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# Designing the Employee Experience: The Ultimate Guide for HR

The Demand for Better Employee Experiences

Did you know 70% of CHROs say strengthening the employee experience and company culture is their top priority?

That's likely in light of recent findings that only 50% of employees feel connected to their company culture, and their confidence in their organization's future and leadership is declining. As those rates decline, so do employee engagement and retention.

Strategic HR teams need to put employee experience first to fight the downward trend and retain their top talent.

We put together a guide on how to design your employee experience strategy and manage your people at every stage of their journey. Dive in for tips on improving employee experience (EX) from pre-recruitment to post-offboarding, including advice for better EX for remote and hybrid employees.
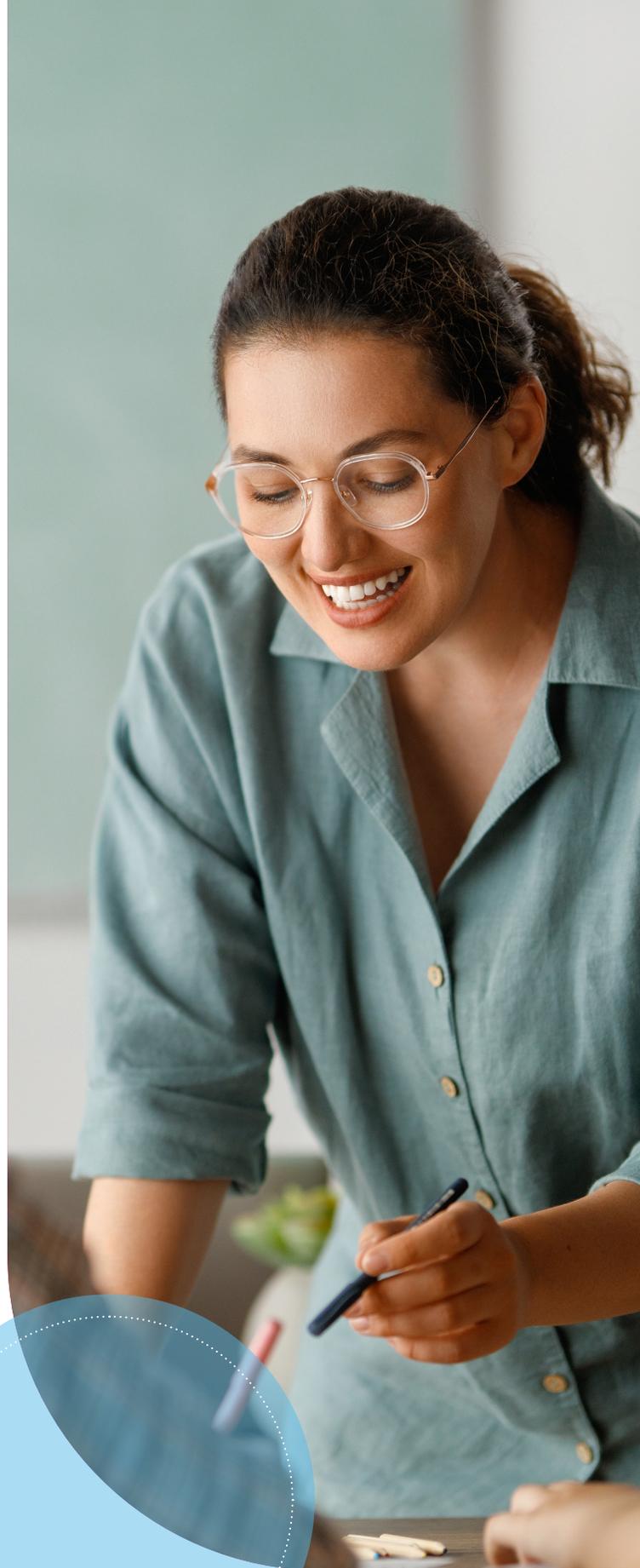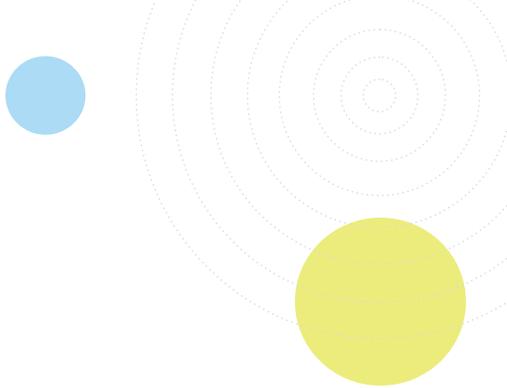
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Employee Experience, Explained

