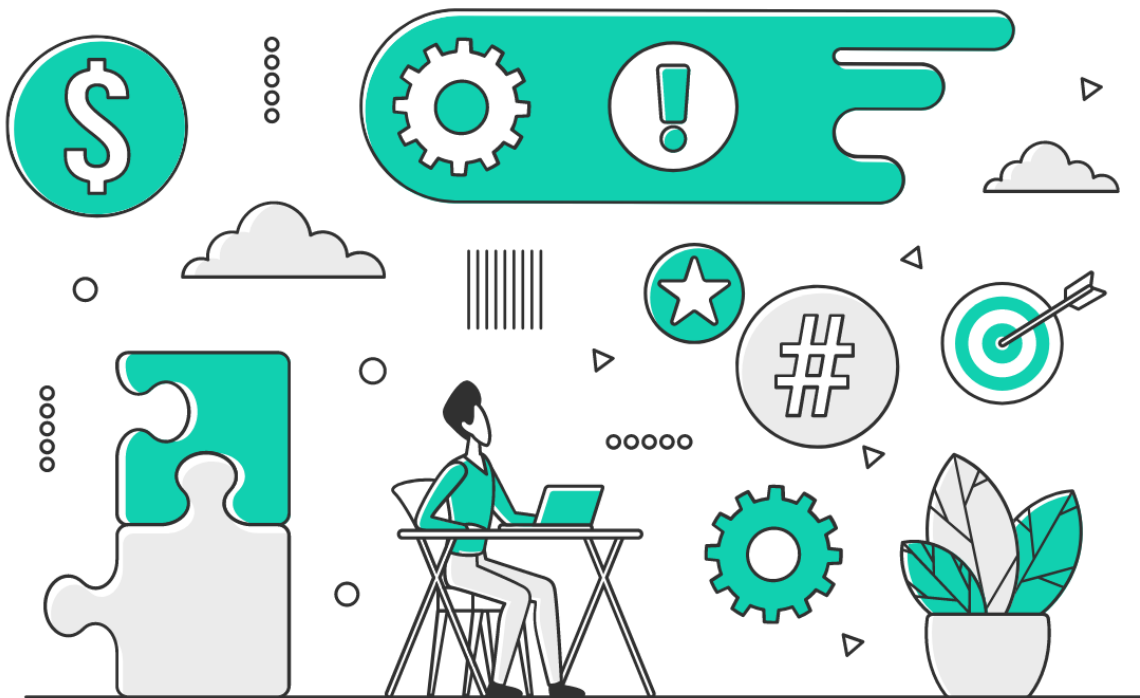


HOW TO CREATE THE BEST

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE



recruitment
marketing.com

How to Create the Best Candidate Experience

Your candidate experience should be consistent no matter where candidates engage with your employer brand, whether that's on your careers site, on a job posting, at a virtual career fair—anywhere!

“For many job seekers, their first impression of your employer brand is not your career site—it's your post on a job board or social media platform such as LinkedIn,” says Keca Ward, Senior Director of Talent Experience at Phenom People. “Talent branding across all channels is critical to delivering a seamless candidate experience that engages and converts best-fit candidates.”

Candidate experience is critical to successful recruiting strategies. Know the channels where your employer brand exists and audit how they align. This will help you understand how a candidate may be finding you, learning more about you, and making the decision to apply for your jobs.

Ensure candidates have the same experience no matter where they see you—on or offline. Hopefully, that experience is a positive one!

Let's look at each layer of the candidate experience for recruitment marketers to consider:

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1. Develop a Story
2. Tell Your Story Across Many Channels
3. Paid Channels for Recruitment
4. Earned Channels for Recruitment
5. Owned Channels for Recruitment
6. Collect Candidate Feedback

Develop a Story

Tell a story across all channels that will create engagement and be impactful to drive candidates through your recruitment marketing funnel.

Derive this story from a combination of your employee value proposition (EVP) and real testimonials from employees. What is it like to work at your company? What do people love about their jobs? Candidates should be able to glean this story no matter where they interact with your employer brand.

Pro Tip:

Only speak about the employee experience from a real and human place. Make sure to gather feedback from your employees to discover what is “real” in your employer brand and what your value is as an employer. Employee Resource Groups, or ERGs, are a great way to do this.

