

Why companies should care about the strategic impact of

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE



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Introduction

Employee experience is now one of the hottest topics in HR. You might be wondering what happened to [employee engagement](#). Don't worry—it hasn't gone away. In fact, engagement ties directly to the employee experience.

Gallup offers two definitions that help differentiate these key HR terms:

“[Employee experience](#) constitutes the entire journey an employee takes with your organization. This includes everything from pre-hire to post-exit interactions and everything in between.”

[Employee engagement](#) is when employees “are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace.”

In many ways, you can't have one without the other, nor can you leave either behind if you want to deliver against your company's overall strategy for success.

“CEOs and business leaders are heavily focused on productivity improvements, organizational transformation, and the development of new digital business models. Success in these areas is not possible if employees are having a hard time getting their work done,” [according to Josh Bersin](#).

Data from the O.C. Tanner Institute [2020 Global Culture Report](#) details how a thriving employee experience critically impacts successful business strategies.

Employee experience essentially includes every event across an employee's entire tenure with your organization. Think of it as all the moments between "hire to retire."



The impact of positive employee experiences



Source: O.C. Tanner Institute 2020 Global Culture Report

Experience builds upon every job, task, conversation, project, interaction, failure, and success employees face while they are members of your organization. Josh Bersin illustrates the complete employee experience using six key pillars.

Considering every possible touchpoint with an employee, the “complete employee experience” can feel like a massive challenge. That’s where this guide can help. We’re going to walk you through the steps you can take to begin evaluating the employee experience in your organization.

Ideally, you want to ensure the necessary touchpoints occur, that they’re positive, and help employees contribute to your strategic success.



The irresistible organization: a complete employee experience

Meaningful Work	Hands-On Management	Productive Environment	Growth Opportunity	Trust in Leadership	Health & Wellbeing
Autonomy	Clear goal setting	Flexible work environment	Facilitated talent mobility	Mission and purpose	Safety and security
Selection to fit	Coaching and feedback	Recognition rich culture	Career growth in many paths	Investment in people, trust	Fitness and health
Small teams	Leadership development	Open flexible work spaces	Self and formal development	Transparency and communication	Financial wellbeing
Time for slack	Modern performance management	Inclusive, diverse culture	High impact learning culture	Inspiration	Psychological wellness and support

Source: Employee Experience: The Definitive Guide. (c) Josh Bersin Research. April 2021

Where should you start with employee experience?

The employee experience requires the use of design thinking to empathize with your employees. It's a process of understanding how employees experience each situation and then designing solutions to any issues you uncover.

Define your employee lifecycle stages

Start by defining the employee lifecycle, or employment stages, within your organization. Each stage typically has an overall purpose to which it's aligned. A standard lifecycle includes onboarding, developing, retaining, and separating:

Onboard: Provide the welcome, orientation, mentoring, and company experiences to enable an employee to get started in the organization. During [onboarding](#), employees confirm that they've made the right choice in joining your team.

Develop: Offer opportunities for mentoring, [performance management](#), coaching, and professional growth. This stage includes promotions and pay increases associated with changes in job levels and roles. A positive development experience can motivate productivity and inspire staff to deliver against your company strategy.

Retain: Establish great relationships with your top talent and build trust. This stage is critical to ensure employees have experiences that encourage them to stay with your organization as long as possible.

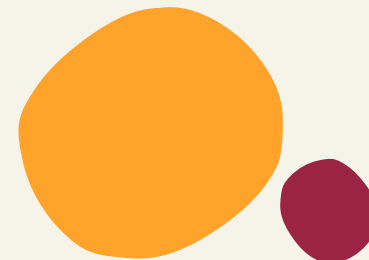
Separate: Understand and assess the reasons why employees leave. As part of separating, dig in to ask questions about their experience. What were the peaks, and what were the valleys?

Once you have a map of the employee lifecycle, identify the ideal touchpoints at each stage. For example, in the case of onboarding, you might have touchpoints such as:

- A [welcome letter](#) from the organization
- A manager phone call or message before the first day
- Instructions about what the first day will include and where they need to be
- The first-day experience (orientation, team introductions, equipment)

- Setting job expectations for the first 30, 60, and 90 days
- Consistent 1:1 meeting schedule set up with manager
- Schedule of meetings with key colleagues and collaborators

Employee lifecycle stages are just the beginning of understanding all the experiences that make an impact. The next essential step is understanding your employees.



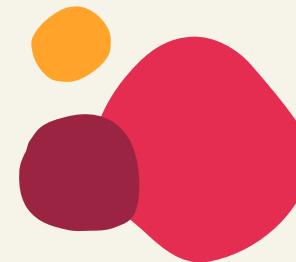
Identify your workforce personas

As you begin to consider the employee experience, look at your employees. Who are they? What information do you have regarding each person in your organization? If that sounds too basic, it's not. Ninety-seven percent of respondents to [Deloitte's 2020 Global Human Capital Trends survey](#) said they required additional information about their workforce.

