

GUIDE

# Employee experience, why and how to get started

Understand why employee experience  
is critical to your company's success



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## **Spencer, every employee's companion**

*The experiences we enjoy as digital consumers reflect on our expectations at work. Today, we have to admit that those expectations are often not met, resulting in frustration. Where can I find an available meeting room that fits the planned brainstorm activity? Why do I have to add my purchase order in three different places to get it approved? Why are we making yet another update to our mobility policy?*

*This paper will help you understand why employee experience is critical to your company's success, and which steps you can take to reconnect with all your employees, as a solid foundation for today's and tomorrow's business results.*



# **Why Employee Experience is critical to your success**

As the marketplace continues to change and morph at lightning speed, progressive businesses are adjusting their organisational models and routines to fit the new way of doing business. Flat organisations, remote work, project teams, agile working methods, dedicated squads, ... are all rapidly becoming the standard.

To foster such collaboration, within or across departments, companies are deploying the required communication and collaboration tools for the day-to-day work, and granting appropriate autonomy and decision making to these decentralised teams, thereby changing the daily interactions, stakeholders and relations.

These trends – though necessary in this day and age for a modern organisation – are making it more complex for employers to articulate their business purpose and DNA. The increased complexity prevents employers from delivering their company initiatives with the desired impact. It hinders employers in creating meaningful connections with their employees, which form the root for driving engagement, alignment with the company's purpose and a broader sense of belonging.

# Today's battle for talent will be won by establishing a meaningful connection with your employees

While decentralisation increases the distance and complexity to connect as an employer, employees' expectations of their employers continue to rise. Employees seek a genuine connection with the company, its purpose and its culture. They are looking for impact and meaning in their job, to stay engaged, motivated and eventually stay on board.

Beyond retention of current employees, the transparency of the job market allows potential candidates to evaluate their fit with a company easily, without setting a foot in your organisation. The brand perception of employers is largely determined by its current and past employees, amplified or degraded by their Employee Experience.

*Looking towards the future of hiring and retaining your talent, it's becoming clear that there's no way around building an impactful employee experience.*

With competition this fierce, companies are devising strategies to tackle that challenge. While most companies are working to build their brand image through external campaigns, smart ones build strong employee value propositions internally to attract, and retain talent. The study on High-Impact Talent Acquisition by Deloitte, has found forward-thinking businesses to:

1. rely on workplace core values as a basis for hiring,
2. focus on consistently improving the job candidate's experience,
3. actively seek non-traditional talent sources,
4. routinely track, measure and cultivate employee engagement.

# Great departmental initiatives result in a fragmented & non-differentiating employee value proposition

Companies introduce numerous well-being initiatives, and operational improvements to meet employees' expectations. Think of: new reward tools, recognition tools, smart office initiatives, engagement tools, mobility solutions, etc.

**With every new initiative, companies hope to make strides in winning the war for talent. Instead, every new initiative scatters the employee value proposition further. While the impact is temporary or non-existent.**

Employees are getting lost in the midst of what's offered - as it's scattered and often deemed irrelevant to them at the point of launch. Once they do become relevant, they're not retrieved or remembered.

On top of that, in today's context, the next learning program, focus booth, or work-from-home initiative, is not making you stand out from the crowd. Most companies – with which your talent pool will compare you – are offering or claiming similar initiatives.

While taking these steps is a necessity to comply with the needs of your workforce, the impact is missing. Impact comes from a delivery model where things are offered in a highly personalised and contextual fashion, in-line with the company values and purpose, and delivered in a frictionless experience.

*“Two-thirds of the impact of your Employee Value Proposition is emotional.”  
(Gartner)*

In the end, it is not a broad set of initiatives that will reconnect that quest for purpose with your company. It will not result in a stronger employee value proposition, let alone, employee experience.

**The key lies in the way your workforce experiences these initiatives. It's by offering the right benefit at the right time, for each employee personally and in tune with the company DNA, that will make you a front runner in the employee experience space.**

# Employee Experience is the frontier of a year-long evolution

Years ago, the relationship between employer and employee was basic. Your work was a necessity in life, and the employer-employee relationship was founded on a *“I need to work here”* frame of mind. That focus moved over time. Companies started to optimise how employees worked – through modern digital tools, office refurbishments and the first employee wellbeing initiatives – thus improving their engagement, resulting in a mindset where employees look for an environment where they *“like to work”*.