You shouldn't try to define this on your own—utilize your employees' perspectives and experiences.

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Create employer brand guidelines to drive all of your content throughout the candidate experience. This way, you can ensure no matter who is working on a piece of the funnel, the job seeker gets the same impression of your company.

Tell Your Story Across Many Channels

Understand the different channels in your recruitment marketing strategy and how each provides a unique opportunity to create candidate engagement.

To start, put on your job seeker hat! Search your company online, try applying for an open position or two, and see what the candidate experience is like for yourself. Audit as you go and take note of where you can improve the candidate experience, where your employer brand needs more consistency, and where information or details are missing that a candidate might find valuable.

Job seekers will encounter your employer brand at many points along their journey. As recruitment marketers, you'll influence their experience with your paid, earned, and owned media.

Paid Channels for Recruitment

It starts with getting people to click on your ads. If you're noticing that impressions aren't converting into clicks, look at your job titles.

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Job titles that don't adhere to best practices generally won't attract candidates to take further action. Nobody wants to learn more about roles like "Chief Marketing Wizard" or "Sr. Manufacturing Mgr II – Ops Level 1 | Day Shift Job Code: AB2991".

Improve the candidate experience by optimizing the job title for keyword-based searches. Tailor it for the specific job seeker audience you need.

The same goes for any other copy in your ads. You need to share your authentic employee experiences for candidates to want to learn more about your job openings. Learn more about job postings best practices.

Pro Tip:

When in doubt about your ad copy's relevance to your audience, conduct an A/B test. Run two different versions of your ad for a few days until you see which one gains more clicks. Then, you can turn off the version that didn't work

Earned Channels for Recruitment

Job seekers will also encounter your company through earned media such as shares, mentions, reposts and reviews. You don't have much control over what other people say about your company, but it's essential to know the places a candidate might find them.

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Employer review sites are excellent for engaging with current employees and receiving their open and honest feedback about you as an employer. Audit these sites a few times a year to see the conversation about your employee experience.

If the story your employees share does not align with your EVP, take steps to course correct:

- Provide feedback to the rest of your human resources team
- Interview current employees for their testimonials to see what aligns
- Continue to share the employee stories that amplify your EVP

Also, you can earn advocates through internal company channels.

Internally, you can earn employee advocates or brand ambassadors, and even employee referrals. Referrals are proven to reduce time to hire, cost per hire and more.

Owned Channels for Recruitment

Lastly, you have your career site and your social media channels to drive home your story. While you have complete control over these platforms, there are still some places to help you notice when the candidate experience is inconsistent.

If candidates are landing on your website but not applying to roles, start by evaluating your job descriptions. They should be concise, engaging and speak to the right audience that clicked on your job title. Job description best practices and brand messaging are the focus at this stage.

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Pro Tip:

Consider a tool like Textio or Ongig to understand how different types of job seekers perceive your job description.

Additionally, if candidates are starting applications but not finishing them, you have another issue with your process. Make sure your application is as concise and straightforward as possible. It also needs to be optimized for a short-form mobile application.

During this final stage of the application process, take the time to understand which qualifying questions are absolutely needed versus which ones are just background noise. Your candidates will thank you, and you'll see an uptick in your application rate.

Collect Candidate Feedback

To continue creating the best candidate experience, it's critical to seek out feedback year over year. Send anonymous surveys to your new hires and recent candidates to ask them about their experience.

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Here are some examples of questions to ask in your surveys:

Ask new hires:

Ask candidates who weren't hired:

Did your first month in the role match your expectations of the job requirements?

How friendly was the recruiting team you interacted with?

Did your first month in the role match your expectations of the company culture?

Did the interview process match your expectations of our company?

Would you refer a friend to this company?

What would make our hiring process better?

Share this feedback with everyone who touches the candidate experience: recruitment marketing, recruiters, hiring leaders and other HR teams. The candidate experience is impacted by everyone who interacts with job seekers throughout their journeys, but recruitment marketers are the first line of defense. Convert more top talent into candidates by focusing your efforts on these touch points.

