

# Employee Experience – understanding new workforce needs

Over the last few years, the pandemic and other global issues have presented fundamental new challenges to our traditional ways of working. To adapt, companies accelerated their adoption of new technology, agility, and other business concepts that experts predicted would emerge in the future of work. But where are we today?

Since March 2020, people have been re-evaluating how, where, and why they want to work - and, more importantly, they're taking action. The most startling proof: **The Great Resignation, which began in April 2021** - a movement of employees across the globe leaving their jobs for ones that better meet their personal and professional needs.

How employees perceive their relationship with work has radically changed, and organisations should take note. The unique circumstances of working during a pandemic - and the upheaval as companies shifted to remote, hybrid, and flexible working arrangements and dispersed teams - have brought employee needs and expectations to the fore. With employees seeking a better work-life balance, being in good mental health, and having flexibility at work.

This change in employee values presents companies with the challenge of enabling remote flexibility, while still providing employees with the resources to unleash their potential.

In addition, the recruitment process is changing, too. In the future, it will be innovative people doing the work, not necessarily those with the most specific backgrounds. Why? According to a report by Dell Technologies, 85% of jobs that'll exist in 2030 haven't been invented yet. In the future, job descriptions will be changing almost side-by-side with market needs, while also becoming more self-directed. Plus, as repetitive, and routine tasks are automated, teams and employees will be freed to do new work.

All of this will require people who can adapt to constant re-shaping and re-skilling within a shifting economic environment. Companies are beginning to let go of traditional skill-based hiring, working to build interdisciplinary, multi-talented teams with equal parts technical and human skills.

In addition to this, companies are discovering the business value of investing in the employee experience. When employee well-being is prioritised, engagement goes up, and so does profitability. A study by Gallup showed that engaged employees increased profitability by 22%.

With this trend well underway, concepts that sounded radical, such as the 4-day work week, may become more commonplace.

All of this can be daunting. But it also presents exciting opportunities for succeeding - and having a good time doing so – BUT organisations need to take action to evolve from simply managing their workforce to truly supporting it. To do so, the Employee Experience (EX) can no longer be a by-product of their talent strategy - it must drive the talent strategy. And this goes for every size of organisation.

## The accelerated need to join up all 'parts' of the EX

Companies are currently experiencing a shift in the primary motivations of their employees. Beyond money, employees are looking for opportunities for meaningful growth, appreciation, and connection.

Pivoting to an employee-first culture will help companies succeed by advancing retention, productivity, engagement, and profitability to new levels. If you are proactive about building an environment that empowers employees, they will be better prepared to perform in ways that also empower one another while meeting or exceeding customer expectations.

We have also seen a shift this year, as more and more businesses tackle environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. Not only because it's the right thing to do, but because enabling people to align their personal values with their company's purpose is an essential way to attract and retain top talent.

Looking to the future, it's clear that good pay and benefits won't be enough. People desperately want to feel a sense of purpose and connection, and the ideal EX will be with a company that contributes to the greater good and helps workers feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. Organisations that can provide this type of environment will prosper, and those that don't may find themselves left behind.

## The time to design EX is now

Although organisations have come a long way over the past two years, there's still room for growth and improvement when it comes to the EX. Many companies (and their employees) are still adapting to the new world of remote or hybrid work. Others are recognising that while wellbeing benefits are important, broader cultural shifts need to take place for people to truly feel supported at work. And employees and employers alike are recognising just how important it is for the workplace to foster true connection and purpose.

As organisations strive to build a workplace culture that prioritises a great EX, it's important to understand the touchpoints or triggers, as covered in the table below.

The advantages of successful EX extend far beyond internal cultural and operational benefits - they extend to the business and the bottom line. EX-driven companies with engaged employees are shown to outperform companies without an EX-focus in terms of both customer satisfaction and revenue.

Models such as the one by below by Josh Bernstein represents a starting point to address a variety of issues: meaningful work, the purpose of the organisation, employee talent development and growth, rewards and wellness, the work environment, fairness and inclusion, and authenticity among management and leadership.

Meaningful Work	Strong Management	Positive Workplace	Health & Wellbeing	Growth Opportunity	Trust in the Organization
Job and values fit	Clear goals with stretch opportunity	Tools, processes and systems to get work done productively	Safety and security in all aspects of work	Open, facilitated job and role mobility	Mission and purpose beyond financial goals
Autonomy and agency	Regular coaching and feedback	Appreciation, recognition, and rewards	Personal fitness, health, and physical wellbeing support	Career growth in multiple paths	Transparency, empathy, and integrity of leadership
Agile teams, supportive coworkers	A focus on management development	Flexible hours and workspace	Psychological and emotional wellbeing and support	Many forms of learning as needed	Continuous investment in people
Time to focus, innovate, and recover	Transparent, simple performance management	Inclusive, diverse, and sense of belonging and community	Family and financial support	A culture that supports learning	Focus on society, environment, and community

Strength of impact    Moderate    Medium    High    Very High

Source: Employee Experience: The Definitive Guide, © Josh Bersin Research, April 2021

## Where do you begin...

There are several factors for success in an EX-intervention or transformation, starting with a clear North Star, or measure for success. Also crucial is a commitment to understanding current employee pain points, talent needs, as well as the emotional context of life and work journeys through a listening strategy. Finally, these journeys should be enabled by digital tools that adopt an interdisciplinary approach to improve the digital employee experience; and naturally the capabilities of employees to manage these products – upskilling should be a first step before buying in new capabilities.

**Build EX Aspiration and Baseline** - establish a current-state baseline and build aspirations, a shared vision, and a clear direction, including a definition of the value at stake

**Transform Core EX** - use a discover, design, deliver approach to structure employee journeys, including how to redesign, innovate and implement employee experiences

**Enable EX Transformation** - implement a system for measuring employee experience metrics to drive transformational change through analytically rigorous performance management: changing mindsets, behaviours, and capabilities; and tech enablement.

## Final Words...

Now more than ever, people are thinking hard about where and why they work. The best employee experience is not meant to be yet another organisational process. EX means pinpointing important moments in an employee's journey and making them more positive, fulfilling, even joyful. Doing so can help companies attract the best people, motivate them to perform, and augment feelings of loyalty. A successful EX culture, in turn, accelerates growth and creates competitive advantages.

Focusing on employees is long overdue. Organisations can seize this moment to do and be more for their people, as well as for their shareholders and customers. How each company manages this opportunity may shape its perception as an employer- both internally and externally - for years to come.

Partner with us to change mindset and realise the benefits of a programme of organisational culture change for your organisation through EX.