

THE TEN DEMANDMENTS:

RULES TO LIVE BY IN THE AGE OF THE
DEMANDING CANDIDATE

talent mindset™



Executive Summary

THE TEN DEMANDMENTS: RULES TO LIVE BY IN THE AGE OF THE DEMANDING CANDIDATE

Welcome to the era of the demanding candidate. Not the applicant who *needs* your job, or just happens to be the best *available* talent, but rather the best candidate – period. The candidate who will make a difference inside your organization, help you better compete in the marketplace and drive your company on toward greater success.

Organizations have long recognized the value of customers and the pivotal role that they play in a company's success, devising countless clever strategies aimed at "recruiting" them. Most, regrettably, have neglected to place the same emphasis on recruiting employees who can effectively run their organization and satisfy those very same customers.

To further complicate matters, much of the job search and recruiting process has, in recent years, transferred to the Internet. Whether their given industry has fully turned to the web or not, today's employers must understand the new environment and embrace it to the same degree that job candidates have – most of whom expect anytime access, great service and content that goes deep on demand.

When they look online, the top job candidates increasingly expect more – more than just a list of open jobs and a downloadable job application. They expect to be engaged, to have their questions answered in a timely fashion and to quickly get the information they need to make the next step in their job search.

So, how can employers get there? What do organizations have to do to meet the increasingly demanding expectations of today's consumer-candidates? Just know the rules – and abide by them.

Kelly Mooney's *10 Demandments: Rules to Live by in the Age of the Demanding Consumer* provides a framework for building and sustaining relationships with customers. In this white paper, we provide employers with a way to apply these rules to their relationships with job candidates and applicants. Companies that hope to be "talent magnets" and "employers of choice" need to understand what's expected of them in this new age of the demanding candidate. They also need to be able to translate that information into executable tactics.

Candidates expect more from career portals, websites and the talent acquisition process, from start to finish. Thanks to the Internet, applicants can compare prices and features on consumer products in an instant. They also can quickly compare dozens of job opportunities side-by-side – both yours and those of your closest competitors.

So ask yourself – are you worthy of the caliber of talent you desire to attract? Do you show it online and offline – anytime, anywhere, and in every way? If you are like most companies, you have room for improvement. This paper is about:

- The universal experiences and expectations of today’s most desirable candidates, and what they want, need and demand
- The holistic needs of candidates and how they apply to our changing world
- How candidates’ lives are changing, and how companies can evolve to anticipate new demands as they arise
- The need for companies to keep clearing a bar that the competition is perpetually raising; and
- Making your organization a “talent magnet” through Innovation and experiences that attract and delight talented people in new ways

Be forewarned: staying ahead of the talent curve will be your greatest challenge. This paper “lays down the law” according to the high-caliber candidates you want to hire and outlines what they want, expect, and demand from you now.

Delivering a great candidate experience is, most simplistically, about an initial targeted marketing message, followed by the cultivation of a long-term relationship. Begin by asking yourself these basic questions:

1. Does our organization know how potential candidates really feel about us? How about our own employees? What messages do they deliver about us as an employer?
2. Does our executive leadership advocate a passion for great people? And do our HR and compensation practices help us to develop, retain and compensate performance-oriented talent?
3. Does every associate understand his/her role in attracting great talent to our company?
4. Do we have key metrics that measure our efforts to attract, engage, and retain great talent?
5. Are we worthy of the loyalty of our current and future talent?

When you can answer these questions with a resounding *Yes!*, you will succeed *and* flourish, positioning yourself as both a “talent magnet” and an employer of choice.

So here they are: “The Ten Demandments: Rules to Live By in the Age of the Demanding and Talented Candidate”:

- Demandment 01. Earn My Trust
- Demandment 02. Inspire Me
- Demandment 03. Make It Easy
- Demandment 04. Put Me in Charge
- Demandment 05. Guide Me
- Demandment 06. 24/7
- Demandment 07. Get to Know Me
- Demandment 08. Exceed My Expectations
- Demandment 09. Reward Me
- Demandment 10. Stay with Me

DEMANDMENT 01

EARN MY TRUST

Respect, integrity, values and authenticity come first. Forget about all the other Demandments if you can't handle this one.

