



As the war for talent intensifies, creating a **Delightful Employee Experience** for new hires even before they join your company sets the tone for their journey with you. The first time your future employee gets to experience your employer's brand in real life is during the recruitment process. Will it be delightful or transactional?

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# MAKE HIRING A **DELIGHTFUL** **EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE**

## How to upgrade your employer brand to attract and retain the best talent

by Avi Liran

In today's competitive hiring landscape, no one has the luxury of a second chance to make a good first impression. All of the resources you invested in developing your corporate website and social media presence to reflect your brand have given your candidates high expectations. Now it's time to deliver.

### **MAKE IT PERSONAL.** **ADD AN EMOTIONAL TOUCH.**

So, you've decided to accept the selected candidate and make them an offer. How will you make your candidate feel special? How can you create an emotional connection and make a lasting

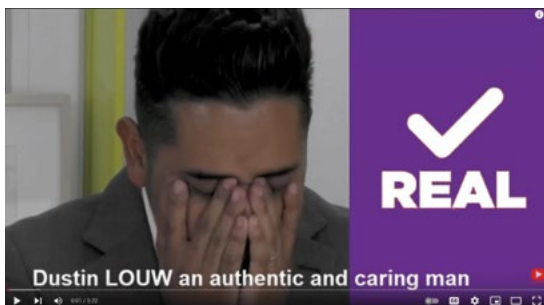
impression? What if you consider the last interview as the first part of your onboarding process?

For clues, check out an emotional interview video published on LinkedIn that attracted more than 9 million views. It features Dustin Louw, a global talent partner in a Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) company.

Dustin thought he was taking part in a documentary about people making big life changes, but was unaware that the interview was filmed. Dustin was shocked and worried when the recruiter said she'd invited people to assess whether Dustin was a people person. Dustin tensed up. Who might the prospective employer invite to talk about his character? To his amazement, his close friends were called one by one to share authentic praise about him. The last one to be called was his wife. You can imagine how emotionally unforgettable this interview was. In the video, Dustin said this was the best interview ever.

Consider watching this surprising and DELIGHTFUL interview <https://youtu.be/nmDTU3mzcno> (see QR code). It might inspire you to upgrade the last mile of your recruitment process.

Continue watching after the end of the interview, especially if you're wondering if this interview was staged.



*A word of caution: Employer brand starts from within. You don't want to project values you can't live up to. If your culture is transactional and not as appreciative and caring as you think or pretend it is, starting with such a high emotional connection can backfire. It will create high expectations that will never be met.*



## MEANINGFUL FUN IN HIRING

Every job has requirements. For instance, in the hospitality industry, one must be hospitable, positive, and friendly. When I met David Prince (1) in China in 2015, he was the GM of the Beijing Hilton, which had received the best guest reviews in the entire chain for several years in a row. I asked him, “What is your secret sauce?”

“We hire **as a team** for attitude. The rest we can teach later.” David invited members of his hiring team to become judges in the selection process, like in American Idol or BGT. They were looking for candidates who have a Ph.D. (Positive, Hungry, and Desperately want to serve). Hospitality requires people who are naturally positive, open, playful, creative, helpful, and highly empathetic. But unlike today, 2015 was an employer's market. Good brands like Hilton could attract hundreds of applicants for every opening. It took ages just to read the CVs for just one job. So, his team had to find a way to hack the selection process of whom to interview.

As the candidates arrived, they were greeted by the “smile-detecting hosts.” The smiling candidates with positive energy were invited to the “smiling event hall”. The rest were ushered to the “farewell event hall”, where they received coffee and cake and had a short chat with a team member who respectfully thanked them for coming.



They divided the “smiling group” into teams of four. Each team received a double-spread page of the local newspaper and was invited to play a simple game. To move to the next stage, each team’s four members had to step inside the perimeter of the newspaper without touching the floor outside it for 15 seconds. After each round, the remaining teams had to fold the newspaper in half and play again. The “judges” observed that as the size of the paper shrank, the candidates had to be more creative and collaborative and communicate effectively. It was easy to spot the candidates who had positive leadership traits and those who were unsuitable for Hilton’s first element of the vision “Light and warmth of hospitality”. Now it was easier to move to interview a few dozen instead of hundreds.

## HIRING FOR VALUES FIT PLAYFULLY

A recent study showed that 8 out of 10 employees say it’s important that their company’s values align with their own. It’s equally important to you to recruit people whose values are highly aligned with yours.

You want job-seekers to get so excited about your company’s brand that only the most suitable ones will apply, so you revamp your Careers page. Like most other websites, it reflects your organization’s mission, vision, and values through its copy and design. You also want to ensure the chosen candidate will be a positive fit with your culture.

But what is the most innovative way to interview the candidates you’ve shortlisted for a high-paying leadership role? The more experienced they are, the more likely it is they’ll have done their homework and prepared themselves for questions about things like their weaknesses and faults. How can you create an authentic conversation that will allow you to understand their values, priorities, and whether they’re the right fit for your team?





