peers.

Top Causes of the Negative Candidate Experience

Most employers are oblivious to their role in creating a negative candidate experience and fail to understand the broader impact their behavior has on their company's brand and ability to recruit top talent. Wondering what constitutes a bad experience for the applicant?

- **Lack of response.** By far the most common reason job seekers report having a negative candidate experience is that employers simply don't bother to respond to them. Seventy-five percent of applicants never hear back from employers after applying for a job, and 60% never hear back from employers after an interview.

- **Time disrespected during interviews.** Job seekers who report having an *extremely* negative experience with an employer are most likely to say that their time was disrespected during the interview itself. Common examples include recruiters or hiring managers who failed to show up or showed up late, and interviewers who were not prepared or appeared disengaged or disinterested during the interview.

- **Exasperating application processes.** Most automated applicant processes today are tedious, overly complex and often irrelevant to the job. Sixty percent of job seekers report quitting in the middle of filling out online job applications because of the length or complexity of the automated process.

5 Ways to Ensure a Positive Candidate Experience & Stand Out as an Exceptional Employer

Given the low bar set by most employers, imagine what a point of differentiation it would be if you left candidates feeling respected as human beings and positive about your company. Imagine how your employer brand would stand out if you did these five simple things:

1. **Walk in their shoes.** Map out the candidate's journey with you (whether it starts with an online application or a call from an external recruiter) to understand each and every touch point and where in the journey you create a positive or negative experience. Supplement your knowledge by reading online reviews about your interviews or application process on platforms like Glassdoor and Indeed.

2. **Acknowledge the candidate's existence.** Make it mandatory that each candidate is thanked for their application and told when they will be hear back from you about next steps or an end to the application process. For large companies, the notification systems can be automated, but make sure the message reflects your brand and does not come across as machinelike.

3. **Communicate status.** Keep candidates apprised of their application status at set intervals and inform them about where they stand in the decision process. Close the loop with every candidate that applies for the job or has an interview, not just the ones who get the job. The people you do not hire have just as much influence on your company's reputation as those who join your organization.

4. **Provide interview feedback.** Candidates deserve to know when and why they missed the mark with an interview instead of the black box they typically experience. Ninety-four percent of job seekers want interview feedback and job seekers are four times more likely to consider a company for a future opportunity when they receive constructive feedback.

5. **Simplify the application process.** Allow various application options so that candidates can apply by uploading their resume or via their social media profiles. Shorten your application forms to include only the questions that are absolutely necessary and eliminate the need for applicants to create accounts in order to apply for jobs.

The Exponential Power of a Positive Candidate Experience

Good applicant experiences have positive long-term effects for organizations regardless of whether the candidate was actually hired. Fifty-six percent of applicants who were happy with the way they were treated by an employer when applying for a job said they would consider seeking employment with the company again and 37% said they would tell others to do the same. More importantly, how a company treats job candidates (the ones hired AND the ones rejected) broadcasts a clear message about its values. As the boundaries between employer and company brand continue to blur, the importance of the candidate experience to a company's overall success will magnify.