Employee experiences are made up of moments that matter from the first interaction as candidates until the time employees exit or retire. Effective management of the employee experience involves continuously capturing employee feedback and then — based on the insights — acting with precision and in real-time to drive ongoing improvements.

**Employee Experience Management Is the Next Frontier**

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Questions posed by: SAP SuccessFactors
Answers by: Lisa Rowan, Research Vice President, HR, Talent, and Learning Strategies

**Q** Why is employee experience management critical for organizations?

**A** Employee expectations and demands for their workforce experiences have dramatically changed. Employees want their business applications to be like consumer applications — smart, engaging, intuitive and personalized. At the same time, employees want to be heard. They want to provide feedback and they expect to see changes based on their input. The moments that matter are those critical touch points between employer and employee that define the employee experience.

Organizations that deliver exceptional employee experiences achieve better business results and outperform the competition. They reduce unwanted attrition, retain and develop top performers, drive higher employee engagement, and increase productivity. They also drive higher customer ratings (or satisfaction).

Companies can't afford to ignore employee experience. The costs of not focusing on employee experience are significant when you consider that — without the ability to collect and connect data across the entire employee lifecycle — there's no way to achieve those outcomes.

It's very important that the systems utilized to measure the employee experience are listening on a continual basis and not just at a point in time. To truly capture the voice of employees, organizations need to collect feedback at every moment that matters.

**Q** How does employee experience relate to customer experience?

**A** You can’t deliver great customer experiences without focusing on your people and delivering great employee experiences. Employees come first. Your employees represent the frontline that faces the customer. Oftentimes, customer experience is the only differentiator for a company. Great experiences keep customers coming back. And satisfied employees — those who enjoy their jobs and feel like they are adequately recognized and rewarded — are more likely to put forward a positive face to the customer. As such, the employee experience is intertwined with the customer experience. If you focus on your employees, the numbers will follow.
Think of employees as consumers of the HR department. Ensuring that employees are satisfied, engaged, and bringing their A-game to work every day requires a way to measure and optimize their experiences in an ongoing fashion. Additionally, EX and CX go the other way too. Organizations can develop and coach employees using customer experience data to improve the service that the employee is providing. Some organizations identify CX barriers using voice of the employee feedback as well.

**Optimizing the workforce experience at every moment that matters**

What prevents organizations from being successful at employee experience management?

Organizations have massive amounts of operational data. Related to people, they know how many people are getting hired. They know how many employees are completing their training. They know how many are designated high potential. They can even drill down and see how many employees are leaving in the first year by geography. But until now, the struggle has been in connecting operational data and experience data. Organizations know what is happening, but not why.

In trying to figure out the “why,” organizations have struggled to engage employees in a relevant, engaging way to collect continuous feedback. Organizations have historically deployed very structured, formal, long, brutal questionnaires to their employees. The experience alone, of being talked “at” by the company, can negatively experience the employees. Lack of flexibility and transparency are also big issues. It’s difficult for many employers to understand how to easily access and track the sentiment of employees on a regular basis simply because they don’t have flexible and transparent systems to access and listen to the voice of the employee.
Employers often don’t know what’s happening with the workforce because they may only do an annual employee survey which gives them a glimpse into a single point in time. Additionally, the process of analyzing feedback from an annual survey, for example, and getting the right insights into the hands of those who can drive change, is highly manual and can take months. This manual process makes it difficult for employers to respond quickly to employee satisfaction challenges. Employers need to evolve their listening programs over time as their needs and the needs of their employees change over time.

**Q** What are some best practices of good employee experience management?

**A** It’s important for organizations to start with the problem they are looking to solve. The operational data can clearly indicate if sales are down or if people in marketing are not being promoted internally or if attrition is occurring in a certain geography. Employers need a continuous process of listening to the employee to understand the sentiments around why these things are happening. And if experience data shows that sentiment is not where an organization wants it to be, the organization needs quick access to actionable insights and that data needs to be available to the people who can actually drive change. Gathering employee sentiment is valuable but linking it to people decisions and people actions is imperative. Only by listening and understanding is an organization able to act and improve the employee experience. While an annual survey is incredibly useful for organizations to surface key topics and track longitudinal metrics to see if they are improving how they take action on the data they are getting, it’s also important to get granular data and insight into key moments that matter. Furthermore, there is immense power in being able to connect line of business data with HR and employee experience data. Measuring employee experience should not be something that sits to the side — it needs to be integrated into the broader human capital management ecosystem. Measuring employee experience should be in the context of evaluating and improving things like performance management processes, hiring talent acquisition initiatives, compensation programs, and learning and development efforts. The data collected relates to the moments that matter across the lifecycle of the employee with the goal of linking experience insight to optimizing people, processes and decisions.

**Q** What is the role technology plays in employee experience management?

**A** Technology plays an integral role since it needs to not only surface insight but also help the organization act on insights. And the technology makes all these interactions with employees possible to manage at scale.

Modern experience management involves a wide range of listening mechanisms across a variety of engagement channels including email, text, portals and social media. These engagement channels are needed to support continuous listening so organizations can gather input and capture feedback at all the key employee moments that matter and then take appropriate action. Modern solutions provide customized, role-based and pre-configured applications to the individual who needs relevant information be it a line manager, a group manager or a senior executive. And good, validated survey content that is tied...
to the outcomes and the benchmarks of the company is also needed. Organizations should strive to align sentiment analysis to the goals of the company. In many situations, organizations may need to leverage some consulting services to maximize the success of their efforts.

Data should seamlessly flow into the system that provides the analytics and the dashboards that managers utilize. Analytics and insights need to be embedded and integrated throughout the lifecycle where they are most valuable in the HCM suite – onboarding, recruiting, learning, performance, career development, and so forth.

Technology also makes it easier and faster for employers to conduct statistically valid surveys. A solid foundation of data is needed because employee experience is a strategic initiative. It goes beyond just whether an employee is having fun on the job. Employee experience is about making sure that employees have all the tools they need to get their jobs done in a timely and high-quality fashion. It’s about their level of engagement with their work, their team, their manager and their organization. The technology needs to surface the insight that can help the organization make changes on the fly.

In closing, in order to realize the benefits of a happy, engaged workforce, organizations can’t just add “perks.” By being able to listen, understand, and act on the insights from employees, organizations can truly make their business a place where people want to work, turning employees into ambassadors, reducing turnover, retaining top performers, and increasing workforce productivity.

About the Analyst

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Lisa Rowan is responsible for global research on human capital and talent management software and services. Ms. Rowan provides expert analysis focused on both the business services and software used to address HR and talent-related dimensions. Her research addresses developments in human capital and talent management applications, HR consulting, and HR outsourcing services.
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