Trust is at the center of the consumer experience with a brand. It is also at the heart of the employment experience a candidate has with your organization. Searching for and taking on a new job is, at its most basic level, a series of transactions. And in one of the most important transactions of a lifetime, a talented individual will engage your company and your people, evaluating whether there is a fit. Nothing evokes anxiety as palpably as being confronted by a screen full of personal questions, which is exactly what candidates often face when they apply for a job. Often this is done without a corresponding sharing of key information about the company and what it's like to work there. More than ever, information is not a commodity; it's a valued, treasured asset. We must earn a candidate's trust quickly – even just to get their information – and retain that trust through the employment process and beyond.

Play fair: Tell me about your philosophy on reward systems and performance, and *then* offer a competitive salary and benefits plan. Give me reasonable routes for professional and personal development. Tell me what the performance expectations are and I'll meet them. And show me how all of your policies meet and beat the competition.

Lose the fine print—and the empty promises: Don't kid me about advancement opportunities if there are none, and be a straight shooter when telling me what the job really is – including both the pluses *and* the minuses.

Respect me, and my data: This means sending automatic e-mail responses letting me know my application arrived safely, and following up with personalized messages. It also means refraining from "irrelevant, repetitive, inappropriate, and downright suspect questions." I don't want to spend hours filling out an application, especially if it includes redundant or useless questions or if I'm clearly not right for the job and could know that right away. Finally, I reserve the right to *not* be contacted.

Deliver ROI (Return on Information) to me: If I'm spending all this time sharing my personal information with you, what's in it for me? I understand the tradeoff when I'm applying for a job, but what about when I'm registering on your site? Will you send me periodic updates on company milestones and accomplishments? Will you keep in touch as positions in my area of expertise and interest open up? Will you ask me for updates on a regular basis? I expect this and more.

Straight talk, not slick talk: I want an honest answer if my skills and qualities don't fit with your organization. Tell me what to expect and deliver on that promise. Don't become a black hole into which my information, calls, requests and follow-ups disappear. And please, have hiring managers call me – not just HR! I want to see the whole team!

Prove you're on my side: Prove you're willing to act in my best interests, even if it means telling me I'm not a candidate for a certain position. Then tell me why and what I need to do to qualify. Be my advocate and I'll take notice. Better yet, I'll tell my friends.

DEMANDMENT 02

INSPIRE ME

In a world where competitive advantage lies with people, the companies that thrive don't just link employees' skills and experience to corporate strategy. They link the corporate vision to employees' hopes and dreams. Capture the spirit, embody the dreams, and uncork the bottled-up hopes and energy of your employees, and your talent will be a force unequalled in your markets.

Show, don't tell: Show me what it's like to work at your company. What does a "day in the life" look like at your company? How will it feel to work here? A video job preview allows me to see what the job entails, how employees spend their time, and lets me see if I would fit in. Don't forget to tell me about the awards and achievements the company and its people have earned.

Connect with me: Show me that you believe in your people and that they believe in you. I'm not quite sure how this happens -- but somehow your words, pictures, and graphics grab me and I feel this connection in my head, sometimes in my gut, and yes, sometimes in my heart.

Put me in the action: In a world where great talent votes with its feet every day, show me how you will involve me—heart and mind—in executing the vision of your organization when I'm employed there. Give me a preview of your culture in our interactions and show me how you expect me to interact with you. Great companies and their leaders understand that their intellectual capital walks in and out of a company's front door, and they make sure that the doorway is theirs!

Motivate me: Help me to see a better me. Meet me where I am, but understand that I want to continue learning and experiencing. Tell me about opportunities to travel, attend classes and continue my education. Tell me about development and advancement opportunities. I want to live my life, not spend it. Let me make a difference at work and after work!

Share the wealth: Talk to me about total compensation—my salary, bonus, and benefits. Tell me how I can develop a strong portfolio of skills and experiences, and then how I can move horizontally and vertically within your company. Show me how others have built careers at your company. And don't just talk to me about the extrinsic rewards; help me to understand the intrinsic rewards as well, the ones that will stick with me all my life.

