Candidate Experience Done Right

Practical Strategies for Open Source Hiring Teams

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What You Will Learn About Me Today:

- I love **email templates**, **one-pagers, calendar schedulers**
- I prioritize **planning** to reduce friction caused by one-off communication, phone tag, etc.
- I **over communicate** to keep things clear
- I believe in **planning repeatable, easy-to-execute processes**

Results - Candidate Experience Surveys:

- Increased survey results from 3.6 out of 5 to high of 4.7 and 4.9 for **NON-HIRED** and newly hired candidates, respectively
- Maintained **multi-year** ~4.7/5 candidate experience score across entire team

The Unique Value of Candidate Experience in Open Source

01 **Attract Talent in a Competitive Market**
- Not every candidate wants to work for the highest bidder
- Driven to work with products they are passionate about

02 **Build a Pipeline of Future Hires**
- Hiring people with experience with the technology
- A positive experience drives to candidates come back

03 **Create Network, Candidate Referrals**
- Treating people with respect leads to positive outcomes
- Unselected candidates refer others when positive

04 **Build Employer Reputation**
- Tech is small. Open Source is smaller. Word spreads
- Even little adjustments can make a big impact

What is a trait of a positive candidate experience you've experience

I want to hear from you!

Communication is Everything

The more information we build and share with candidates, the more confident they will be in the interview process and the more likely you are to get a more accurate view of their skills.

Best Practices

Written hiring briefs/kick off documents are a must
- No confusion among interview team
- Future use, Long searches

Interviewer team alignment meeting - must have before first interview!
- Ensures alignment
- Everyone attends, including alternates
- Confirm everyone knows their topic, questions
- ID disagreements over role, needs

RED FLAGS

Let's figure out the interview process as we go
- <u>HARD PASS</u> on this idea

It's just X, we don't need all of this
- Yes, you do

We hired this before, nothing's changed
- Nothing? The team hasn't added or changed processes/tools? Working on the exact same projects?
- Do we still have the old hiring docs? Do we still have the templates, prep info?

Consequences

❌ Candidates hearing conflicting info
❌ Company looks disorganized
❌ Can't undo initial interview results
❌ Lost hires
❌ Poor candidate experience
❌ Wasted precious team time

EPIC FAIL
Because ordinary failure just wasn't enough.

Consider the Company Story You Want to Tell, and How

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Building a Positive Interview Experience

Bare Minimum

Able to share interview outline

Includes basic details ahead of each interview:
- Interviewer Name
- Title
- LinkedIn
- Interview Topic
- Tools required (Zoom, Coderpad, etc.)

Better

Bare Minimum, plus:
- Additional details on interview focus areas example topics or questions
- Expectation of timeline for results after
- Context on who the interviewer is beyond title (how will they interact post-hire?)
- Offer to talk if they have questions or want to discuss

Best

Depending on the interview - especially for practical, skills-based interviews - **I recommend more detailed instructions.**

Other Items:
- Good luck emails
- How'd it go emails
- Live candidate prep call
- Ensuring all recruiters are prepping candidates the same

1 My Basic Interview Prep

Even when it is an open interview, you can still add something.

Two Examples of interview prep for first calls at DBeaver (think Hiring Manager or CEO call types):

Example 1: I mainly expect an open conversation on your experience, your interest in DBeaver, your motivation, your interests, etc., as well as a chance for you to ask questions of her as well!

Example 2: First, this is a chance for you to meet your potential manager, learn more about the role from him, explore whether you would like to report to him. Please bring any questions you have for him! In addition, he will get into detail with you around your experience, sales processes, deals/quotas, territory management…those kinds of subjects. If you haven't already started exploring our website, products, etc., I definitely recommend doing so. It wouldn't surprise me if he wanted to hear your thoughts about DBeaver so far. :)

2 Better Interview Prep

Being able to add more color around team interviews is always helpful

Example of interview prep for a full team loop interview for a Customer Success role at DBeaver:
Interviewer #1, as your potential manager, will obviously be a chance for you both to get to know each other. He will \want to have a conversation more focused on how you manage customer relationships, dig into customers needs, and your experience with the sales aspect of the role (renewals, upsells, etc.).

Interviewer #2, our [Fill in Title], will likely focus more on the different metrics, goals, data, and processes you use and value in customer success to determine customer health and maintain customer relationships.

Interviewer #3, [Fill in Title], is your peer and someone you will not only work closely with but who is currently in this role. They will focus more on the practical and tactical aspects of Customer Success strategies at scale .

All of them will leave time for you to ask questions! I also wouldn't be surprised if one or all of them want to hear what you've learned about DBeaver and our products, and what you think so far :)

1 DBeaver Example - AE Presentation and Role Play

Basic Summary: Who, What, Where, When
- Each person on the interview, titles, location, LinkedIn
- Zoom link (with note to have video on)
- Basic structure summary, estimated time for each section, Ex:
  - Intros
  - Product Presentation: ~10 minutes
  - Role Play: ~20-25 minutes
  - Mutual Q&A + Feedback: ~15-20 minutes

Detailed Instructions on Product Presentation:
- What do we expect (aka how to prepare)
- Re-use resources, not looking for you to create something
- Goal of presentation (what the team is expecting to learn)