A mere 11% of survey respondents said they could provide data about their workforce in real time. On the most basic level, to effectively manage the employee experience, organizations require an [HRIS](#) that collects and provides access to the information and insights you need.

When you have the data available, it's easier to use it to identify your employee personas. Employee personas represent different groups of employees, so you can create profiles that describe their needs, values, and behaviors. This step is essential to clarify who needs what for a unique, optimal employee experience.

“When it comes to employee experience design, you must be strategic in setting your priorities. Trying to do too much at once is inviting failure. Every job role is different. The experiences of sales representatives are very different from those of customer service representatives,” [according to Bersin](#).



For example, in search of creating more productivity and satisfaction for employees at work, [Cisco identified](#) five key personas to address workplace design:

1. Highly mobile: salespeople, account managers, systems engineers
2. Campus mobile: business development managers, executives, manufacturing, and logistics
3. Remote/distance collaborator: analysts, customer service and support, HR, legal, marketing, training, and program and product managers
4. Neighborhood collaborator: engineers, finance staff, many managers
5. Workstation anchored: administrative staff, software, and network engineers

Then, after reviewing how each persona worked, Cisco “designed a variety of types of spaces for concentrating, collaborating, learning, and socializing.”

Similarly, once you’ve identified the personas you’re working with, you can match perspectives for each persona to various points within your standard

employee lifecycle. What are the critical touchpoints, needs, and expectations for each persona in your workforce at each stage?

For example, in onboarding, you might have identified that a sincere welcome on the first day is essential, as is setting job expectations for the first 30-60-90 days. With that touchpoint in mind, you can identify what works best for each persona. Using the Cisco personas, persona-based onboarding might take the following approach:

- Highly mobile: these employees receive a virtual card or video from their manager
- Campus mobile: manager schedules a time and place to meet with the new employee on campus
- Remote/distance collaborator: managers set up a web meeting with the team to make introductions and host a welcome celebration
- Neighborhood collaborator: intranet message welcomes this employee and invites others to stop by and say hello
- Workstation anchored: a sign welcomes the new employee at their workstation

There are many other touchpoints in onboarding, but this idea of how to welcome employees based on their persona provides a perspective of how you can personalize each experience.

“Employee personas enable companies to understand employees not as ‘talent,’ ‘human capital,’ or ‘headcount’—but as humans who want and need to be engaged meaningfully if they are to perform their jobs well and contribute to the organization’s success in this new hybrid work world,” according to [Forbes](#).

As you go through the lifecycle and apply the needs of each employee persona, take note of existing elements that provide peak experiences, as well as moments that may seem like valleys. These peaks and valleys will help you identify what you need to continue doing or what new experiences you need to implement.

Welcome to the team Ken



Meet your teammates

Say hello to your new colleagues, they can't wait to finally meet you!

Acknowledge and commit to what's important

Even with a new focus on the employee experience, the research shows there's room for improvement. In 2020, the [O.C. Tanner Institute research](#) revealed that “only 42% of employees feel good about their daily experiences at work.”

Culture, recognition, and communication all offer ways to acknowledge and commit to what's essential for your employees. These can all improve daily work experiences.



Culture

There's a significant advantage to using the power of purpose to motivate employees. A [McKinsey survey of U.S. employees](#) found "that people who say they are 'living their purpose' at work are 'four times more likely to report higher engagement levels' than those who say they aren't."

As you delve into the employee experience, stay true to your company's purpose at every stage. Let your mission and values serve as a foundation for the culture you create and the experiences you provide. From leadership to frontline workers, everyone should understand and be able to articulate how the work they do makes a difference and supports the organization's goals. With clarity about one's work, it's more likely that the employee experience will remain positive.

Recognition

According to [O.C. Tanner](#), "many leaders use recognition to engage employees." Problems arise when organizations view employee "recognition as a stand-alone initiative, rather than a crucial piece of their culture."

To ensure [recognition](#) supports and boosts the employee experience, integrate appreciation within every element of an employee's work. Don't save recognition just for the big moments like tenure anniversaries or project milestones. Reward and recognize employees in the moment, too.

By appreciating employee efforts as often as possible, you're more likely to reap the benefits. Those benefits are impressive—the research indicates that organizations with regular recognition are four times more likely to have engaged employees.

Communication

Finally, if you want to improve the employee experience, you need to embrace communication. More importantly, commit to communication being a two-way street. Not only do leaders and managers need to be open and transparent about what's happening, but you also need to provide opportunities for employees to communicate and give feedback to the larger organization.

Whether it's through town hall meetings or an online platform that allows you to [gather feedback throughout the employee lifecycle](#), listen to what employees are telling you.

Adapt the employee experience as your business evolves

Just as your business grows, so does the experience of the employees in the company. Leadership changes, [turnover in the workforce](#), and new initiatives can all impact the day-to-day experience in your organization.

