



THE HEADHUNTERS



Bridging the Gap:

Aligning Employer & Candidate Expectations

Employers and candidates are often looking for different things, but ultimately both want a mutually beneficial, long-term fit.

This guide will help you bridge any gaps with insights to better understand each other and tips for meaningful discussions to get to more win-wins.

TO FIND THE BEST, WORK WITH THE BEST
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INTRODUCTION

Hiring and employment have changed significantly over the past several years. Employers and candidates are not always looking for the same things, making it difficult to get the right people into the right jobs.

These gaps between employer and candidate goals and expectations are complex and can be daunting to tackle. But in this guide, we'll break each one down into key insights to better understand each other and tips for meaningful discussions to help you get to more win-wins.

THE GAPS:

1. On-site vs. work from home
2. Compensation
3. Vacation & time off
4. Hiring timelines
5. Onboarding & training

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT JOB MARKET

Much like buyers and sellers in real estate, the 'power' in hiring shifts between candidates and employers depending on what's happening in the job market. It's important to make sure you have an accurate picture of current market conditions and set your expectations and approach accordingly:

In a labour shortage, employers need to be prepared to **sell** the company and job to the candidate, **'woo'** them at the offer stage, and **dazzle** them on their first day.

When the market shifts and unemployment is high, candidates must be ready to **sell their skills and experience** and **compete** with other candidates.

Regardless of the market, both should aim to build a relationship. It's not about 'winning' a negotiation, but rather coming to a mutually beneficial job offer or deciding the 'fit' is not right and amicably parting ways.

GAP 1: ON-SITE VS. WORK FROM HOME

Many employers are eager to have their team fully on-site, but many candidates are asking to work from home.

- **Discuss together:** What are the requirements of the role? Does the nature of the position make it necessary to be on-site? Can it be done as effectively remotely? Is a hybrid model possible?
- **Discuss together:** Why is the candidate looking for remote? What flexibility are they looking for and are there other ways to offer that? (i.e. flexible hours)
- **Employers ask yourself:** If you have a policy of on-site only, could that policy be a barrier to hiring and retention? Have other team members asked for remote or hybrid? What are competitors doing?
- **Candidates can ask employers:** If remote or hybrid are not possible initially, is there a chance for remote in the future once the candidate is trained and performing comfortably in the role?



A study by Statistics Canada found that 39% of Canadian workers hold jobs that can plausibly be carried out from home. In some industries, that number is as high as 85%.

In a 2022 study by Amazon Business Canada, 43% of respondents said they'd be likely to look for a new job if their current employer mandated a full-time return to the office.

GAP 2: COMPENSATION

There are differences between what employers want to pay and what candidates are expecting as compensation.

- **Discuss together:** Think beyond just salary. Total compensation can include commission, signing bonus, holiday bonus, performance bonus, longevity bonus, equity or profit-sharing, time off, health and wellness benefits, retirement and savings plans, vehicle allowance, child care, etc.
- **Discuss together:** What is driving the company's compensation policy? Is it seniority-based? A collective bargaining agreement? Is internal equity/fairness a factor in what can be offered?
- **Employers ask yourself:** What is the market saying? What are competitors offering?
- **Tip for both:** Be careful with online salary guides; they are quickly outdated and don't always factor in the nuances of job scope or geography. If needed, seek advice from an experienced recruiter who specializes in that role, industry and location.

GAP 3: VACATION & TIME OFF

Many employers are offering 2–3 weeks of vacation, but candidates are often asking for 3 weeks or more.

- **Discuss together:** What does the total package look like? Aside from vacation, what other days off are offered (personal days, sick days, flex days, etc.) and when can they be used? Do vacation days increase over time and is that timeline negotiable?
- **Discuss together:** What is driving the company's vacation policy? Is it seniority-based? A collective bargaining agreement? Is internal equity/fairness a factor in what can be offered to new hires?
- **Discuss together:** Is there any flexibility in work hours? (i.e. start/end earlier or later, allowed to take personal appointments during the workday)
- **Employers probe to find out:** Why is the candidate asking for more vacation? What did they have in their previous job? Are they changing industries and are their expectations aligned or misaligned with this new industry? What are competitors offering?
- **Both consider:** How much would you be willing to budge? Is this point a deal-breaker?

Companies on Canada's Top 100 Employers list provide more than the minimum vacation days required by the Canada Labour Code, and in many cases offer additional forms of paid time off.

GAP 4: HIRING TIMELINES

During the hiring process, employers are often either moving too slowly and losing candidates or rushing and scaring them off.

- **Discuss together:** What does each party's timeline look like? How urgently does the employer need someone in the role and why? When can the candidate start and why? Is there flexibility on either side?
- **Employers:** Communicate hiring timelines and set clear expectations for next steps.
- **Employers:** Strike a balance between moving too slowly and rushing. It can help to think of this like dating—don't rush to a marriage proposal on the first date, but don't ghost or leave the other person hanging either.
- **Employers:** Keep in mind that headhunted candidates will often react differently than those who actively applied for the job. Headhunted candidates will typically need more time to consider their options and are more likely to receive a counteroffer from their current employer.

GAP 5: ONBOARDING & TRAINING

Employers want new hires who understand the job and are able to ramp up quickly. Candidates are asking for strong onboarding, training, mentorship and coaching.

- **Employers:** Ensure you are effectively screening and interviewing for the needed skills. Or, if the necessary skills are in short supply in the market, consider hiring for aptitude and coachability, paired with a strong training program.
- **Candidates ask employers:** What onboarding and training do you provide for new employees?
- **Employers:** Be prepared to discuss in interviews the scope of training that will be provided.
- **Tip for employers:** Build a strong onboarding program. This will ensure new hires are properly introduced to the organization, help them achieve success quicker, improve retention and decrease turnover.
- **Tip for candidates:** Once hired, you can help improve your onboarding experience by communicating to your supervisor if there are gaps in training.

According to The Wynhurst Group, new employees who went through a structured onboarding program were 58% more likely to be with the organization after three years.

CONCLUSION

The gaps between employer and candidate goals and expectations can often be resolved through empathy and open communications. Seek to understand the person sitting across the negotiation table—what are their goals, values and motivations?

Don't assume that a candidate's only concern is compensation. Many employees are choosing jobs based on work-life balance, job security, flexibility, vacation days, professional growth opportunities, inclusion and equity policies, values-alignment with the organization, or a sense of purpose in their work.

Likewise, every employer has their own business objectives, challenges, budget limitations and hiring priorities.

Approach negotiations with curiosity and be open to creative solutions. Aim for a fair exchange that leaves both parties feeling respected and results in a win-win.



RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS

Looking for your next great employee? [Browse our Talent Showcase](#) or [contact us](#) to discuss your hiring needs.

If you want to build a successful onboarding program, The Headhunters offers resources that can help, including our [Workstyle & Performance Profile](#) and our free [Onboarding Guide](#).

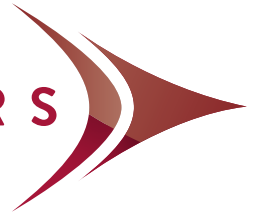
RESOURCES FOR CANDIDATES

Looking for your next great role? [Browse our open jobs](#) and apply online.

Need tips to help with your job search? Check out our [Career Resources](#) for advice on resumes, cover letters, interviews, salary negotiations, and more!



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