The employee experience refers to each employee's journey with your company and their feelings about it.

Every encounter with your organization, from the first time a future employee reads one of your job descriptions until their tenure ends — and even beyond that — is part of the employee experience. You might think of it as how current or former employees would describe their time working at your company, from their relationships with colleagues and career growth opportunities to whether they received support and motivation to do their best.

The employee experience is shaped by every interaction with your organization and every stage of the employee lifecycle, as well as by each person's experiences with their roles, managers, work environment, and well-being. It impacts their perception of your company and not only their individual success but that of their teams and the entire organization.

Your people need to have their core needs met throughout the employee lifecycle for a high-quality employee experience:

- ✔ Employees' physical work environment

- ✔ Employees' relationships with their managers, including the support they receive to do their best

- ✔ Employees' sense of belonging and connection to company culture and values

- ✔ How employers demonstrate a commitment to employees' health and well-being

Did You Know?

People are willing to pay for great experiences. When companies offer outstanding customer and employee experiences, they can charge a premium of up to 16% for their products or services.

Why Does Employee Experience Matter?

Employee experience shapes employees' feelings and perceptions of your company — its culture, brand, and purpose.

Those feelings and perceptions impact employee engagement, retention, development, and performance.

In short, the employee experience matters because it has a direct impact on the success of your business. Let's look more closely at why EX is so significant.

Drives Engagement and Performance

Employee engagement (and its benefits) is the result of a great employee experience. Engaged employees are 59% less likely to be looking for a new job. They also perform at a higher level than disengaged employees, producing higher quality work, demonstrating more innovative problem-solving, and providing better customer experiences. Engagement is a top factor in the success of your business — companies with high levels of engagement are 21% more profitable.

59% Engaged employees are 59% less likely to be looking for a new job.

Reduces the Cost of Turnover

You're well aware that retaining your current employees is much more cost-effective than dealing with employee turnover. Replacing employees takes weeks of valuable time and can cost up to two times their salary. That adds up fast, eating away at your business's bottom line.

Turnover also affects the employee experience by disrupting team dynamics, diminishing morale, and impacting overall productivity. It's no surprise that the research shows that of CHROSs whose priority is employee retention and recruitment, 80% say retention takes priority over internal mobility or attracting new workers.

Fosters a Culture of Success

When employees feel valued, supported, and engaged, they're more likely to stay committed to your organization long-term. On the other hand, a negative employee experience can lead to disengagement, absenteeism, and underperformance. By investing in employee experience, you're not just creating a positive work environment — you're fostering a culture of success where employees thrive and grow alongside your organization.

Improves Customer Satisfaction

Happy employees lead to happy customers. When employees feel valued and engaged, they're more likely to go the extra mile to deliver exceptional customer experiences. This, in turn, leads to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. In fact, research has found that companies with high employee satisfaction scores also tend to have higher customer satisfaction scores.

When your people are disengaged, quitting, or underperforming, it's often because they're not having a good employee experience. On the other hand, when you foster a sense of purpose, provide support, and cultivate relationships throughout the employee journey, you're shaping the employee experience by creating an environment where engagement can flourish.

How to Build a Successful Employee Experience Strategy

A successful employee experience strategy starts exactly where you might guess — with your people.

Research from Gallup tells us that to get the employee experience right, you need to engage your employees and give them the support they need to do their best and grow in their careers.