Today, inspired by the success of leading Customer Experience pioneers, we’ve learned that the impact of the above initiatives can be amplified and capitalised upon by delivering them through a personalised, contextual and meaningful experience.

It’s time to shift to a new concept: Employee Experience. One where employers start to create a truly unique company experience, bundling everything they do for their workforce, delivering it at the right time, for the right person and tying it back to the overall company purpose. Employee Experience allows employers to deliver their Employee Value Proposition with impact, to develop an *“I want to work here”* mentality and image.



Image: The evolution of Employee Experience

*In the next chapters of this paper, we’ll elaborate on which steps, sponsorship and mandate you need to get closer to embedding employee experience throughout your company.*



## 2 Getting started with Employee Experience

From our experience, employee experience is still perceived as a trend – remaining a vision for the future. Most organisations know its main principles, but struggle when it comes to applying or implementing them.

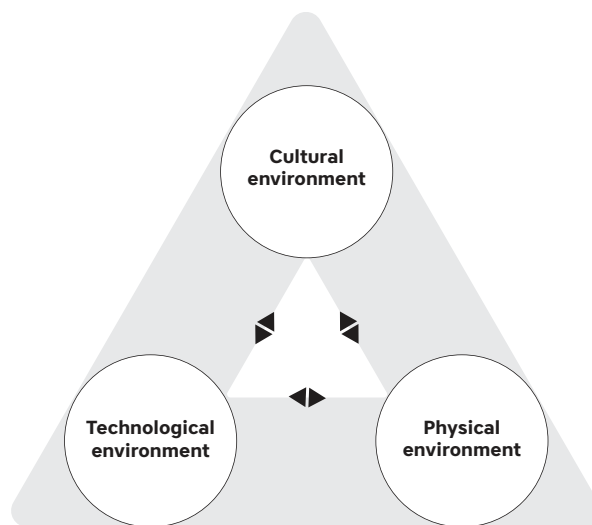
Based on the model proposed by Jacob Morgan, there are 3 aspects that, when connected, define an impactful employee experience. By uniting the technology that fits your employees' expectations, with the physical workspace to do their best work, and a culture that connects and brings meaning to their work, a company transforms from engagement to experience.

Given such breadth, it is clear that Employee Experience needs a company-wide foundation and sponsorship to start from. Without proper empowerment and support, HR professionals rapidly touch upon the limits of departmental responsibilities, and the silos in which their current initiatives are set up, managed and budgeted.

So how do you get started?

# Transforming from employee engagement to employee experience

Your organisation already has a lot of initiatives and tooling in place. The first step is to understand what's already there, what's working, what isn't, and why. From that point, you can start to connect the different elements and optimise the way they are delivered to your employees.



*Image: The three environments that create every Employee Experience by Jacob Morgan*

## Define your unique employee value proposition

An employee value proposition (EVP) defines the essence of the company – its uniqueness and what it stands for. It clearly states the set of benefits an employee is given, in exchange for the skills and experience they bring to a business.

## Build a task force

Company-wide involvement makes sure your EVP is represented every time your employees interact with the company.

This can be achieved by assembling the relevant departments in an employee experience task force (typically HR, communications, operations & facilities stakeholders). Once this task force gets the mandate, the budget, and resources to actively work on carrying out the EVP, it's their main duty to make sure every staff member clearly comprehends their role in delivering exceptional service.



## Implement the right experience

Once that proposition is clear, and responsibilities are assigned, it's a matter of understanding how every initiative contributes to your EVP. And start implementing it across the range of employee initiatives and experiences.

By looking into how employees interact at work, both on a daily basis and throughout their career at your company, you can discover the gaps to close between the value you want to offer, and the one you actually deliver. Additionally, it discloses the required new structures to introduce, procedures to update or friction to resolve. Through this exercise, you can make sure your EVP seeps through every stage of the recruitment process, performance development programs and financial compensation discussions.

