



Hiring Confidence:

When to use Texting Solutions and Why





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What is Hiring Confidence?

Hiring confidence comes down to trust. Trust in the strategies in place, trust in the technologies in use, and trust that every aspect of the process works to support better outcomes. To build hiring confidence, talent teams need to ensure alignment between stakeholders and

systems every step of the way. That might sound like a tall order, but in today's world, we have the technology – it's called text messaging. Texting isn't just for chatting with friends, it can play an integral part in recruiting from that first point of content to post-hire.





The State of Texting Technology

What's commonly known as texting came about in the early 1990s, with the roots of the technology stretching back even further. The ability to communicate via Short Message Service (SMS) and now Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) changed how humans interact, though it didn't happen overnight. Not even close, actually, and as a result, we've just begun to understand the importance of text messaging, especially in business settings.

Before we get into that, let's consider the prevalence of texting. [According to Pew Research in April 2021](#), "The vast majority of Americans – 97% – now own a mobile device of some kind. The share of Americans that own a smartphone of 85%, up from just 35% in Pew Research Center's first survey of smartphone ownership conducted in 2011."

Likewise, [The New York Times reported in February 2022](#), "The bottom line is that the U.S. uses SMS at a volume that most other countries don't. In 2020, something like one trillion personal and commercial messages traveled in the U.S. by SMS or the companion image technology known as MMS. In Germany, the figure was eight billion, according to an analysis by the mobile research firm Strategy Analytics. Between adoption rates and usage, it's clear that when it comes to texting, the American population is already on board and ready to engage – including job seekers."





Improving Candidate Engagement

While the audience is there, making the jump to text recruiting isn't as straightforward as it might sound. Texting often feels personal, so there are dos and don'ts for the initial contact and everything after that.

First and foremost, do ask permission. Citing a study from SoftwareAdvice, [RecruitingDaily's own Noel Cocca wrote](#), "Consent is key...While 35% of job seekers stated that they welcome the idea and see it as professional, 34 percent believe the practice to be unprofessional, and the other 31% remain undecided. For some people,

unsolicited text messages can come across as intrusive—and may even get flagged as spam by a candidate's phone."

Do set clear expectations and respect boundaries. Knowing that not every candidate welcomes this form of outreach, don't force the issue. If a candidate doesn't want to text, don't make them. Meanwhile, keep the first few interactions simple for those inclined to participate and focus on collecting the information needed to drive the process forward. Do get to the point and don't keep candidates waiting.





From First Contact to Follow Up

Once there's an established rapport, text messaging becomes a way to personalize the experience. It can nurture engagement, share updates and remain in contact.

The end goal is to build a talent pipeline that's eager to communicate and easy to access.

If a candidate is actively being considered, think about sending a weekly or biweekly text to let them know where they stand – even if there is nothing new to report. In this instance, the message might say something like, “Hi, Candidate Name!

Recruiter Name here. We are scheduling interviews on our end and will be back in touch soon.” Even this type of basic message offers the candidate assurance that they are still in the running and that the company still values their time and participation.

At the same time, with the [right technology](#) powering these messages, the talent team can generate a texting history in the applicant tracking system that will show all candidate communications to date. Having this level of insight makes it possible to not only engage new candidates but also re-engage others as opportunities arise.



Engagement in Action

The Pew Research data mentioned earlier found that younger populations, especially those ages 18-29, are among the most prolific mobile users, with 100% owning a cellphone and 96% having a smartphone. This is critical intel, especially for the purpose of [campus recruiting](#). In addition to the dos and don'ts of initial contact, texts serve to invite engagement from interested parties.

Add a text line to encourage job seekers to connect as part of campus materials. The text line can be used to survey students about their interests and share information about relevant positions, offer reminders

about upcoming on-campus events or send links to applications and other company resources. It helps them learn about an organization and start to envision their future.

As part of an engagement strategy – campus or otherwise – the magic of text recruiting is the power it affords candidates. It puts options at their fingertips and allows them to choose whether to proceed (or not). Done well, it makes the initial experience feel personalized and tailored to each candidate, without creating extra work for already stretched talent teams.



Improving Apply Flow

Anyone who has ever applied for a job or seen a new doctor will tell you there's nothing fun about paperwork. Whether in-person or online, the process almost always includes writing and rewriting the same information over and over again in different places. Name, address, phone number, etc. This experience is particularly frustrating when technology is involved but unable to parse personal details from one form to another.

It's no wonder that [one vendor survey found that](#) "the candidate drop-off rate for people who click 'Apply' but never complete an application is a whopping 92%."

Ninety-two percent. Let that sink for a second: 92% of candidates never bother to finish an application, so recruiters only review 8% of interested, available talent. Talk about a self-limiting approach to quality of hire. More than that, a high drop-off rate will impact other critical metrics, including cost-per-hire and time-to-fill. And in a job market where competition remains fierce, employers need every advantage they can get.