Detailed Instructions for Role Play:
- Role Play set up - who the customer is, who is playing who
- What you know about the customer heading into the "meeting"
- Goal of role play (what the team is expecting to learn or where you should end)
- Recommended Prep - no right way; not expected to be expert in DBeaver; okay to reference website, materials;

Finally: When to expect feedback post interview

2 Temporal Example - SDE Coding Interviews

Basic Summary: Who, What, Where, When
- Each person on the interview, titles, location, LinkedIn
- Zoom link (with note to have video on)
- Which tools will be required for the interview so they can test it ahead of time:
  - CoderPad, etc.
  - Zoom Whiteboard or Whiteboard of your choice
  - IDE of your choice

Coding Interview
- Concurrency interview. Example of topics that are fair game during the interview. Example of topics (typically advanced topics) that won't be covered in the interview, so they know the limits of the preparation
- Explanation of types of questions: Not leetcode style. Practical, real world questions
- You might reach a point where you don't know the answer, that's okay - goal is to see how deep your knowledge is for leveling
  - Explanation of internal leveling, topic depth at each level

Finally: When to expect feedback post interview

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Add Personalization + High Touch

High Touch Methods Stand Out

Transparency: Clear communication, realistic expectations.

Responsiveness: Timely updates and feedback. Even non-update updates - I try to email candidates at least once a week, even if I don't have an update

Respect: Valuing the candidate's time and expertise.

Personalization: Good luck emails, how did it go emails, thank you emails, feedback emails - schedule emails ahead of time!

Being Human: Apologizing for delays, being open when possible about why, out sick, team vacations, etc.

Find Ways to Share Information Outside of Traditional Calls

Find creative ways to build on a candidate's knowledge of the company without extending call times:

✅ Reduces time needed on intro calls

✅ Allows more of the conversation to focus on learning about candidate, candidate asking deeper questions

✅ Highlights company's transparency

✅ Indicator of candidate interest

Ideas for Quick One-Pagers:

🦫 Company Information: History, Value Product Links, Structure, Size, etc.

🦫 Relevant Team Explanation, Work, Example Projects, Size, Leveling (if you have it)

🦫 Benefits Information

🦫 Summary of Interview schedule (general interview prep, if you have it; save specifics for individual stages)

Use the Open Source to Your Advantage!

Open Source is a Great Pseudo-Advertising

Mainly for technical roles, the open source project or a free trial of the enterprise product, is a great way to encourage candidates to see what they'd be working on.

Do they like the technology? Could they see themselves using it?

Typically reserve this idea for middle to late stage

Internal Policies That Affect Candidate Experience

Providing Candidates with Feedback That depends on you and your company

What are the Risks?

Legal considerations are very real for a company
- Company policies

Will I do more harm than good?
- What one company looks for, another might not care about

Potential emotional toll on recruiter
- Tough conversation
- Never know reaction

Are There Benefits?

Candidate experience
- Honest appreciation regardless of result

Anecdotal benefits
- Feedback may be more open than on surveys
- Adding color to data
- Ability to track feedback patterns to iterate on process improvements or additional training needed

Other Considerations?

When to deliver feedback?
- Always?
- Certain stages?
- When you have constructive feedback?

Deliver feedback carefully
- Experience and planning required
- Set up for delivery is important
- Balance positive and areas for improvement

My Approach

1	Application Stage	• Automated Application Received Emails • Template Applicant Rejection Emails
2	Recruiter Phone Screen	• Template Post-Recruiter Rejection Email ◦ Sometimes, customized, depending on reason
3	First Manager or Practical Interview	• Template Post-Interview Rejection Email ◦ Usually customized
4	Post Loop or Final Interviews	• Template Post-Interview Rejection Email • Calendly to schedule optional call for feedback

Leveling

Performance, Promotions

Onboarding

Raises, Stock

Automation for a Better Experience

High-touch, high quality communication that candidates want doesn't have to be hard!

Find Ways to Build One-Click Processes

There are many different ways you can build simple automation into the interview process that:

✅ Ensures consistency regardless of how busy your day is

✅Builds on candidate experience and company knowledge

These are the things I can't live without:

🦫 Email Templates - ATS, Gmail, Outlook, TextExpander, Word Document

🦫 Automated Scheduling - ATS, Calendly, etc.

🦫 Auto Tasks in ATS

🦫 Using existing PM tools if no ATS - Trello, Confluence, Excel

🦫 One Pagers - Easily attached in any format

Thank you!

Thank You + Q&A

Coming Up Today!

- Talks!
- Consulting with Experts!
- Headshots!
- Workshops!

Sign Up for Consulting:

Today's Talks:

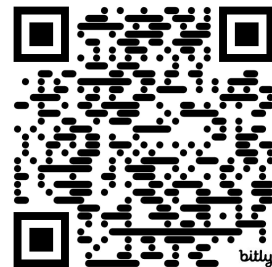11 a.m.: **Why You Should Join a Community** by Amy Marrich

12 p.m.: **Make Your Open Source Story Work for You** by Krista Burdine

1 p.m.: **Using Certification to Prove Home Lab Skills** by Adrianna Frick

1 p.m.: **Career Workshop: Interviews and Negotiations in Open Source** by Jenson Crawford

2 p.m.: **How to crack software engineering interviews at FAANG and beyond** by Vinit Dhatrak

Connect with Me:

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