Have a heart: I know the importance of giving back. When you know that too, in a way demonstrated by more than just money, I know you walk the walk. That means a lot to me. At the end of the day, I want to say I've been able to make a difference in some small way. You can help me to accomplish that. I want to know that you're a good corporate citizen; that you care about the environment, about diversity, and about global issues. I want to know that you're *doing* something in these areas ... not just talking the talk and putting the right words on your website.

DEMANDMENT 03

MAKE IT EASY

Let's face it— in an era of unprecedented technological progress, many of us can't even figure out which of our five remotes operates the TV! For all the tools designed to increase our productivity and, presumably, decrease our efforts, many career websites are complicated and frustrating. The best talent doesn't have time—and will not respect—poorly designed and executed career portals.

Help me to simplify my decisions: Let me search your site any way I might need or want to. Give me enough information to help me decide if your company is for me, and then help me to decide quickly, for your sake and mine, whether a certain job is for me. That way, I'll have *fewer but better choices*. I get confused when I have to sort through jobs for different divisions, business units, and job levels, so organize the site so that I can view jobs in each category. Give me several options to narrow my search and find jobs that fit my background.

Top-Ten lists: Tell me which jobs you most recently posted and include a list of your most popular or intriguing positions. Hot jobs, cool jobs, and other special announcements catch my eye and keep my interest high! And as always, anything that is just one click away has appeal.

Let me pick up where I left off: Oh my, I just spent 25 minutes loading my information into your site and got interrupted. When I came back, my information had not been saved. You lose. I will *not* re-apply!

Make it fast—or forget it! Speed is the name of the game. The most sought after candidates get snapped up fast. Remember one click? Amazon has trained us all to want fewer steps in everything! The consumer world's "beep me to keep me" becomes "ping me to sing me" in the online employment process. That means keeping in regular touch with me if I've shown an interest in your organization. If I've applied to a specific job or jobs, step up our communication—I'd appreciate that. E-mails, wireless text messages to my cell phone, even phone calls—if I've told you that's okay—tell me that I'm important to you.

Make it usable and useful: Don't overcomplicate your website with too many features and choices. More isn't necessarily better. I'll go back to my expectation of ROI (return on information): send me only what I want to see! When you create your site—online and off—use words that I understand and relate to as a professional. And whatever you do, *don't* use internal lingo.

DEMANDMENT 04

PUT ME IN CHARGE

The employment process is intensely personal—and candidates want some control of the process. In an age where talented people have more choices than ever, being given an appropriate amount of information about and control of the process at an early stage leaves candidates feeling empowered by, rather than overpowered by, the process.

Let me go deep: “If my curiosity is piqued, let me dive below the surface.” I might want to learn more about a specific department or position. When I’m really into something, I want to dig deep. I want to absorb as much as I can. Give me enough information and I’ll be able to make a better decision.

My pace is my own: I might not have time to fill out an application in one sitting. Allow me to register with your site so I can save my application and make changes when necessary. Let me apply for more than one job at a time and with one application—use a “shopping cart” feature.

Don’t trap me: I never want to get stuck in a never-ending voice-mail loop or be forced to fill out online applications. While I agree that the best service is often self-service, supply me with technology enablers to make the registration or application process simple for me but robust enough for personalization.

Automate the administratively burdensome aspects of application: Respect me by not wasting my time with mountains of data entry. Let me engage a resume parser to “auto populate” your forms. Send me auto e-mails with updates and to confirm that you’ve received my correspondence. But wait...don’t forget about really connecting with me. Remind me with an occasional phone call (provided I’ve said this is okay) or personal e-mail that shows me you have real people back there!

Let me control my data and be anonymous when I want to be: If I’m not ready to jump aboard your ship yet, let me begin and continue a relationship with you anonymously. Tell me when jobs in my geographic area, salary range, and occupational interest category open up. Inform me of exciting happenings at your company. Respect me and engage me before you even know who I am. Start a dialogue with me from day one while your competitors only have a monologue—that’s the best way to land the best and most talented candidates like me. And one final reminder - never, *never*, spam me.