Understanding the Challenges

An [earlier piece](#) looked at how text messaging supports candidate engagement from that first point of contact. The same principle applies here, too (pun intended). [Per SHRM, a recent report](#) on the application flow of Fortune 500 companies looked at how many clicks it took from start to finish.

The results indicated candidates had to click an average of 51 times to get through the process – nine before they even got into the application. Along the way, they had to

create user accounts and passwords, enter the same data already contained in their resumes and answer the same questions more than once. No surprise that 92% of candidates abandon ship before they reach the end.

Knowing how frustrating the situation is and where the problem lies creates an opportunity for improvement. The easiest way to boost engagement and lower drop-off rates is to streamline the application and reduce all those clicks – and that's where texting comes in.

Text-Based Apply in Action

By augmenting or even supplanting the traditional online (or, in some scenarios, in-person) application with a text-based one, the bi-directional apply flow becomes interactive and looks something like this:

1. Recruiters advertise openings with a unique phone number
2. Candidates text 'Apply' to the number to opt-in
3. They engage with a chatbot that asks basic questions, such as name, email, zip code and the job category of interest
4. Based on the provided information, the system builds a candidate profile
5. Candidates receive additional information about the job via text

The last step varies based on the position in question. In some instances, a longer, more formal application does follow. In others, candidates get invited to schedule a phone screen or interview. Either way, the initial lift lessens for both candidates and hiring teams, connecting through automation and providing the details needed to move the process forward. On the backend, recruiters and hiring managers see which candidates came in through text and review their profiles at any time.

Given the prevalence of text messaging in [today's world](#), it has become an unintrusive way to start candidates on their journey. From the collection stage to screening, text recruiting provides a quick way to connect with candidates and fill the talent pipeline. While configurable, text applications are

most often used in high-volume hiring scenarios, where hiring teams need to source a large number of candidates in a short amount of time. That includes retail, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing and the like.

By allowing candidates to apply anywhere, anytime, text messaging encourages potential applicants to get started when it's most convenient for them. The automation factor ensures that communication initiates instantaneously, reaches candidates where they are and speeds up the process.

At the same time, text recruiting features make it possible to outreach to multiple prospects, inviting them to attend a mass hiring event or demonstrate their interest. This is particularly handy for seasonal hirings, such as amping up a retail presence ahead of the holidays or ensuring summer recreations like amusement parks and boardwalks are fully staffed in time for the vacation crowd.

When it comes to hiring this year and beyond, efficiency continues to be a top priority for recruiters and the organizations – and candidates – they support. Asking anyone to navigate 51 clicks on top of an application is not only excessive, but it's also unnecessary. There are better ways to engage candidates and better ways to complete an application – and it's all just a short message away.



Improving Communication

Let's face it: finding a job is time-consuming, which is why the value of frequent, consistent communication during the recruiting process can't be understated. When candidates get kept in the dark, the quality of their experience degrades – and quickly. Their minds start to wander and begin to question the journey. Case in point: the myth of the robot recruiter and all the fearmongering that comes with misconceptions about recruiting technology.

By putting communication at the center of the experience, hiring teams can overcome potential candidate crises and ensure everyone involved remains aligned.

Ideally, from the initial point of contact through to the offer letter or subsequent disposition, candidates should know where they stand and when they can expect to hear back. Doing so not only reassures candidates at a vulnerable moment in life but also lets them know their efforts are recognized by the potential employer. Of course, staying in regular contact means more work for already stretched recruiters reluctant to take on anything else, so texting comes in handy here, too.





Reasons to Notify

Having already discussed text messaging for the purpose of [candidate engagement](#) and the [application](#), it becomes possible to leverage such solutions further down the recruiting funnel to send notifications and encourage follow-up. But first, consider the why.

The Candidate Experience (CandE) Awards program has captured candidate sentiment for over a decade. Year after year, the CandE Award-winning organizations deliver above-average candidate experiences, with [more timely and consistent communications](#) being an influential factor in the ratings.

On top of that, the 2021 CandE benchmark research found that [with regard to post-application stages](#), “Candidates at CandE-winning organizations said they received post-application information about next steps 13% more often than the average for all candidates. Mobile text messaging campaigns – which can contribute significantly to an employer’s ability to communicate quickly and effectively – have increased a whopping 380% since 2018, with slightly more CandE winners investing in this type of communication.”

Knowing that texting is the preferred method of communicating for [roughly 75% of job seekers](#), texts get read over 95% of the time AND that companies employing these campaigns are able to provide better communication throughout the process, the why becomes crystal clear, which leads to the how and when.

Text Communication in Action

Similar to the steps outlined in the piece on the [apply flow](#), using text for notification and communication begins with candidate consent. By asking candidates if they want to receive text messages, it is possible to communicate more often, eliminating the need for playing phone tag or leaving voice mails. Instead, candidates get updates on their phones with the choice to opt out at any time.