Game developed by Dr. Simon Dolan

The “*Value of Values*” card game (2), based on 40 years of research by Prof Simon Dolan (3), is the ultimate last-mile recruitment tool. The recruiting team can invite each candidate for the final round separately to play the game with up to four other people, usually the direct boss, one direct report, one peer, and one from HR.

At the beginning of the game, each participant receives five random cards. Through the exchange of cards, like when playing Rummy, the goal of each participant is to get closer to their top five personal values. The power of this game comes from the conversations before every card exchange.

**During every exchange, the participants ask the person who exchanges the cards four questions:**

- 1** What does the value shown on the card you intend to surrender mean to you?
- 2** What does the value on the card you selected mean to you?
- 3** Why is that value so important to you?
- 4** Tell us a two-minute real-life story that happened to you in the last 12 months about how you used the value in the card you chose. If they struggle to offer a compelling story, the value is likely to be more aspirational than actual.

**After 90 to 120 minutes of playing this game, you’ll reap the following benefits:**

- 1** Your team will gather important insights into the character and motivations of each candidate. The team will know them much better than they would have had they participated in a traditional interview.
- 2** The random nature of the game significantly reduces the chance that candidates will give preplanned answers that employers want to hear.

**Delightful rejection is a job not just for the recruiter but also for the prospective hiring manager. Your task goes beyond communicating the rejection effectively.**

**3** The candidate whom you choose for the job will have insights into the character of the important people whom she will work with, such as her direct boss, employee, and peer.

**4** Since it was a team decision based on values, the team members have higher motivation and commitment to help the new leader be successful.

## **CREATE DELIGHTFUL REJECTIONS FOR YOUR “ALMOST-HIRES”**

Some of the shortlisted candidates you almost selected might be a proper fit for the next round of hiring or newly opened positions. These can come up sooner than you think. At times, your first selection doesn’t work out. You need to keep and maintain a great relationship with them so you can keep them in your future talent funnel. You want to behave like the verse from the song Hotel California: “*We are programmed to receive. You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!*”

Delightful rejection is a job not just for the recruiter but also for the prospective hiring manager. Your task goes beyond communicating the rejection effectively. You want to make the talent you did not select feel valued, appreciated, and nourished through the journey with you, so they might consider working with and for you in the future. The way you turn down candidates will shape their lasting impressions of your brand as an employer and you as a person.

## 1 First, tune inside yourself.

Tap into your empathy and kindness. Imagine you were just rejected. How would you like to be treated? Your north star should be the values you personally and your employer brand stand for.

## 2 Respect:

Value their time with quick communication. Let them know the bad news promptly, so you don't damage the other job prospects they might have. Avoid ghosting them or sending the rejection by text, even if you're busy.

## 3 Communicate with grace.

The first step will be to hold a voice conversation. Give the candidate the privacy they need.

Most people prefer not to show their body language when they hear the bad news. After delivering it, ask permission to share with them the reasons why they were shortlisted. Praise them for all the positive qualities you found in them.

## 4 Invest time and effort.

If you and the rejected candidate live in the same city and there are no meeting restrictions, consider inviting them (you pay) for lunch or a coffee session. This will be an opportunity for you to build greater rapport. You can mentor and coach the candidate on what they can do better in the other interviews they have. Supporting their job-seeking efforts helps you build a relationship.