But there's evidence to suggest that businesses aren't aligned with what their employees actually need — although 95% of HR leaders say they're confident in their employee experience, 58% of employees are thinking about taking a new job.

To truly understand and manage the employee experience, listen to feedback and zero in on what matters most to your people. Then, you can make improvements that actually move the needle toward building the best experience possible.
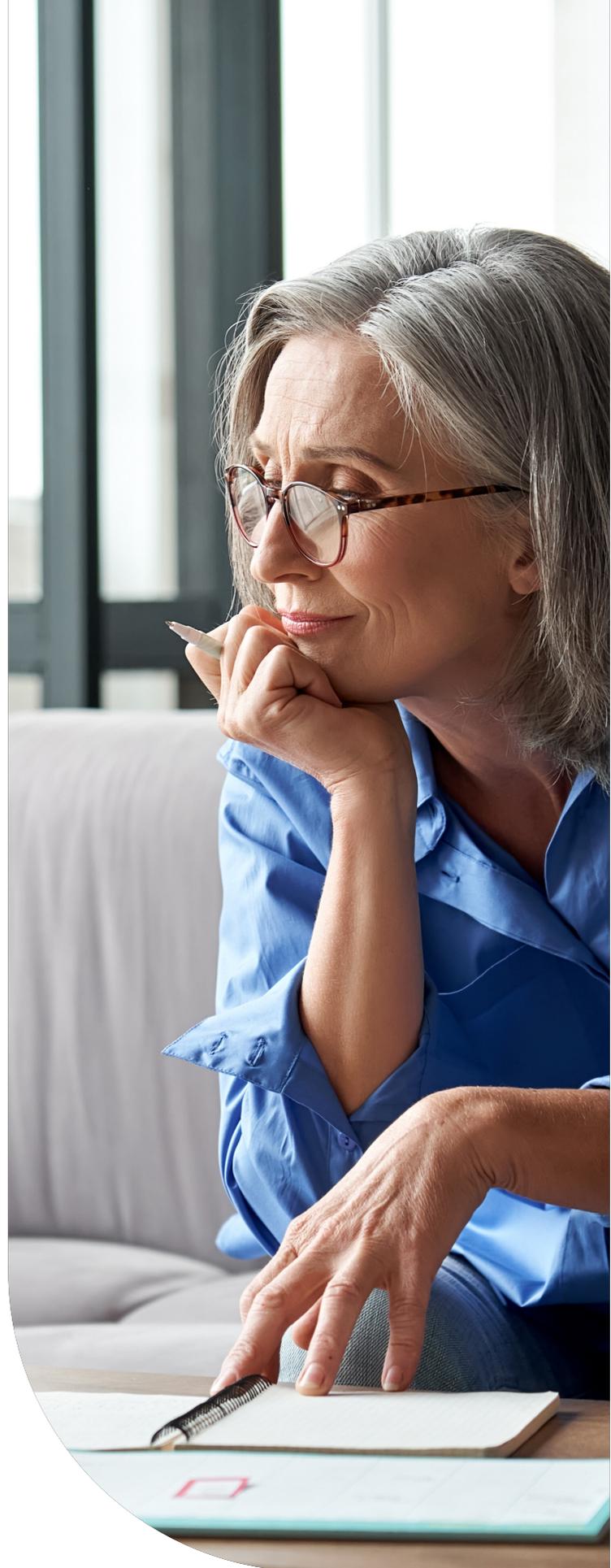
Step 1: Take the Pulse of the Current Employee Experience

Start the conversation about employee experience by discussing these questions with your team and stakeholders:

- ✔ Do we have an established employer brand and candidate experience strategy?

- ✔ Do our recruiters interact with passive candidates and talent pools?

- ✔ Do we have an effective onboarding strategy that supports remote onboarding and increases new hire retention?

- ✔ Is performance management tracked and discussed in a transparent and accessible way?

- ✔ What challenges do our employees face, and do we provided the tools to overcome them?

- ✔ Do our employees feel they have a good work-life balance?

