



talent works

Recruitment Process Outsourcing

# LOST.

Is the Candidate Experience missing from your RPO?



**Change how you hire.** Everywhere. In every way.



# Introduction

**Candidates are full of hope and expectation.**

But your RPO just wants to fill vacancies and fill spreadsheets.

RPO has revolutionised how organisations source, attract, and hire talent. By partnering with RPO providers, companies gain access to scalable talent solutions, global recruitment expertise, and streamlined hiring workflows. Despite all of this, a common criticism persists: many RPO providers lose sight of the candidate experience — another way of saying that they don't care enough about the people in the process.

Sound familiar? ***It doesn't have to be this way.***





## People and process

In the talent acquisition landscape, reputation and relationships matter more than ever. This principle is the driving force behind how the best RPO providers are adopting a more strategic approach – focusing on the need to balance process and cost-effectiveness with a welcoming, supportive and inspiring candidate experience.

Taking a more strategic view of RPO means looking beyond how to source, hire and hit the numbers. A fuller candidate experience encompasses how you engage with candidates, build your employer brand and communicate with them clearly throughout the application process:

- » How do you want to be positioned to talent?
- » What do you want to be known for and how should your recruiters be talking about your culture, opportunities and people?
- » Is your RPO set up to deliver the right messages to candidates at every touch point in the process?



*In the talent acquisition landscape, reputation & relationships matter more than ever*





# Why some RPO providers fail to deliver on candidate experience

## 1. Prioritising Metrics Over Meaningful Interaction

Most RPO models are governed by service-level agreements (SLAs) and key performance indicators (KPIs) such as time-to-fill, cost-per-hire, and submittal-to-interview ratios. While these metrics are important, they can inadvertently cause recruiters to become task-focused rather than people-focused.

Under pressure to hit quotas, recruiters may rush interactions, skip meaningful engagement, or fail to follow up with unsuccessful candidates — all of which degrade the overall experience. When output quantity becomes more important than relationship quality, the candidate is the first to suffer.

### The solution

Balance operational metrics with qualitative feedback like candidate satisfaction scores, Net Promoter Scores (NPS), and post-process surveys.

## 2. Fragmented Communication Channels

Many RPO engagements involve complex recruitment tech stacks — applicant tracking systems (ATS), candidate relationship management platforms (CRMs), and scheduling tools. While these technologies improve efficiency, they can reduce human touchpoints and depersonalise the process. A lack of coordination across tools can make the process feel robotic.

Candidates might be bounced between systems, receive automated (and sometimes irrelevant) updates.

### The solution

RPOs should ensure integration across platforms and prioritise human touchpoints where appropriate, especially during offer stages or rejection conversations.

## 3. Misalignment with Client Brand and Culture

An RPO provider is an extension of a client's employer brand. But when onboarding is rushed or training is inconsistent, recruiters may fail to convey the right tone, messaging, and values during candidate interactions. This disconnect creates confusion and inconsistency. For example, candidates might receive conflicting information about job expectations, company culture, or benefits — leading to mismatches and higher attrition.

### The solution

RPOs must invest time in deeply understanding their clients' values, tone of voice, and hiring philosophies to create seamless, branded candidate experiences.

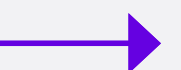
## 4. Volume Hiring at the Expense of Personalisation

For RPOs managing high-volume hiring projects, speed and scalability are often top priorities. This can lead to templated messages, batch processing of candidates, and reliance on AI or automated decision-making tools that lack nuance.

Candidates may feel like just another number in a pipeline — particularly if they never receive feedback or status updates. This depersonalised experience can damage perceptions of both the RPO and the client brand they represent.

### The solution

Even in volume recruitment, personalisation is possible. Simple touches like tailored rejection messages, interviewer insights, or thank-you notes can make a lasting impression.





## Why some RPO providers fail to deliver on candidate experience

### 5. Short-Term Focus, Long-Term Neglect

Some RPO engagements are structured around short-term hiring bursts or fixed campaigns. When the relationship is transactional, providers may prioritise immediate placements over building talent communities, nurturing long-term candidate relationships and building long-term employer brand awareness and reputation.

This myopic view fails to consider that today's rejected candidate could be tomorrow's perfect hire — or a potential referrer or future customer.

#### The solution

RPOs should adopt a long-term mindset, nurturing talent pools and maintaining respectful communication with all candidates, regardless of hiring outcome.

### 6. Lack of Accountability or Feedback Loops

If an RPO provider doesn't measure or report on candidate satisfaction, it's easy for poor experiences to go unnoticed. Many providers focus primarily on client-facing metrics, leaving the candidate voice unheard. Without feedback loops, negative patterns — like ghosting, delayed responses, or unprofessional interviews — persist unchecked.

#### The solution

Implement candidate feedback surveys, monitor social media and review sites (like Glassdoor), and hold recruiters accountable for candidate-centric behaviours.

### 7. Cost-Driven Decisions

In highly cost-sensitive engagements, RPO providers may trim budgets by reducing recruiter headcount, limiting tech investment, or skipping key candidate experience steps such as onboarding support or proactive communication. While this might offer short-term savings, the long-term reputational costs can be significant. Poor experiences often result in negative reviews, lost referrals, and decreased application volumes — all of which increase hiring costs over time.

#### The solution

Treat candidate experience as a business imperative, not a luxury. Strategic investments here pay off in both brand equity and pipeline quality.

### 8. Overreliance on Automation

Automation can improve efficiency, but it must be used wisely. Overautomated workflows can result in generic messages, delayed responses, or black-hole applications. Candidates today expect real-time updates, transparency, and personalisation — all things that automation alone cannot fully deliver.

#### The solution

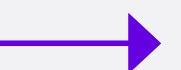
Use automation to augment, not replace, human interaction. Automate repetitive tasks but leave nuanced conversations to real people.

### 9. Cultural Misfit Between RPO and Client

Lastly, some RPO failures stem from fundamental mismatches between the provider and the client organisation. If the client champions candidate-first hiring and the RPO operates with a transactional, low-touch model, dissonance will emerge — often at the candidate's expense.

#### The solution

Ensure cultural alignment and shared values before entering an RPO engagement. Both parties must agree on the importance of candidate experience and actively work together to uphold it.



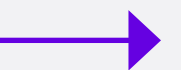


# RPO's must *evolve from* **Process Managers** **to Brand** *Ambassadors.*

## Conclusion

Candidate experience is not a “nice-to-have” — it’s a core pillar of recruitment success. When RPO providers neglect it, they risk damaging client reputations, losing top talent, and undermining long-term business value.

RPOs must evolve from process managers to brand ambassadors — understanding that every interaction shapes how a candidate perceives the client. By ensuring that the candidate is at the centre of their delivery model, RPO providers can deliver not only more hires, but also better ones.





To find out more about our offering, or to discuss how we can support your business, **please get in touch.**

Website: [talent-works.com](https://talent-works.com)

Email: [stuart.white@talent-works.com](mailto:stuart.white@talent-works.com)

Calendar link: [lp.talent-works.com/meetings/stuart-white](https://lp.talent-works.com/meetings/stuart-white)