As competing priorities fill your day, it's easy to lose sight of the employee experience until it's too late. Rather than overhauling the employee experience every year, simply put some tools in place to track and assess how things are going.

Conduct performance reviews

Make [performance reviews](#) a priority—whether they are quarterly check-ins, annual performance discussions, or weekly 1:1 meetings between managers and employees, ensure your people connect. HR leaders understand the value of listening—[89% of them](#) agree that ongoing peer feedback and check-ins are essential for successful outcomes. Use that connection time wisely. Almost every employee conversation offers time to ask how someone feels about work and to listen for any peaks and valleys in their experience.

Benchmark other organizations

If you're facing employee experience issues in your organization, your peers in other companies will likely understand. Taking time to benchmark peer organizations provides valuable insights about what might work for your organization, too.

[Harvard Business Review](#) offers these benchmarks regarding what the best companies do differently in terms of the employee experience:

- Put people first
- Help employees discover and pursue their passions
- Bring people together on a personal level
- Empower people to own their work
- Create a work environment where people can be themselves

Consider if any of these benchmarks from the best companies are ones you might be able to implement. Reach out to colleagues in your area and industry to inquire about their challenges, offer advice, and ask for their strategic employee experience suggestions.

Stay aware of generational needs

As we explain in our guide about [how to motivate employees](#), each generation experiences workplace motivation differently. [Goldbeck's Generational Values and Personality \(2010\) matrix](#) outlines stereotypical values and personalities ascribed to different generations regarding work, motivation, leadership, and others.

When you review and examine the employee experience and what motivates your workforce, be sure to keep the various needs of each generation in mind.



	Generation baby boomers (1943-1960)	Generation X (1960-1981)	Generation Y (1982-2001)
Work ethic & values	Workaholics, work efficiently, personal fulfillment, desire quality, question authority	Eliminate the task, selfreliance. want structure and direction, skeptical	What's next, multitasking, tenacity, entrepreneurial, tolerant, goal-oriented
Work is...	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge, a contract	A means to an end, fulfillment
Leadership style	Consensual, collegial	Everyone is the same, challenge others, ask why	Not yet determined
Interactive style	Team player, loves meetings	Entrepreneur	Participative
Communications	In person	Direct, Immediate	E-mail, Voice mail
Feedback	Don't appreciate It	Sorry to interrupt but how am I doing?	Whenever I want it at the push of a button
Rewards	Money, title, recognition	Freedom Is the best reward	Meaningful work
Messages that motivate	You are valued, you are needed	Do it your way, forget the rules	You will work with other bright creative people
Work & family life	No balance, work to live	Balance	Balance

Source: Motivational Differences between the Generations X, Y, and Baby Boomers. (C) Goldbeck Recruiting, Inc.

Conclusion

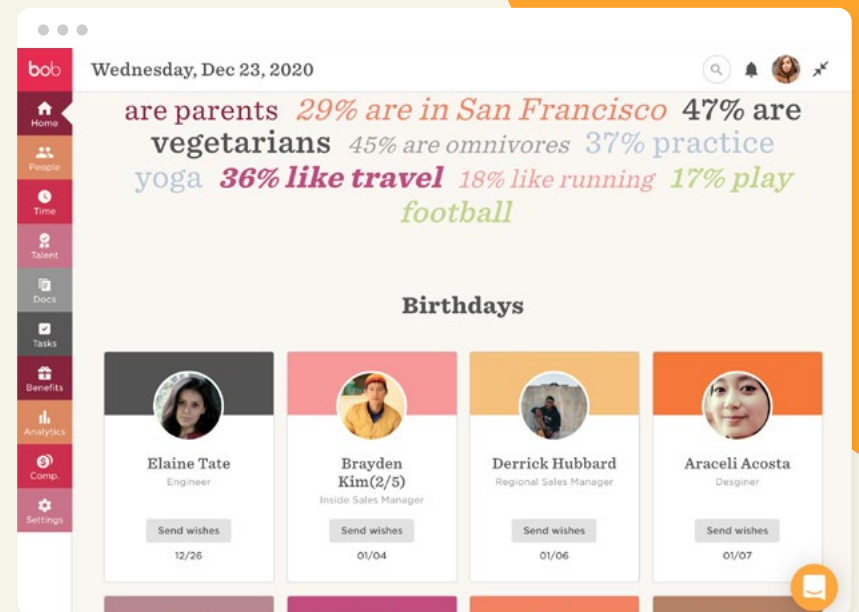
While employees are not customers or consumers, it's wise to treat their experience with the same level of care and concern. Just as a satisfied customer will return to a restaurant after a great meal, employees will stay with an employer if they have a good experience.

Companies can reap the benefits of a positive employee experience with engaged employees, increased revenue, innovation, and a higher incidence of great work. For the employee experience to positively impact your business strategy, you must listen to employees and then take action. Crafting the optimal employee experience may not be simple, but it's one of the most critical undertakings an organization can take on—and one which will quite possibly deliver the most results.



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