Best Practices to Maximize Recruitment on Your Career Site

Candidates are watching you. It sounds creepy but it's true. They're Googling your company, pulling up employee profiles on LinkedIn, reading reviews on Glassdoor. After all, choosing an employer is a major life decision.

The place these job stalkers go most is your careers site, which is one of the primary fact-finding tools at a candidate's disposal.

- Is it ready for visitors?
- Is it easy to navigate?
- Informative?
- Search engine optimized?
- Mobile friendly?
- Personalized?
- Helpful?
- Most importantly, is it engaging?

Because while it's true that a new job is a huge decision, it's also true that our attention span—even for important stuff—is minuscule.

Choose the Right Careers Site Platform

Make sure to carefully think through the technology behind your careers site. Does your tech play nice with your ATS?

How about your CRM?

How easy is it to create new pages? Do your research—the platform you choose can make or break your careers site.

Make Your Careers Site Mobile Friendly

One of the first tasks on your Careers Site To-Do List should be make it responsive—i.e., your site needs to work on mobile devices. If a candidate can't research a company using their phone, they're going to find another company.

Responsive design allows your website to automatically adapt to any device or screen size. So whether a candidate visits your website on a phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer, it will look as you intended it to.

Responsive design uses Cascading Style Sheets, or CSS. This will make it so your site works everywhere, gets scaled appropriately and you don't need to send visitors to different versions depending on their technology.

Mobile job applications: 2 truths, 1 solution

But what about job applications? How do you make those mobile friendly?

- **Mobile job applications truth #1:** Most people browse social media on mobile devices.
- **Mobile job applications truth #2:** Applying for a job on a cell phone is not a good experience.

If your social links send job seekers to your careers site to apply, you may see an increase in drop offs once they get to the application.

Solution:

Instead of driving to an application page, use social posts to send potential candidates to creative alternatives that are easier to tackle on a phone—maybe a page called “Five Things to Know About Us” or an opportunity to join your talent network.

Let Candidates Drive Your Content

The candidate should be at the center of every decision you make regarding your careers site. A job seeker lands on your homepage—and then what? Think about what’s in it for them. Imagine what they might want to know about your company. Picture their user experience. By putting yourself in your candidates’ shoes and creating content around them, you’re on your way to an effective careers site.

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What candidates want to know

Your site should include some basics about your organization and what you're offering. Consider including:

- Fast facts about your company, including number of employees, locations, years in business, etc.
- Company values
- Awards (especially ones related to employment)
- Benefits
- Career paths (more on this below)
- Volunteer opportunities and programs
- Employee resource groups
- Employee testimonials
- Social media feeds and links (more on this below)
- A call to action to join your talent network
- Events (job fairs, campus visits, open houses, meet-and-greets—list events you're hosting where candidates can make a personal connection)

Showcase Your Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Let's rephrase that: showcase your diversity, equity and inclusion if you have it to showcase. Honesty is especially crucial when it comes to DEI. If you have good data to share, share it! If you don't, share what you're doing to change that fact.

There are plenty of places throughout your careers site where you can highlight or underline your DEI. For instance:

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- **Imagery:** Use images of real employees and avoid stock unless absolutely necessary (candidates will quickly spot a fake).
- **Testimonials:** Feature diverse employees discussing their roles, your culture, career paths, growth potential, if they feel they can be themselves at work, and anything else that promotes your DE&I.
- **Employee resource groups:** List your ERGs with a brief description so candidates can see how diverse employees support each other.
- **Volunteer opportunities:** Use video or photography of your employees engaging in volunteer opportunities to show an inclusive, empathetic workforce.
- **Transparency:** Your shift towards true diversity and inclusion may be a work in progress—that's fine. Be transparent about it. Consider sharing data and goals so job seekers can get a true picture of the current state of diversity at your company, and a sense of how it's evolving.
- **Equal Opportunity Employer statement:** An EOE statement expresses your commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion. You can include a basic version or take it up a notch with a branded statement.

Use Personalization

One of the most powerful ways to put candidates at the center of your careers site is through personalization, which uses AI and machine learning to tailor content to a specific site visitor.