- ✔ Does our company have a strategy for frequent and timely recognition and feedback?

- ✔ Do we know our company's employee engagement rate?

How you answer these questions can help you understand which aspects of the employee experience you're already thinking about and which might be slipping through the cracks.

You can also use employee experience surveys to get firsthand feedback on how your employees are feeling. With employee engagement software, you can send a variety of surveys and analyze their results — and set automatic survey cycles to take tasks off your HR team's plate.
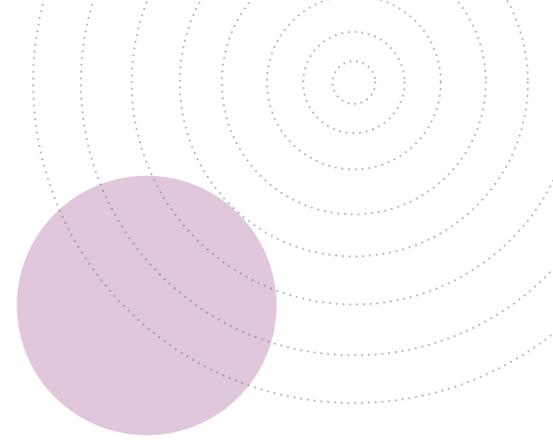
Use surveys to gauge your people's feelings about:

- ✔ Overall employee satisfaction and engagement

- ✔ Mental health and well-being

- ✔ Their work environment

- ✔ Their onboarding or new hire experience

- ✔ Your diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) policies

- ✔ Any topic that's important to your company with custom surveys

Digital Solutions Enhance Employee Experience

When remote work was suddenly a necessity for many of us in 2020, it became clear whether our digital tools were meeting our needs or just complicating our workflows. No doubt, we can distinctly remember if the uncertainty of the time was amplified by frustrations with the software we were using or if it helped ease the transition from the office to the home office.

The right software solutions enable meaningful interactions, increased collaboration, and employee success. Get the HR technology you need to manage the employee experience — and an all-in-one-tool that helps improve your own EX with the ClearCompany Talent Management System.

Step 2: Create a Plan for EX Enhancement

With the insight you gathered from assessing your current employee experience, you can now make a plan for how to address shortcomings and bolster strengths. Work with your team and stakeholders to identify your priorities and develop actionable strategies. Here's how to do that:

1. **Prioritize** where your company needs to improve the employee experience. For example, if your new hire turnover rate is twice your company's average, the onboarding process is most likely the first part of the employee journey you'll want to focus on.

2. **Set goals** for your areas of improvement and communicate them to everyone involved. If you're revamping onboarding, your goals might include reducing new hire turnover by 10% over the next year.

3. **Develop an action plan** for how to tackle your goals. With onboarding, your plan might start with implementing a new hire survey so you can create a record of what's working, what's not, and how those perceptions change as your strategy changes.

4. **Invest** in your managers and employees by providing them with the training and tools they need to improve the employee experience. That could include providing comprehensive software tools and training your people on skills like effective communication, leadership development, conflict resolution, and DEIB.

Step 3: Implement Changes Incrementally

Putting your employee experience improvement plan into practice doesn't need to be all-or-nothing. You might implement the plan in stages or test it in one or two departments. No matter how you get the ball rolling, keep your employees informed about what you're doing to address any concerns they may have brought up in their survey responses. As new processes take effect, continue to provide support and coaching for your team and employees.

Step 4: Monitor the Impact of EX Initiatives

When you make changes to any process at work, it's highly beneficial to monitor the results. That tells you if your strategies are on the right track or having the opposite of the intended effect. Track your progress against the goals you set in Step 2, and continually collect employee feedback to see how they feel about changes to their experience.

Be prepared to adjust your strategies as you learn more about their impact. Flexibility and responsiveness help ensure your efforts remain effective and relevant over time. Don't forget to recognize when your strategies are working and acknowledge your wins as you go along.