DEMANDMENT 05

GUIDE ME

For some candidates, an employment change can become fraught with indecision and uncertainty -- if you allow it. Like any good tour guide, a company's career portal should shepherd "travelers" through points of interest---educating, interpreting, and pointing out key information along the way. This guidance may be in the form of job previews, employee commentaries or process tips.

Boost my confidence: Let me know what I'm getting myself into. Give me some tips for a successful interview. Assign me a mentor at your company, even before I apply, so I have someone to ask questions to or bounce ideas off of. Listen. Really *listen*. I need to know that you hear what I'm saying and are not just waiting for your turn to speak because at this point, it *is* all about me. Send me a confirmation that lets me know you have my information. That way I'll know that my application hasn't been disregarded or lost in the "black hole" of resume databases.

Organize the chaos: Filter out the noise. Make bite-sized points. Make your site personal. You're a large organization, maybe even international. I know you have a lot to say, so organize your website in a way that gives me the most important overview information first and allows me to easily find more details. Begin the dialogue by talking to me, prompting me, posing questions, or simply reaching out to me. Nothing fancy, just friendly.

Point me in the right direction: Which way? How far? Are we there yet? There are so many options on most career portals; I need help to find my way. Give me a process map. Tell me where I am in the process and how much longer the process will take. Save my data if I don't finish in one sitting. And *always* let me know my status!

Seeing is believing: Most people are visual, like me. To appeal to a wider market, use audio and help me with visuals. Let me see your products and your people in action. Let me learn from them. Help me to visualize how I will look and feel as your employee.

Anticipate my needs: I'll admit it: I'm a sucker for immediate gratification. I know I won't get a hot new job with your company overnight, but help me to see the big picture. Look down the road with me. If I don't fit now, engage me until I do. As my life changes, help me to keep you informed. If I didn't accept your job offer in the past, are there milestones I should know about, moments when it would be wise for me to reevaluate? Like a "lifetime customer," treat me like a "lifetime candidate"—and I'll be yours.

DEMANDMENT 06

24/7

Anywhere, anyway, any time. What was unthinkable a decade ago is unremarkable today—and your career website had better be there or catch up fast. The hottest talent is currently employed, so make it quick and easy for candidates to engage with you when, where and how they want to do it. Make room for wireless in your online strategy...it's how the world runs nowadays!

Remove the walls: If you're a company with divisions or business units, let me apply once and copy my information over if necessary. *Please* don't make me reapply to every different division or unit you have. You'll lose me if you do.

How long is the wait, anyway? I know you have a lot of applications, but the quicker you let me know the status of mine, the better I can weigh my options and make a job choice. And you say you want to hire high performers – make sure your organization acts with the urgency of one!

Is anybody there? I don't want to wait on hold or talk to a machine when I have difficulty with your site. Make sure you provide a support number or "i-chat" feature rather than a clumsy feedback form to answer my questions. Even if you've locked your doors for the day, I should be able to get in touch with you. It doesn't matter why, really. All I need to know is that I can count on you—24/7.

Give me the real deal: Give me details about the position. Describe the hours, work environment, amount of travel, and necessary skills. Better yet, tell me what the culture at your company is like, and what kinds of people are successful. Testimonials and opportunities to contact an employee make a big difference to me. I can't determine whether I'm qualified or interested if you don't provide enough information. I don't want to waste your time or mine. I'll respect you more and stay more engaged when I know you aren't holding anything back!

I need it *now!* My world demands so much of me and my time that I need to be able to engage your career portal when I want to and can. My to-do list is never ending and my job is around the clock. When I get a minute to look at the latest career options on your site, I need you to be ready for me. Let me "click and go" to items of interest to me – because you have cared enough to communicate with me and track my areas of interest.

DEMANDMENT 07

GET TO KNOW ME

Everywhere we go, we're asked for more information. But have we seen much change in how we're treated by the organizations that gather all this information? *No!* Remember the Second Demandment, "Inspire Me," and how it spotlights the emotional tie that can connect great talent to your company? *This* Demandment, "Get to Know Me," is about bridging the anonymity gap, giving talented individuals a sense of importance by tailoring experiences to their unique needs and wants.