Imagine a job seeker has visited your careers site several times. With personalization, you can:

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- Serve them new, relevant job postings
- Share blog posts related to the field they're interested in
- Direct them to a veterans' landing page if they have a military background
- Offer employee profiles of someone who works in a similar role

The more tailored the content, the more of an impact your company can make.

Make it their personal Amazon homepage for their career.

Stay Consistent with Your Employer Brand

Your careers site is a major (perhaps *the* major) communications touchpoint. It needs to accurately convey your employer brand.

Remember that an employer brand is everything a candidate thinks of when they think of an employer. That includes color palette, imagery, tone of voice, featured content, even ease of use (or lack thereof). If there were no logo on the screen while you viewed Facebook's careers site, you'd still know it was theirs.

Same with Apple, Nike, Chipotle. The employer brands of those companies come through loud and clear, creating consistency and trust. Make sure yours do too.

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Be honest about your company

Remember, you don't want to set up a disconnect between what you promise candidates and what they'll find if they join the organization. Go for authenticity above all else—no stock shots of diverse engineers if you don't have any.

No boasts about work-life balance if your company culture encourages long hours.

No elaborate descriptions of your collaborative work environment if that's just an open-plan office.

Instead, be transparent. Use videos of real employees—even better, make it user-generated content. Link to Glassdoor, Indeed or Comparably reviews so job seekers can get an unvarnished glimpse of your organization.

Honesty creates trust. Trust creates loyal employees. And loyal employees create stronger companies.

Keep Copy Concise

You only have a few seconds to catch the attention of web browsers. You may get a small uptick in attention for a careers site—a job is a major life decision and all—but the point is: get to the point. Websites are a visual medium, so let your images do the heavy lifting and keep copy short and relevant.

Make Your Careers Site Accessible

As companies transition toward more inclusive cultures, there's been a greater push for website accessibility. Accessible websites are designed so that anyone and everyone can use them, regardless of any barrier like learning disabilities, visual impairments, hearing-related disabilities, motor impairment, restricted bandwidth and speed, or any other roadblock.

When your careers site is correctly designed, it gives all users equal access to information, brings in more diverse candidates, and supports your work to create a more inclusive workplace.

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6 ways to make your careers site accessible

1. **Screen reader compatibility:** A screen reader is an assistive technology used by people with vision impairments that turns text, buttons, images, and other elements into speech.
2. **Video captions:** Subtitles are a translation for people who don't speak the language being used in the video. Video captions go a step further. These are designed specifically for people with hearing challenges and include non-speech elements like footsteps, slamming doors, a throat being cleared, etc.
3. **Alt tagging:** Alt tags (aka "alt attributes" and "alt descriptions") give screen readers a way to communicate visual content like images and photographs. (Bonus: they also give search engines a text alternative to images, which helps with your SEO.)
4. **Extended time on assessments:** If you require timed assessments on your careers site, provide an option to request more time if needed to provide equal opportunity to job seekers with cognitive impairments.
5. **Color contrast:** Website users with visual disabilities may have trouble perceiving your content if the colors don't have enough contrast.
6. **Keyboard accessibility:** Many candidates with motor disabilities are unable to use a mouse or touchpad. Be sure your content can be navigated using a keyboard only.

Explain What Candidates Should Expect

Candidates don't want surprises, so tell them upfront about your hiring process. Give them a quick timeline or list to walk them through what happens after they submit their application, explaining your procedures for review and assessment, interview(s), offer, onboarding, etc.

Put Social Front and Center

This best practice should go without saying, but you'd be surprised what slips through the cracks! Be sure to place your social media links where they're easy to find and use. In fact, you can even try built-in widgets that display tweets and posts so users can explore your social channels while remaining on your site.

However you handle social, you want to communicate that your company has a thriving community and allow the candidate to picture themselves as part of it.

Feature Growth Opportunities

There are several different categories of growth at work. Focusing on one or all of them will help convince job seekers that your company is the right fit.

Career paths

A job seeker is more likely to apply for a position that has growth potential, so be sure to showcase career paths on your site. Even if you're hiring for entry-level call center positions, for example, you can still include a few bullets about where employees can go next within the company: technical support, sales manager, executive director, etc.