Employee Experience Metrics to Monitor

How do you know your EX strategy is working? These are some of the HR metrics you can track to see its impact:

- ✔ Employee Engagement Rate

- ✔ Employee Satisfaction Score

- ✔ New Hire and Employee Retention

- ✔ Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)

- ✔ Employee Performance Scores and Goal Achievement

- ✔ Absenteeism

- ✔ Rate of Promotions or Internal Mobility

- ✔ DEIB Metrics (e.g., Pay Equity or Employee Demographics)

- ✔ Employee Well-being Score

- ✔ Customer Satisfaction

- ✔ Customer Loyalty or Retention
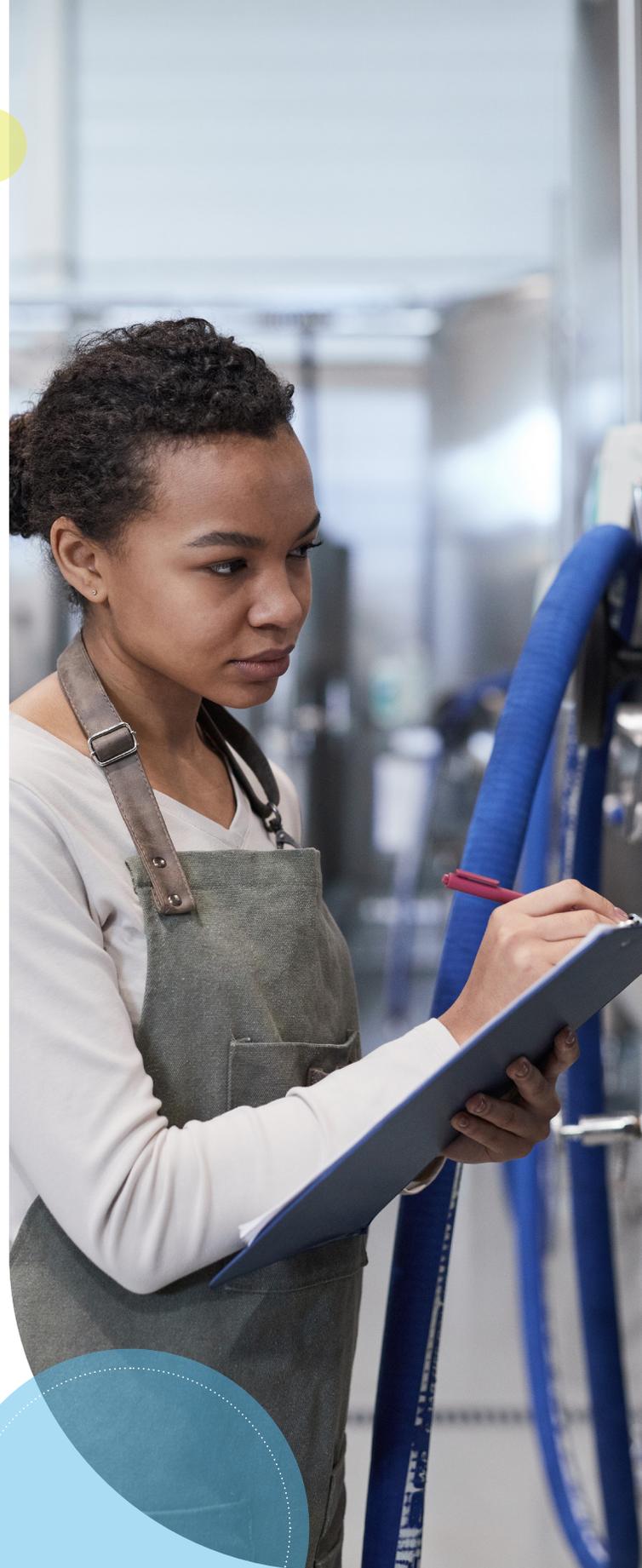
The Employee Experience for Remote and Hybrid Workers

For many of us in roles where remote work is possible, our work environments have shifted permanently. We've gone from going into the office 100% of the time to hybrid (anywhere from one to four days a week in-office) or fully remote work schedules. That's also become the preference — workplace flexibility is second only to salary as the most important factor for workers today.