The world revolves around me: Not you. Not "them." *Me.* I know it sounds selfish, but what I mean is that I want you to listen to me describe my special skills and talents, and then help me to find a place with your organization. Set up job agents who tell me when new positions become available that fit my background. And if I'm not right for your company, tell me! I want to hear it because then I will know you respect me enough to be honest with me. Sometimes knowing who the right candidates *are not* is just as important as knowing who they are! And by the way, when I know this clearly, I'll be able to refer just the right kinds of talent to you!

Don't just dive into the data pool: List recruiting events. Let me recommend a friend or give you the name of the employee who referred me to your organization. Let me know all the interactions I've had with you—the jobs I've applied for, the referrals I've made. Help me track my activities with you as you are getting to know me and I am getting to know you.

See me as *one* candidate: I don't know how you're organized, but don't make me apply anew for each job opportunity for which I qualify. Don't make me tell you twice. Keep a record—*one* record—and remember me when I come back. The way you treat me as a candidate reflects how you will treat me as an employee. Even if I'm not an immediate fit, treat me like I will be someday.

Speak my language: You talk about globalization and diversity, and then your site is only in English! I'm a hot programmer proficient in the latest language, so let me dig for all the detail I need to know about your IT competencies and needs. Speak my language, whether it's French, Spanish, Chinese, or Farsi ... or IT, Biotech, or Accounting!

Live in my shoes: Observe how I interact with you through your website tracking. Tailor your site design and my individual experience with it and with you by using my trail of cookie crumbs! Survey me once in a while. And when you do, thank me and follow up to let me know how you used my input. And finally, and most importantly, *always* ask my permission and give me opportunities to opt out!

DEMANDMENT 08

EXCEED MY EXPECTATIONS

Expectations are a funny thing: Set them too high and they're hard to meet. Set them too low and you undersell what you have to offer. Great companies go above and beyond what came before and what they compete against.

Good enough is never enough in a world where great talent contributes more and demands more. "Exceed My Expectations" is about launching candidates on their most exciting leap of faith ever, the leap that takes them from interest to action to desire, from trust to confidence, from expectation to delight, from interested applicant to job candidate to successful employee. Do more than you should. Exceeding expectations is about building an invisible but tenable bridge to the other side of the employment transaction equation, proving that your company is head and shoulders above the competition.

Little things are big: Sometimes it's the small things that stand out. Let me know about the small things that make you unique, and pay attention to the details about me that will make me know you understand that I'm unique and that you've listened to me.

Overcompensate: I know this whole process is complicated and that you have a million things on your plate, too. I'll understand if we encounter a speed bump. Just smooth the ride with an apology and a follow up. And make sure it's personal...not an auto-e-mail that may not even get my name right.

Try harder: A lot harder. It's amazing how I can be drawn in by a company when its associates go the extra mile. When you try harder than you have to—harder than anyone else—it makes a difference in how I see you, and in how I feel about working for you! After all, I work hard and I expect and respect others that do!

Surprise me with extras: I love it when you know who I am, but I'm delighted when you offer me some important inside information or offer. When you're warm and friendly with me before I work for you, I know how you'll be after I've joined. Uncommon courtesies go a long way.

DEMANDMENT 09

REWARD ME

Companies that deliver exceptional work/life experiences consistently earn the loyalty of their employees over time. But how does this apply to the candidate-relationship-management process and the application-to-hire process? One of the keys here is in great technology-enabled business processes. Reward a candidate's interest and efforts with ease of use and responsiveness. In reality, "Reward Me" means "Appreciate Me." Rewards come in many shapes and sizes. They are intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic rewards can be a thank you, a follow up, a personal connection made as part of the process. Extrinsic rewards might be coupons for products or services for "registration," referral bonuses, and other "spiffs" that help you generate and maintain excitement among interested visitors to your career site. *WOW* your candidates and they will reward you with not only their own application but the referral of their friends and colleagues.

Become the object of my affection: Make me excited to work for you—before I even apply for a job! This initial enthusiasm is essential for finding and retaining me as a loyal employee. If I'm a "passive candidate," make my registration with your career portal worth my time.