## 5 Cultivate the relationship.

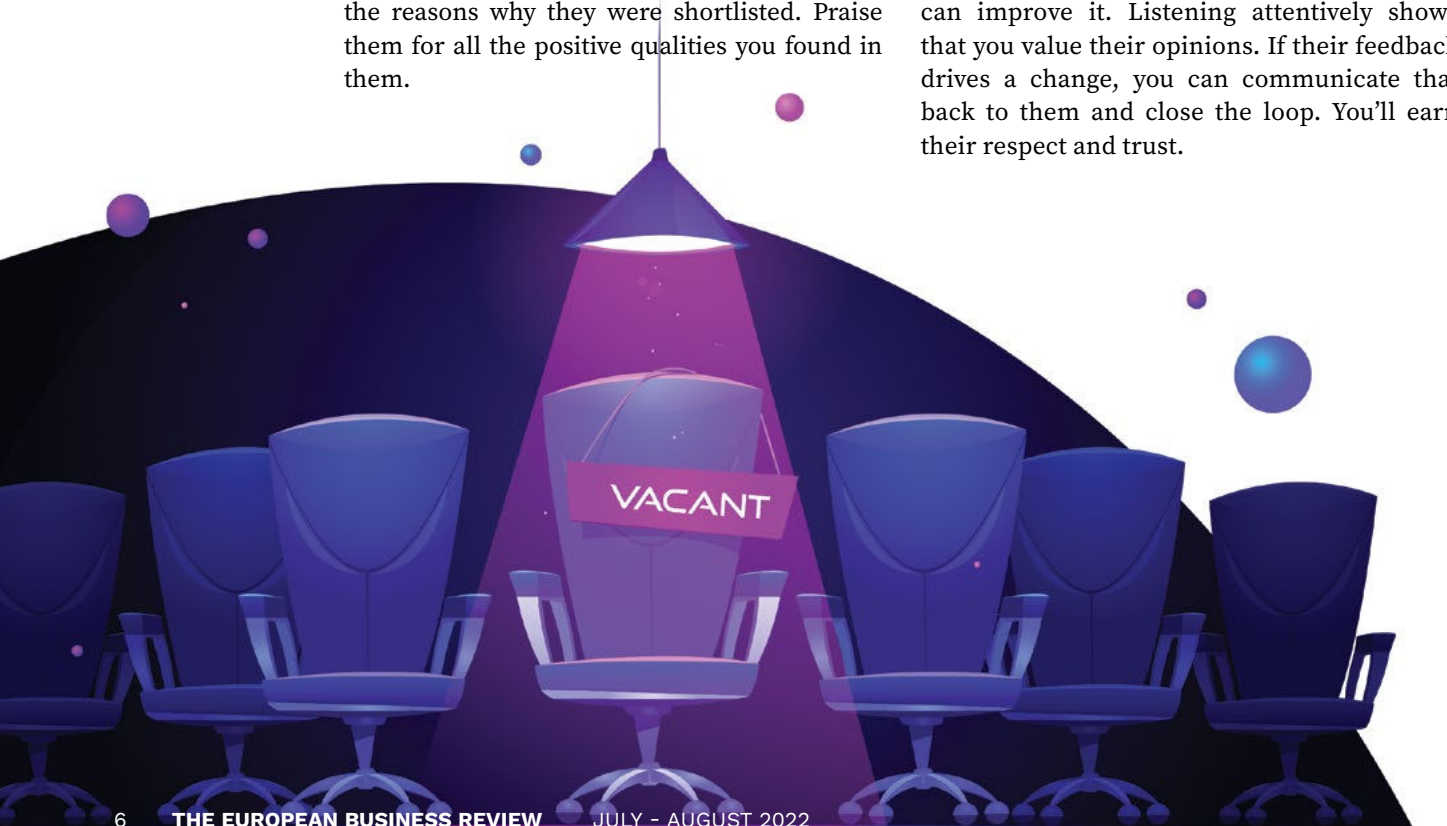
Stay in touch with them. Perhaps meet with them once in a while to share perspectives and insights on the market. Give them online love. Occasionally pay attention to their LinkedIn posts. Congratulate them when they get a new job or a promotion, and on their birthday. You can also like or comment on interesting posts they share.

## 6 Seek Honest Feedback.

Ask politely to learn about the candidates' experience during the hiring process so you can improve it. Listening attentively shows that you value their opinions. If their feedback drives a change, you can communicate that back to them and close the loop. You'll earn their respect and trust.

## In the balance sheet of life, good relationships are assets, not liabilities.

Avi Liran



## DO WE REALLY NEED TO HIRE?

One commonly overlooked talent pool is often just under your nose: people you already work with who are hungry for an opportunity to prove themselves and step up to the next challenge. Do you have seamless and transparent career planning that allows your people to be the first to know about future openings and apply within the company?

DBS bank in Singapore had undergone a major cultural transformation in the past decade that focused on people. Led by the CEO Piyush Gupta, DBS was voted World's Best Bank by Euromoney won several years in a row. When I was interviewing

Avi Interviews Piyush  
Gupta, CEO of DBS Bank  
Singapore



Piyush, he shared an insight about their internal mobility program of 2+2 and 3+3 for senior moves.

DBS encourages internal movement with great ease and transparency. Employees who wish to move to another job need to approach the leader of that function directly and express their desire to join their team. Once the new boss agrees, the employee will give two or three months' notice to their existing boss and sign up for two or three years

in the new job. The process eliminates the need for the current boss's approval for the move and gives the workers more options to develop themselves. It also provides stability to the new bosses, who can invest in developing the new employee further in the next few years. **EB**

## REFERENCES

- (1) David Prince is now the Area Vice President - Dubai, Northern Emirates & Bahrain at Rotana Hotel Management Corporation PJSC
- (2) The Value of Values card game is used in many organizations to help people bond and get to know each other deeply after the two-year void of the pandemic. It's also used to create team values and connect the values of functional teams with organizational values.
- (3) Simon Dolan was a full professor of people management and work psychology at several universities including ESADE Business School (Barcelona) Montreal & McGill (Canada), and Boston and Colorado (U.S.) He is a prolific author with over 70 books published in different languages, including the bestselling "Managing by Values", and "Coaching by Values". He is the president of the Global Foundation for the Future of Work.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Known as the 'Chief Delighting Officer,' **Avi Liran** is an author, economist, a TEDx global expert professional speaker. He has been researching, consulting, and implementing positive cultures transformation in 21 countries, helping top leadership teams to create delightful employees and customers experiences that deliver superior business results.