To see if your employee experience is meeting the needs of your remote workforce, ask yourself these questions:

1. How does time-to-hire compare for remote/hybrid roles vs. in-person?

2. Are we providing office equipment for remote employees equivalent to that of our in-person employees?

3. Compare the retention rates of fully remote, hybrid, and in-office employees (if applicable). Are we able to retain top talent no matter where they work?

4. Does the remote onboarding experience offer new employees the opportunity to have meaningful interactions with current employees?

5. Do we provide easy access to remote onboarding materials and resources?

6. Are we offering flexible work hours to accommodate different time zones and personal schedules?

7. Do remote teams have access to collaboration tools for seamless communication?

8. Have we established clear remote work policies and guidelines?

9. How do we encourage remote employees to take regular breaks and disconnect when they're not working?

10. How can we offer remote employees opportunities to participate in virtual team projects or collaborate with other departments?

11. How do we facilitate virtual recognition programs to celebrate remote employees' achievements?

12. Can we create a remote employee buddy system for peer support and camaraderie?

13. Are we promoting a culture of inclusivity and belonging for remote employees?

14. Do we need to adjust DEIB policies to accommodate the virtual workplace?

Based on your answers, you can no doubt identify where the employee experience may be lacking for remote workers. Start from there to make changes so you can offer every employee the same engaging experience, no matter their role or where they work.

23 Ways to Improve the Employee Experience

A better employee experience strategy has to consider every possible stage of the employee lifecycle, from passive job seekers and former employees to new hires and of course, your own talented HR team.

It should reinforce the pillars of an excellent employee experience, contributing to a positive work environment, providing the necessary tools to get work done, creating connection with the company's values and goals, and supporting your people's health and well-being.

Take a look at 23 actions you can take to strengthen the pillars of the employee experience at your organization to improve performance, retention, development, and engagement.

Work Environment

1   **Increase flexibility** where possible, whether in work location or hours. If your employees can't do their jobs remotely, flex schedules, like four-day workweeks or alternating shifts, can help you meet employees' needs.

2   **Offer an equipment stipend** employees can spend on equipping their home office with the tools they need. If you're in-person, ensure everyone has a designated workspace and comfortable, ergonomic equipment.

3   **Enforce safety standards and protocol.** Many employees work in potentially dangerous environments, like manufacturing plants or construction jobsites. Create a culture of safety by holding everyone accountable for following safety procedures, like wearing the proper PPE.

4   **Ask your employees what they need** to improve their work environment. You can have managers regularly check-in with their team members or send out a survey at regular increments to gauge satisfaction levels with the work environment.

5   **Adopt digital tools and workflows.** Take tedious manual tasks off employees' plates and streamline processes with the help of technology solutions wherever possible. For example, if your recruiters are manually coordinating and scheduling every interview, look for a digital tool that allows candidates to schedule their own interviews based on the hiring team's schedule.

Did You Know?

Employees with flexible schedules report:

39%   **higher productivity**

64%   **greater ability to focus**

Conversely, less flexibility leads to:

4.6x   worse work-related stress and anxiety

2.6x   worse work-life balance

Connection to Company Culture

6 **Establish a strong employer brand** that accurately reflects your company culture to anyone outside it — prospective candidates, their friends and family, your talent pipeline, and even former employees. You don't want your career site to make promises about monthly team outings and growth opportunities that don't materialize after an employee is hired.

7 **Align individual goals with company goals.** When your employees set goals each year or maybe every quarter, ensure your managers are connecting them to larger company goals. This makes it easier for your employees to see the bigger picture — the common goal they and their colleagues are working toward.

8 **Start a mentorship program.** Pair your incoming new hires with a more experienced employee outside of their department. This serves a dual purpose of helping them form relationships with their colleagues and giving them a valuable resource — someone who can answer their questions and give them context for how your company operates and why.