Make my word of mouth count: If you ask me to tell a friend about a position, chances are I will. Provide a way for me to e-mail the job description to my friend. Sweeten the pot a little with a referral bonus plan. And don't nitpick me...I'll be your best recruiter!

Acknowledge my value: In my current job, I come to work every day. I do what it takes to get the job done, regardless of the hours. I check e-mail from home and I'm tethered to my BlackBerry. As I evaluate your organization as my future employer, I need to know what your expectations will be, and that achieving these goals will be acknowledged. Show me by the way you treat your current employees, not just in bonuses and salary increases (I know those will come along), but in career development planning and professional development opportunities. Can you also show me that you sincerely acknowledge the little things—the "above and beyond the call of duty" things—that great employees do every day? The big things are important, but attention to the details can often mean a great deal more.

DEMANDMENT 10

STAY WITH ME

For relationships to stand the test of time, they need to be nurtured. This means staying in touch between visits to your career portal. Follow up on the promises you've made, and make sure great candidates know you're there for them every step of the way. The best candidates aren't looking for jobs; they're too busy achieving successful outcomes with their current employer. To begin, retain and nurture passive candidate relationships. Companies must pursue, promote, and act on a sense of authentic commitment that not only transcends the recruiting and employment transactions from initial interest to hire, but actually fills the space between them with a building sense of excitement and coming fulfillment.

It's not over 'til it's over: I might not qualify for the first job or two I apply for at your company. But don't turn me off; turn me *on* to the right job. If I have what it takes to work for you, stick with me until the right spot comes alone. You'll be rewarded with a most loyal employee.

Accept my updates: Allow me to send you an updated resume. Even better, allow me to register for the site and make the changes myself. My initial and ongoing interest should never be taken for granted or assumed. It must be won over again and again. If not, I'll assume you're all talk and no action after the initial honeymoon, and I want to be in for the long haul with you.

Check in: From time to time, let me know the progress of my application. Use job agents to match me with jobs as they become available. The greatest battlefield—and the least crowded battlefield—is the space “between” transactions in the employment process.

Be there for me: Candidate Relationship Management means getting me “on the inside” as soon as possible and keeping me there as long as it takes for the right spot in your company to open up for me! That might take a month or it might take two years, but I'm worth it! So recognize me as a talent you're interested in, even when there isn't a current opening. Be innovative and responsive in the ways you seek to stay with me if you want to attract me. Let me register with your organization and configure a job agent to let me know when openings I might be interested in and qualified for come up. Better yet, have a live person call me and keep in touch!

Keep your promises: Call back when you say you will. Update me regularly. Don't pass the buck. If something changes internally, tell me. I can handle it and I'll respect you for telling the truth. When I ask where I stand, be honest with me. And if an offer will be forthcoming, keep me posted. Pre-close me by telling me details early.

Give me an out: If I'm not the final candidate, let me know...right away. Tell me why. If I'm a desirable candidate to you, find me some other options. Encourage me when I'm down. On the other hand, if the offer isn't right and I turn you down, don't take it personally. I'll let you know why and what I'm looking for—really! And if I truly want to work for you but not in this job, let's work together to make it happen.

About THE TALENT MINDSET™

get talent worthy.

Getting and keeping top talent is the top business challenge of our era - more crucial than strategy, technology or even capital. Talent Mindset is an online community helping human resources executives meet this challenge head on by cultivating a true "Talent Mindset" in their organizations. TalentMindset.com builds on the work done by strategic HR thought leaders like McKinsey & Co. (The War for Talent, 2001), by working to build the Talent Mindset not just in corporate mission statements, but in everyday practices throughout the organization.

The TalentMindset.com discussion community is the brainchild of Sue Marks, HR industry thought leader with over 25 years' experience as a business executive and entrepreneur. Sue is currently CEO of Pinstripe Inc., a recruitment process outsourcing organization assisting financial, healthcare and technology organizations.

Please join us - feel free to view and download the ideas that are on the site, and submit your input as we build this knowledgebase together.

For more information contact us as info@talentmindset.com