

# Creating a Compelling Employee Experience

Liz Warren



What is employee experience and how do organizations create that experience?

We have found it means different things to various

organizations, and at ESC, we work with our clients to help them create and live a culture where the employee experience is positive and energizing. When our clients ask us about employee experience, we share with them that it is a practice that should mirror the customer experience.

Early in my career, I had a company's president explain to me that if I took care of employees as if they were my customers, my employees would service the customers similarly, and the bottom line would take care of itself. I have found this to be true throughout my career, and I believe it is the key to being a high-performing company creating a world-class employee experience.

## Setting the Stage

The entire leadership team, not just the HR team, sets the stage for a great employee experience. Consequently, ESC works with business owners and executives to help them build a culture that encompasses a great employee experience. There are many aspects to consider, such as values and culture, empowering meaningful work, work space, tools to do the job, and well-being. Even taking all of these factors into account, it is truly all about relationships—most employees leave their jobs because of poor relationships with their managers.

Interestingly, several client business owners and managers have commented



that the only reason employee experience is being discussed is because of Millennials in the workplace. Millennials have the greatest number of employees in the workplace today, compared to other generations, and some Gen Xers and Baby Boomers are slow to embrace Millennial's strengths and the uniqueness they bring to the table. They dismiss employee experience as merely a Millennial-focused initiative. Organizations that hold these beliefs will soon be left behind.

It is important to help client business owners understand why it is worth their time and how the employee experience will help their businesses. One of the ways ESC helps our clients is to ensure they understand how focusing on having a positive employee experience helps drive business results. When that is accomplished and resistance is overcome, real change can happen at the client level. Numerous studies show that organizations with a positive employee experience are more successful. According to a study done by IBM and Globoforce,<sup>1</sup> a positive employee experience can contribute to higher motivation and increased discretionary effort and work, along with an associated lower turnover rate. A PwC study<sup>2</sup> showed that employees who are more committed to their organizations put in 57 percent greater effort and were 87 percent less likely to resign.

## The Components of the Client Experience

Most research indicates that the areas of employee experience are physical, technological, and cultural. When the physical aspect of the employee experience is considered, most people think of Google's open space design and complimentary food. We tell our clients that they need to have open discussions with their employees to determine what is important to them, rather than simply imitating large corporations. One size does not fit all, on an individual or an organizational level.

We worked with one client that recently relocated its office. Its old office had white walls, stained carpets, and was full of filing cabinets. The new space has vibrant colors, hanging egg chairs, all-glass walls, a ping pong table, rowing machines, scooters, hover boards, and a nap room. The client also installed dry-erase walls in all of its conference rooms to encourage creativity. The difference in the feel of the culture from the old office to the new is indescribable. Another client with a lower budget simply added a few beanbag chairs and standup desks for their employees and received positive feedback. This client has established metrics to measure change and, although it is too early to tell, the owner believes in the long run, it will translate to increased productivity. Some organizations are considering things such as art, lighting, air quality, temperature, music, and clutter. The time employees

<sup>1</sup> [www.globoforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The\\_Employee\\_Experience\\_Index.pdf](http://www.globoforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The_Employee_Experience_Index.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> [www.pwc.com/us/en/people-management/assets/pwc-fast-takes-employee-engagement.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/us/en/people-management/assets/pwc-fast-takes-employee-engagement.pdf).

spend at work is meant to be enjoyed and more like a home atmosphere, which makes sense when you consider, in many cases, we spend more time at work than we do at home.

Another important aspect of the employee experience is the work itself. Is it empowering, does it have a purpose, and does it match with the individual's values? We worked with a new client that was experiencing high turnover rates and discovered that its recruiting process needed revamping. It was not structured or organized, and candidates were not given realistic job previews. Hiring decisions were made too quickly, and information regarding values, purpose, and job responsibility were glossed over at best. Once the system was redesigned, taking into account a great employee experience from the moment a candidate inquired about opportunities, turnover rates dropped dramatically.

Having the requisite tools and technology to do the job is another important component of the employee experience. This means more than having the latest computers at workstations or the most up-to-date conferencing software, although those are important. We worked with a dental client whose practice managing partner solicited and listened to feedback from employees who said that more expensive equipment would make it more efficient for them to do their jobs. Not only did employee satisfaction increase, but patients commented on the improvements, and the time to service most patients decreased without a reduction in service. This again illustrates the close ties between employee experience and customer experience.

Another consideration when envisioning a client's employee experience is well-being. In the past, some organizations had wellness programs, but today the well-being aspect of the employee experience is much more than getting your cholesterol and blood pressure checked. Well-being incorporates physical, mental/emotional, and social wellness. It truly is a holistic approach. An O.C. Tanner Institute survey<sup>3</sup> showed that work output increased from 61 to 81 percent when the

team's well-being went from poor to excellent. Social well-being in the workplace has tangible results. Internally at ESC, we have an events committee run by a group of employees who organize monthly activities to increase social interaction with the team. I frequently receive feedback from employees about the positive impact this has on them.

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of the employee experience for clients to buy into is transparency. It is much easier for a publicly traded corporation to receive high marks from their employees in this category because they are mandated to share a great deal of information, including their financial statements. A privately held business may be uncomfortable with sharing that kind of detail, but employees today regard transparency as being extremely important. Each organization needs to decide what company information they will communicate to their teams as well as how they will implement the communica-

tion plan. One of the non-profit agencies that ESC works with started a "Coffee in the Cafe" with the executive director. There is no set agenda and staff may speak to the executive director in a casual and comfortable setting. This is a simple way to begin the path to transparency.

Regardless of your current employee experience, you may want to have an open discussion with your clients and worksite employees to gain their feedback and determine if you want to make any additions or adjustments to their employee experience. Small changes can make significant improvement, and there certainly is a compelling business case for creating a spirited and positive employee experience. ●

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<sup>3</sup> [www.octanner.com/content/dam/octanner/documents/white-papers/OCT\\_HealthandWellnessWhitePaper2016.pdf](http://www.octanner.com/content/dam/octanner/documents/white-papers/OCT_HealthandWellnessWhitePaper2016.pdf).



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