Getting this right, is a company-wide process. The required support across the board shouldn't be underestimated.

## Get sponsorship throughout the organisation

Sponsorship from your CHRO and CEO to invest in a concerted and aligned employee experience roadmap, will affect the success of adopting employee experience within your company significantly.

Employee experience should become a topic on the board's agenda, to keep it on track and win the game. If leadership isn't convinced of the impact and relevance of offering your employees what they need, your company won't become one of the frontrunners in this space.

## Yes, this requires a new role for the CHRO & CEO

CEOs depend on their human resource department to achieve success and reach the top ranks. Where a study by McKinsey states that CEOs globally tend to see human capital as a top challenge, those same CEOs still rank HR only as the 8th or 9th most vital function in a company. In reality, it comes down to the high administrative focus of the human resource office that keeps them from taking actions on a broader company-level.

Within the next years, that will have to change. After all, businesses don't create value, people do. It's up to the CHRO to build, acquire, retain and assign talent to generate that business value. By these means, CHROs become a connecting role across departments. Instead of being thought of as a supporting player, they can play a central role in corporate decision making.

# 3 Why invest in Employee Experience

Employee experience is more than just your company culture. It incorporates every interaction and overall physical, emotional, professional, and financial well-being of your workforce. When all these aspects connect, investing in a unique employee experience is great for business as it can contribute to your competitive edge in the market. As research by Gallup shows that companies with highly engaged employees outperform their competitors.



# The return of investing in Employee Experience

Where companies already invest in numerous engagement initiatives, returns are stagnating, as these initiatives are no longer unique. Employees expect more, beyond basic elements. They look for a more meaningful connection, and seamless experience in their job.

To make things more clear, the analogy with **customer experience** is key to understanding the importance, and impact of employee experience.

*Just like we carefully build the best customer experiences,  
why don't we do this for our employees?*

Where previously, companies focused on transforming their business to build a unique customer experience, in the next wave, business leaders have come to understand that **customers will never love your company until the employees love it first.**

## **Why? It's simple.**

When a problem call is received, for instance, the customer service representative becomes the customer's primary service provider. From then on, that employee becomes the company for that customer, and that customer will judge the value of doing business with you by their interaction with the customer support representative.

That makes the customer support worker the company's most important resource. Virtually every staff member determines how customers respond to the business in the marketplace.

**Now, would you offer your products, and value-adding services as fragmented, or department-driven to your customers, as you're setting up employee initiatives today?**

Just like we can order an Uber whenever we want, can follow through the live-feed where our driver is, get a notification to meet up, and order diner to be delivered at arrival; we want the flexibility of working from home, have our team informed, meetings turned to video conferences without worrying about the administrative hassle that comes with it.

From requesting remote working to booking a meeting, or taking paternity leave. Why should your employee remember every different procedure, while you offer your customers everything through one channel? In the end, both might be the same person.

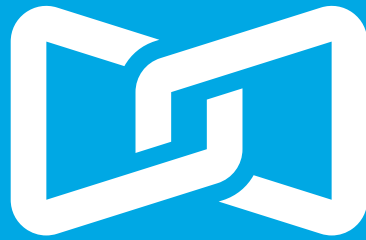
*Would you offer your products, and value-adding services as fragmented, or department-driven to your customers, as you're setting up employee initiatives today?*

## **Differentiating Employee Experience can't rely solely on generic tooling or a single department**

From our perspective, a system of experience means you need to blend everything into one employee value proposition. Beyond the day-to-day collaboration tools, and department specific systems, your organisation requires one channel to deliver its extensive employee value proposition, in all its aspects (benefits plan, transparency, career opportunities, activity-based working, lunch service, ...) to create a lasting employee experience.

This will make it more than a channel, it serves as a companion for every employee personally. While unburdening administrative, operational tasks, the experience should introduce convenience, and delight through frictionless assistance.

Guiding your workforce through the moments that matter in their daily work, as well as throughout the entire employee lifecycle, will reconnect your workers to your company, and its culture. Since it all becomes a part of how they experience their work life.



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