9 **Send out employee surveys** on culture-related topics. Having their voices heard is a key component of an engaged workforce. With employee engagement software, you can send surveys on a variety of topics and get their opinions on anything from your remote work policies to their overall job satisfaction. You can also build your own custom surveys if you want to get really specific.

10 **Implement a digital onboarding process**, even if employees are in-person. Digital onboarding is not only easier for HR to manage, it helps build employee engagement before they even start. Simplify paperwork, create robust employee records, and start building trust with your new hires right away with a digital onboarding process.

Employee Well-Being

11 **Look for ways to facilitate work-life balance.** In addition to flexible schedules or workplaces, you can do this by encouraging employees to unplug after-hours and on vacations, as well as take regular breaks during the workday.

12 **Recognize outstanding efforts and achievements.** Employee recognition is one of the best tools available for motivating your people and increasing engagement. This can be as simple as thanking an employee privately or during a team meeting, or it could involve giving rewards like bonuses or extra PTO.

13 **Celebrate employee milestones.** Wish your employees a happy birthday and congratulate them on their work anniversaries. Encourage peer recognition, too, by posting recognition and milestones on public channels, like your company intranet or Slack.

14 **Form employee resource groups** (ERGs) to provide a supportive community for employees with shared interests or backgrounds and promote inclusivity. Your HR team can support ERGs by providing resources, sponsoring events, and fostering collaboration between groups.

15 **Offer wellness benefits** like gym memberships, mental health resources, and mindfulness programs. Work with your benefits provider to offer comprehensive wellness packages tailored to employees' needs.

16 **Foster relationships** among employees by organizing team-building activities, fostering open communication channels, and encouraging managers to build strong relationships with their teams. Strong social connections at work are essential for employees' well-being and job satisfaction.

17 **Gather feedback** on well-being with employee surveys. We're clearly a proponent of sending a survey because they're powerful tools for identifying areas for improvement and measuring the effectiveness of wellness initiatives. The survey data enables your team to make data-informed decisions and tailor programs to better meet employees' needs.

Tools and Support

18 **Use a Talent Management System** to support a holistic employee experience strategy. With all your people management tools and data combined in one place, your HR team will save time and gain insight. When you unite every part of the employee lifecycle in one platform, you can much more easily make connections and spot patterns that impact EX, leading to better talent management strategies.

19 **Leverage automation and artificial intelligence (AI) tools** for HR processes. Automation and AI streamline HR workflows, reduce administrative burden, and free up time your team can use to focus on strategic initiatives and employee support programs. For example, when you automate survey cycles, you eliminate the need for someone on your team to queue up each round of surveys, send them out, and notify participants when the survey is about to close.

20 **Implement recruiting email drip campaigns** to nurture passive talent. Your talent pipelines need to be worked, and automating this process helps keep them engaged and eliminates this repetitive task for recruiters.

21 **Encourage managers to schedule weekly check-ins** with each of their direct reports. This standing meeting is a chance to give employees quick feedback, remove roadblocks holding up their progress, and just see how they're doing. You can rest assured that your people have ample opportunity to ask for the support they need and build closer relationships with their managers.

22 **Conduct regular formal performance reviews** so employees aren't left in the dark about how they're doing or their goal progress. Regular reviews provide records of performance that can help employees advocate for promotions, identify what they're best at, and improve their weaknesses.

23 **Offer professional development opportunities.** Thanks to the support employees receive during weekly one-on-ones and formal reviews, managers can more easily identify employees who are good candidates for career growth. Employees also have more chances to advocate for themselves, in addition to having reviews and feedback to prove they are ready for the next step in their career.

There are countless ways to cultivate an engaging, retention-driving employee experience — how you do it depends on what your people need. The only nonnegotiable? A robust talent management system to manage all the moving parts of the employee experience.

Employee Experience Excellence With ClearCompany's Talent Management System

Companies that choose to center the employee experience in their processes, platforms, and culture are successfully retaining their people and outperforming their competitors. Yours can be one of them.

Find out how you can create an engaging employee experience from first-touch to post-offboarding with ClearCompany Talent Management.

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