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Financial growth

Money talks. If you offer performance-based compensation, be sure to feature it to motivate potential candidates to apply.

Personal growth

There are other ways to grow at work that have nothing to do with promotions or paychecks. Consider highlighting your work-life balance (if you have it—remember our point about honesty!) with a snapshot of ways you encourage employees to pursue personal goals.

Learning and development

If you have a robust L&D program, let candidates know. The right training is a stepping stone in all of the above categories.

Make It Easy to Apply

It's human nature to seek the path of least resistance. A job search is no exception. So, make it easy for candidates to apply by being sure your application is no more than two clicks away and that you have multiple "apply now" buttons throughout your careers site.

Create a Clear Call to Action

Your call to action (or CTA) is the thing you want candidates to do after they visit your careers site. You may have multiple CTAs, but whatever you're asking the job seeker to do must be easy to spot and easy to complete.

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Place your most important CTA above the fold—meaning it will be visible without scrolling—so that it's the first thing a candidate sees.

Pro Tip:

Make the font large and easy to read and be sure your CTA button stands out from the rest of the page. It also doesn't hurt to repeat your CTA again lower on your page, "below the fold."

Tracking

Tracking will tell you if your careers site is doing its job. Google Analytics is a good place to start for insights into candidate behavior. It can tell you:

- **Where job seekers are coming from:** paid media, organic traffic from your SEO strategy, etc.
- **Your conversion rate:** the Google Tag Manager provides data on number of clicks to apply, completed applications, and more. It will help you determine what sources drive the highest conversion rates.
- **If your application process is successful:** the Google Analytics Funnel Visualization feature lets you track the application process so you can see where candidates drop off. (Bonus: Google Analytics is free)

Unconventional Ideas

Once you've nailed the basic careers site best practices above, it's time to start getting creative. Put yourself back in the shoes of your candidate. What would add to their experience? What would delight them? What would express your employer brand in a way that's true, a way that connects with the type of candidates who will thrive at your organization?

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Here are a few thought starters:

- Video tours of the office
- Interactive infographics and apps
- Scheduled webinars or chats
- Opportunities to connect with a future colleague
- Company playlist
- Recruitment blog
- Assessment quizzes or gamification
- Chatbots
- Newsletter sign up
- Deeper dives on hard-to-fill roles

Best Practices Using the P.E.A.C.H. Method

As recruiters in a candidate-centric world (and good humans on this planet), we can do better than automated ATS messages.

And we can definitely do better than no messages at all!

For recruiters and sourcers who want to up-level their LinkedIn InMail messages and candidate-facing emails, the P.E.A.C.H. Method is perfect for you.

Introducing the P.E.A.C.H. Method

Because we're passionate about empowering recruiters to create unforgettable candidate experiences, we created a method for messaging that is simple and easy to use. This is not the only way to successfully write outreach messages, but it is one to try.

The P.E.A.C.H. Method is an eye-catching way for employers and recruiters to connect with applicants.

Rather than using impersonal mass emails, it seeks to build a rapport with candidates, enticing them to respond to the recruiter's message and learn more about the position.

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The technique is characterized by five core traits.

1. **P**ersonalized
2. **E**ye-catching
3. **A**ppealing
4. **C**lear
5. **H**uman.

Personalized

To personalize your message, you should start by including the candidate's first name and one unique thing about them in the message. (Ditch their last name since it makes communication too formal. This is the first of hopefully many conversations, so approach it using a conversational tone.)

Eye-Catching

"Spend 90 cents of your dollar on the subject line."

Focus most of your efforts writing a bold and compelling subject line. (I have a sourcer friend who claims to have great success with the subject line: "Free beer." Without an eye-catching headline, readers won't click and read your message.

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Avoid using 'New Opportunity' or 'Apply Now.'

It helps to personalize the subject line of your message and make it unique to the candidate. Mine their LinkedIn profile for their alma mater's school mascot or mention an organization where they volunteered. This shows that you have done your research.

Appealing

President John F. Kennedy famously said, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." The same holds true in recruiting. Ask not what your candidate can do for you, but share what you can do for your candidate.

Always approach recruitment with a candidate-centric mindset. Sharing what the job holds for them makes your message more appealing. Use the body of the message to describe your differentiators. Your outstanding benefits, growth opportunities, culture or compensation.

