

Shaping & Sustaining the Employee Experience:

Better Employee Experience = Greater Business Outcomes

Leaders do people – period.

Those are the exact words I have been using for over a decade when leading almost every leadership program regardless of the level. Whether I am speaking at a Conference of C-Suite leaders, training a select group of Directors in a cyber security firm, or facilitating a session for Emerging Leaders and high potential performers at a logistics company, I always focus on one simple idea: **Leaders do people - period.**

The reason for this idea is if we want to build organizations and increase productivity, results, and innovate faster, we must focus on our critical resource – our people. Of course, we need to think about our customers, but not at the expense of our employees. This sentiment has never been more truthful than it is today. **Take care of your people and they will take care of your customers.**

Technology has and will continue to impact the customer experience but remote and generational workers, the constant demand of producing value, creativity, and flexibility are just as important. Career lengths are increasing while average job tenures are decreasing, and more employees are quitting their jobs each month!

Think about that for a moment. **More employees are quitting their jobs each month. Why?**

More than likely – they are not feeling valued. The employee experience is about what people value. Years ago, when my parents left Jamaica to come to Canada and started their careers in geriatric nursing and at General Motors, they valued security. Security made them feel good. They valued that feeling and security was what leaders provided.

Today's employee still wants to feel value, and that value still embodies security, but now includes feeling good about the work they do and valued at the organization they work for. Meeting these values creates positive employee mindset and drives meaning in their contributions. Today's leaders at all levels must focus on their people.

So, what am I really talking about when I say employee experience? Through the organizations I have worked with and the research I have conducted, I have come up with this definition: **employee experience (EX) is an employee's perception of an organization through the lens of emotions, relationships, and culture.**

Not new concepts for many of you, but time and again, I see leaders get the order wrong. With so much conversation around culture these days – from Google's Mountainview Campus to Royal Banks Cafe Style Customer area – we tend to focus on the physical environment. There is nothing wrong with this focus, except we can get a much bigger bang for our buck when we start from the **employee's perspective.**

Here are 3 actions leaders can take to shape and sustain the employee experience in their organizations.

1. Emotions

Employee emotions (mindset) is perhaps the most important of them all. Emotions encompass how employees think about the company, how they interact with peers and leaders, and how they

understand and navigate their work environments. Emotions drive behaviour, so create an employee experience that matters and let your employees' emotions help guide the way.

Action: Determining and revisiting the emotional state of your colleagues, teams, or organizations will go a long way to increase the effectiveness of daily interactions. The more impactful and consistent the interactions, the more we will understand their motives, wants, needs and dreams.

2. Relationships

People who have a best friend at work are 7 times more likely to be engaged in their jobs. It doesn't necessarily have to be a best friend. Gallup also found that people who had a good friend in the workplace are more likely to be satisfied. I think the point is quite clear: relationships matter. So, as leader, build them. That means respecting others, developing trust, managing conflict and change, hiring right, and more. Just make sure you are doing these things with intention.

Action: Connect your people whenever possible and wherever they are. Connecting with others is an important part of the social dynamic of being human. The result is a business that will be stronger, people will stick around, and managing everyday change will be easier.

3. Culture

If you're doing the first 2, then this one will be easy. Culture is the unsaid conversations that determine how an organization shapes attitudes and behaviours. It all begins with developing a strong company purpose and the values that guide people towards fulfilling that purpose. Culture lives and breathes through the words and actions of your employees – i.e. emotions and relationships.

Action: Do a culture check by asking how people would describe your work culture. If you do not like what you hear, figure out what behaviours you need to do more or less of to get you to where you want to be. Remember, the key is to keep asking.

The employee of today and tomorrow has more choices than ever before and they are choosing to work in places that they want to be rather than where they feel they need to be. Consequently, if you want greater outcomes, focus on a better employee experience.

Like I, said before – leaders do people – period.

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