

Forget the customer: how would your staff rate their employee experience?

Businesses have been striving to design great customer experiences, which is often a significant brand differentiator. But what about employee experience? With mass remote working now the norm, how can teams connect together to ensure work is engaging and productive?

Businesses have known for several years that creating great experiences for their customers is a tried and tested way to deliver high levels of engagement and brand advocacy. What is often overlooked is how employee experiences (EX) can also greatly impact your business.

As remote mass working is here to stay, connecting teams to ensure they work efficiently should be a top priority for all enterprises. A workforce that doesn't feel isolated can improve their skills and be healthy, efficient and productive.

Building great EX also has clear commercial advantages for business owners: Locating the right staff and then retaining them has been a constant headache in many sectors. The war on talent continues. Clearly, those businesses that can offer diverse experiences to their workforces will become the companies that are highly attractive to the best talent. The millennial worker, in particular, uses EX as a differentiator when looking for their next employer.

Is there is a quantifiable link between better EX and profitability? According to Citrix in their *Work 2035 report*, nearly three-quarters (74%) of executives anticipate improved ROI from better employee experiences.

LinkedIn handily distils EX into four components: people, place, product and process. Google and Salesforce even have chief happiness officers to focus on the personal development and the wellbeing of their workforces. Research by Salesforce concluded companies that prioritised EX to deliver a premium CX achieved 1.8 times faster revenue growth.

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New work experiences

Defining and then delivering excellent EX can – for some businesses – be elusive. This is often because EX has not been fully understood. The trinity of EX includes the physical spaces workers use, the digital tools and environments they work within, and – perhaps the most difficult to define and create – the culture of the business and how employees interact.

Businesses are now asking how they can create these new experiences. What does work look like in a post-COVID-19 world? Here, technology, of course, will play its part. Where advancing technologies like AI have in the past raised job security anxiety levels when EX becomes the focus, the ability of AI to remove some of the repetitive tasks undertaken by employees is welcome.

The Citrix report concludes that we are on the cusp of change: “Our study shows that we are on the brink of some watershed moments in the evolving relationship between people and technology in the workplace.”

Zena Alana, people and talent manager, Superscript, told *Maddyness* that after the rush to create remote working environments, IT teams now need to think about the longer-term use of communications platforms to support EX.

“The post-COVID-19 workplace is marked with remote and flexible work, but the pandemic caught most organisations off-guard and IT teams rushed to cobble together work-from-home technologies,” said Alana.

“Technology can also hinder the employee experience as many people are spending more time on video calls and not socially interacting. Days become filled with back-to-back meetings, and the known ‘Zoom fatigue’ kicks in. There’s also a negative impact with technology and mental health.

“People have never been so connected but, at the same time, so disconnected.”

One key element of great EX is personalisation, as Duncan Casemore, CTO and cofounder, Applaud, outlines: “For many employees opting to work fully remote from now on, the digital employee experience is the employee experience. Therefore, hyper-personalisation is key.

“In today’s digitised and remote working world, employees can often feel disconnected to their job and demotivated. Businesses must take a personalised approach to show the employee that their organisation is constantly supporting them as individuals, while keeping them included in the wider company culture, no matter what location they are working from.”

As millions of employees’ working spaces have changed – probably permanently – the creation of great EX is paramount. If businesses are to thrive post-pandemic, ensuring their human capital is fully supported will be essential.

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Thinking about employees

Many businesses realise that EX is closely linked to CX. Employees that are treated like customers – as advocated by Colin Ellis, the author of Culture Fix: How to Create a Great Place to Work – have better working experiences that they pass onto the customers they come into contact with.

Liz Barnsdale, managing director, Accenture Interactive, tells Maddyness: “EX is indeed similar to CX. The principles remain the same and leaders in this area make experience innovation an everyday habit, expanding the experience remit across the entire organisation.

“For instance, many companies provide training to help employees deal with customer experience demands to avoid feelings of frustration or feeling overwhelmed.”

This view was reiterated by Annil Chandel, CEO and cofounder, Wurkr: “The industry is seeing an increasing focus on internal, employee-led engagement and a fulfilling experience. Also, demand will continue to grow for digitally-enabled, immersive tools that manage to recreate the valuable chats and

interactions of the usual office environment.

“It’s about replicating the elements of a successful customer experience strategy. That means envisioning the employee journey from the point of hiring and onboarding, taking account of people’s specific needs and personal goals, and then instilling the agile infrastructure that can cater to this.”

Jeremy Blain, chief executive, PerformanceWorks, concluded: “Happy, healthy, engaged and motivated employees are more productive, higher performing and develop at accelerated rates. This is where EX links to a growth mindset, a term coined by Dr. Carol Dwek.

“A growth mindset is a cultural shift.

“It embodies organisations that put a value on leaders at all levels, a coaching mindset, a belief that everyone has the opportunity to think big and contribute big and a foundation for anyone to step up and grow, in-role or as they are promoted.”

No two businesses are the same, so the EX that is created is not a one size fits all. Ask your workforce to outline the pressure points they have. What challenges do they face daily? How can you as an employer relieve these issues? This research is the foundation into which your company can begin to build great EX, which can enhance individuals and teams.

EX has many facets. Identifying what makes great EX in your company needs to be defined, and then a strategic plan developed to implement the plan.

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