Approach your message as the appetizer (did you notice I think about food a lot?) to get them hungry to learn more. Avoid lengthy messages. In most cases, a paragraph will do. The goal is to get the candidate to respond to the message and move forward in the interview process.

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Clear

Great candidate messages always have a clear next step. Do you want the candidate to set up time to talk? Email you back with questions? Visit your career site?

Don't assume that they are ready to apply. You still have time to inform them about your role and company. Design a streamlined candidate experience by including a short link to the job or send a link to your company's website.

Human

I'm a huge advocate of developing personal connections. People trust people. Not brands.

Your entire message should feel warm and personal. It makes a difference when people can see a human behind the message. At the end of the day, we're just humans recruiting humans.

A customized, tailored email makes the candidate feel that they're wanted for the open role. Messages without a human touch are less likely to get recruiters the response they want.

Benefits of Using the P.E.A.C.H. Method

There are several advantages to using the P.E.A.C.H. Method.

First, it's excellent for improving your employer brand. When you send applicants individual emails that resonate, you set yourself apart from other recruiters or employers that rely on auto-generated messaging.

Second, you'll see better results from interested candidates. Once they open and read the message, they're more likely to take follow-up action than someone who simply receives a list of open jobs.

Finally, you build your network. Even if a candidate isn't ready to leap into a new position today, you have built a personal connection that will pay dividends in the long run.. If they're impressed by your communication, they may recommend you to others they know who are looking for a new position. You only get to make a first impression once. Make it a good one.

3 Examples of the P.E.A.C.H. Method

For the sake of illustration, here are three examples of emails demonstrating The P.E.A.C.H. Method using fictional characters from Parks and Recreation and Game of Thrones.

1. Recruiting Ron Swanson

Subject: How do you eat vegan bacon? You don't.

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Ron,

I'm going to be straight with you. Since retiring from the Pawnee Parks Department and Very Good Building Company, you may be at a personal crossroads and looking for meaningful work.

Our National Park is in need of a new superintendent, and I think you are man enough for the job. We believe in speaking honestly, treating everyone with fairness, and showing up on time. No yoga. No cats. Very little red tape.

Let's meet for a glass of Lagavulin whiskey tonight to talk it over.

2. Recruiting Leslie Knope

Subject: Does Pawnee love you back?

Hello, Leslie!

I recognized you from your work on the Clean Restroom Task Force.

Now that you have served our state of Indiana, I wanted to reach out about a new opportunity. Our organization is growing, and we have a leadership role open. We believe in making small incremental changes every day. Working around people you love makes work worth doing, right?

I'm the recruiter for this role and would love to connect via Zoom this week so I can tell you more.

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3. Recruiting Jon Snow

Subject: Direwolves welcome.

Jon-

Some people say you know nothing, but we both know that's untrue. You know a lot about leadership, loyalty and unifying disparate groups for a common purpose.

I know your watch has ended, and you might be open to a new opportunity.

I'm recruiting for an organization founded on bringing people together. Our people can work remotely, so as long as you have decent internet connectivity on the other side of The Wall, you'll be fine. I'll be here to guide you.

Winter is coming.

Here is your chance.

The P.E.A.C.H. Delivers Results

If you keep these tips in mind, your recruitment marketing email campaigns will gain more traction. Your hand-picked recipients will be more likely to reply to your communications since you took the time to draft a personalized message.

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The P.E.A.C.H. Method avoids automation and incorporates the human factor back into communication. It's a breath of fresh air in a recruiting environment filled with stale, impersonal overtures.

Try it yourself, and share your results!

Find the Right HR Technology for Every Stage of Hiring

We offer an extensive recruitment marketplace with innovative talent acquisition technologies for organizations of all sizes. Our partnerships with leading HR tech providers supply best-in-class solutions catered to your hiring needs and budget constraints. We remove the headache of evaluating disjointed point solutions so you can build a streamlined, high-performing tech stack aligned to your strategic talent acquisition goals. Discover how our optimized recruitment tech ecosystem can transform your organization's hiring. Visit RecruitmentMarketing.com today!