Text notifications for hourly employees and other high-volume scenarios might focus on moving candidates through faster and require fewer touchpoints. At the same time, knowledge workers or leadership roles might necessitate extra steps and warrant more personalized contact.

Templates promote consistent messaging while allowing customization along the way. In addition to automated status updates and mass texts about upcoming hiring events, this approach also empowers recruiters to send ad hoc messages to chat in real-time, present feedback and keep candidates interested.

Through tailored engagements that emphasize the free flow of information, hiring teams have the ability to differentiate the experience they provide, offering more or less communication based on their hiring strategy. It is the out-of-the-box thinking that distinguishes the average employer brand from above average and even outstanding.

To facilitate ease of use and reduce the administrative burden associated with increased communication, text messaging platforms help send, respond and track interactions. That last part is essential, Dr. Robin Erickson, formerly of Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, and now Vice President of Human Capital at The Conference Board, told [Human Resource Executive magazine](#).

In addition to compliance and regulations, Erickson shared that having the right technology in place helps hiring teams measure response rates and response times, determine when candidates are most likely to respond and compare the results of text outreach versus email communications to see what worked best. In the long run, having that level of data supports more efficient processes and improves hiring outcomes.

Texting at the outset is about capturing candidates' attention and helping move them to the top of the recruiting funnel, but don't leave them hanging. Just because candidates were willing to engage and apply doesn't mean they will see it through – unless they have a reason. Giving them the option to receive text notifications is a way to stay connected, from start to finish and maybe even beyond.



Improving Employee Referrals

While much of the discussion around text recruiting focuses on pre-hire, what happens after that? It's well-established that employees have networks, personal and professional, chock full of folks with similar backgrounds and experiences. That's why many believe that employee referrals are one of the most reliable sources of candidates, and they're not wrong.

According to SHRM, employee referrals are "a popular strategy because recruiters have long known what research confirms: Employee-referred new hires tend to be better performers than nonemployee-referred new hires and to stay with their organizations long. Employee referral programs are also more cost-effective than other recruiting strategies and often are the fastest way to find external talent." Most organizations face the challenge of building out and maintaining formal programs that don't create additional work for an already busy workforce, and that's where texting can help once again.





Unpacking the Benefits

Done right, employee referral programs become a win-win sourcing channel. Done wrong, they become a headache for recruiters – or worse, they don't get used. [Going back to SHRM, they shared:](#)

“The No. 1 reason people don't use a company's referral program is that employees get frustrated with the lack of communication and engagement from the company.”

To ensure program success, organizations must advocate for employee referrals by making it easier for employees to participate (and recruiting teams to manage!).

[Here's an example](#), one of the companies Cadient Talent worked with had a referral program but lacked the technology to support it. That meant employees had to self-report their referrals while marketing, recruiting and HR had to manually collect and upload the information provided.

That resulted in inaccurate and disparate data across systems – not a great experience for anyone involved. In order to address the issue, the company sought to integrate text technology with its ATS, HRIS and CRM. Doing so helped create a seamless process, complete with the ability to send targeted text outreach to current and former employees and, in turn, their wider networks.

Though this is one example, it looks at what happens inside these programs and spotlights ample opportunity for improvement – with the right strategy in place.

Ways to Differentiate

As SHRM indicated above, most of the problems with employee referral programs go back to communication and engagement. Ideally, programs should be as simple and straightforward as the other text use cases discussed, which might look something like this:

1. Create the program from scratch, an existing policy or a template
2. Invite employees to participate (i.e., gain their consent!)
3. Solicit referrals through text (or email) via different devices
4. Manage rewards by explaining and delivering “what’s in it for them.”

Of course, in those four steps, there are layers of additional **communications** and **engagements** to consider, layers that text technology accounts for, unlike manual processes. For instance, just the idea of creating a program might be overwhelming to some, especially depending on the organization’s size.

Referral interactions add up quickly, **with Dell reporting** that it receives between 40,000-50,000 referrals each year. As such, the initial strategy and program goals may vary from broadening external reach to growing diverse talent pools to reconnecting with alumni. The intent of the employee referral program should be clearly stated from the beginning to get everyone aligned before any texts get sent.

Once a strategy is in place, it’s time to draft the first message, which means getting employees to opt in. They need to know what’s expected and gain a basic understanding of the incentives. Given the nature of texting, messages should be kept short at first so as not to dissuade participation. Once consent is granted, longer-form messages can follow, offering more information and directions.

At step three, the solicit and submission stage, a chatbot comes in handy, giving employees a simple way to submit referrals on the go. Automated updates keep employees, candidates and recruiters engaged. No need to mess around with forms, remember logins or chase down coworkers for details.

And finally, reaping the rewards. This is two-fold, offering benefits to both employees and the organization. For the sake of following the process, text technology helps track and manage referrals on the backend through a unified dashboard, making it easy to figure out who gets what and when. But don’t be stingy with the rewards; **savvy employers like Chipotle** have figured out that higher incentives result in more referrals amid a tight job market.



Hiring Confidently

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