

What Goes Into Creating A World-Class Employee Experience ?

The employee experience is the journey an employee takes with your company, from pre-hiring to post-departure. During this journey a lot of perceptions about the organisation are formed in the minds of an employee, a lot of myths are shattered and many facts are discovered. There is no doubt that each day and every hour, your employee is absorbing the vibes in the organisation, adopting the company culture and living the organisation's values.

Such strong internal employee experiences quickly transform into external perceptions of what exactly your organisation stands for. It is not surprising then that organisations are taking employee experiences very seriously and are paying more attention to moments that matter the most to the employees.

Here are a few more reasons that make employee experience core to today's HR manager's strategies:

- A new set of worker expectations, growing demand of workplace transparency and a volatile labour market have increased organisation's interest in improving the employee experience. Undoubtedly, employees have won the stature of the 'consumers of the workplace.'
- The employee experience can have a deep influence on an employee's decision to return to a former employer. A good experience increases the likelihood of recommending an organization to other high-talent individuals.
- A good pre-joining experience impacts an aspirant's decision to join the organisation and a post-hiring experience affects his inclination to stay or remain with an organization.
- Social media is a big stimulus for HR managers to work on the employee experience. These days, good or bad workplace moments can quickly go viral. Employer's internal communication tools or external websites, both can broadcast negative and positive reviews in a jiffy.

Creating a world class employee experience is a complex process. Organisations have to train managers and HR leaders to carefully select candidates who are a right fit, communicate the company's mission and values to them and all the times improve the work environment to make it relevant, sensitive and enjoyable for the workers.

Despite of several engagement models in place and many vendors in the market offering these services, most of the companies struggle with low employee engagement and poor experience. The reasons can be:

- Companies are facing transition period and change in leadership and management.
- Employees are overloaded with work with no clear goals and targets and a flawed performance management process.
- Poor grooming and talent development facilities at workplace, making it difficult for high performers to grow and progress.
- Bureaucratic culture or non-inclusivity failing to attract and retain today's more diverse workforce.

As clearly evident, building a highly engaged and happy workforce takes combination of many things. Right from carefully selecting candidates who are a right fit, to training them in becoming

good leaders and managers and constantly communicating the company mission and values so that their productivity is always connected with the company purpose.

What is it then that makes an organisation a happy place? Employee engagement, performance and development are some of the key issues that organisations can work on to enrich the employee experience. Other steps than companies can take to create a perfect employee experience are:

- **Align your employee experience to company values and purpose**

An organisation's corporate purpose most often describes its aspirations in running the business. However, the purpose should also include principles and operational standards that employees can follow at the workplace. And most important of all, companies should live this purpose every day.

For example, promises made during hiring should manifest into on-ground experiences. Your behaviour at the workplace is not just observed by the employee himself but also his peers. The experience of a performance review or a firing not only influences the individual, but also the rest of the team. Similarly watching a colleague receive public recognition may reinforce a culture of appreciation and recognition.

- **Welcome them with a smooth on-boarding process**

On-boarding many a times is just a one-way communication process in organisations. Make it more interactive. Let the employee socialise with the team, resonate with the company's culture and learn how the organisation functions. This will allow him to settle down faster and achieve high performance quickly.

- **Give him a good manager**

A manager's role is extremely critical in making the employee experience work. The team, the workspace and well-being are all secondary. An employee's first point of contact and the regular point of contact is his manager. As per Gallup, the manager alone accounts for 70% of the variance in team engagement based on:

- the manager's innate tendencies
- the manager's engagement
- the employee's perception of the manager's behaviour

The quality of the relationship that an employee has with his manager, the clarity of role, mentorship and motivation at regular intervals is all critical to the manager-subordinate relationship. Give him a coach who cares about him and is interested in his career growth.

- **Do a fair and accurate performance review**

Just delivering an annual performance review is not enough. Give regular informal feedback on their work. Employees respond best to frequent praise and recognition for excellent work rather than end-of-the-year feedback. An employee also needs to feel that his performance is reviewed in a fair and comprehensive way.

- **Give a career growth**

The top reason for people to change their jobs today can be cited as "career growth." Many of today's workers consider the "corporate ladder" as broken. Infrequent pay raises and slower changes to job titles are a big hindrance for today's employees who desire to grow and develop. Show them a path forward in your organization. Let them unleash opportunities to gain new skills, and work with new people. Understand their expectations through ongoing coaching conversations.

- **Encourage an owner's mindset**

An owner's mindset means more ownership and collaboration, clarity of purpose and more learning opportunities. Organisations should be willing to give the employees freedom to embrace failure to gain insight. This approach will allow managers to become obsessive with customers and consumers and ultimately drive long term value creation and financial rewards for the company. This mindset makes employees responsible for business results. They are encouraged to treat resources as if they were their own and ensure high levels of efficiency.

- **Settle the anxieties due to tech disruptions**

The growth of artificial intelligence and robotics is disrupting workplace. The employees are still waking up to the new ways of working and understanding the technology. This has resulted in rise in anxiety at work. Organisations should win the confidence of its employees that technology is here to help them not replace them. Upskilling and reskilling programmes are the key in making the workforce experience the technology and fall in love with it.

- **End on a positive note**

An employee exit is generally the most emotional phase of an employee's journey. Make the exit interview an extension of coaching conversation about the employee's experience, performance, development and perceptions of the organization. Employees like to be heard and valued for their contributions. An well-executed exit programme can generate a proud alumni and brand ambassador for ever.

A well-designed employee experience programme includes the above mentioned critical aspects and other continual experiences that drive performance. Remember, an engaged employee is a happy employee -- physically, emotionally and cognitively. Your world-class employee experiences will not just attract top talent but will create a strong brand reputation, drive high performance and create valuable brand ambassadors long after employees have left your organization.

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