UNLEASHING THE POWER OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE: TRANSFORMING WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Employee experience (EX) is the experience of employees right from the day of job candidacy until the day they exit the organization. It combines three distinct environments, namely technological, physical, and cultural, irrespective of the organization's type, size, and scope. According to a recent study, negative employee experience is one of the top reasons behind the high attrition rate of employees. To recruit and keep the greatest talent today, businesses must consider their employees' touchpoints, including their organization's culture, technology, physical environment, etc. Before accepting a job, salary may be a major concern, but with millennials; it's not the only case. They are more concerned about positivity at the workplace and their experience with the organization. Over the past few years, employee engagement gained popularity, and a lot of research has been done on its theoretical and practical perspective. However, very little research has been done on the necessity of employee experience for effective employee engagement and satisfaction. This paper highlights the Employee experience trends to improve workforce productivity. It has also emphasized the relevance of positive EX with the productivity of remote workers. The potential contribution of this study will provide useful insights on how to increase the productivity of the workforce through positive employee experience for various professionals, practitioners, and academicians in the field of HR management.

Keywords: Employee experience, remote workers, workforce productivity

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the most vital asset of any organization responsible for its smooth operations. Their productive involvement in organizational activities improves profitability and growth in the long run. So, it becomes essential to ensure that employees remain productive while working. Employees' productivity generally depends on several factors such as skills, knowledge, competencies, and monetary and non-monetary benefits offered in return for their work. But above all, the employees' experience during the entire job cycle is the new evaluation trend. A famous saying by Timothy R. Clark "Highly engaged employees make the customer experience. Disengaged employees break it" clearly states that customer experience is

dependent on employee engagement. Employee experience should be made part of employee engagement. Engagement and disengagement are influenced by how individuals and the environment interact (Brad Shuck et al., 2010). Managers realize that having a satisfied and engaged workforce is critical for the growth and sustainability of an organization. Employee satisfaction is a measure of employees' experience with their organization's work environment.

The entirety of an employee's career constitutes their employee experience. All interactions that take place between employees and the organization are summed up under the term "employee experience" (Morgan, 2017). It is directly related to employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. A positive EX will take care of all of the employee's needs. If an employee is having a positive experience, he will be more engaged and productive in his work than other employees. Employee experience lies between employees' expectations, needs, and wants & organizational design of expectations, needs, and wants. The types of environments in which employee experience surrounds are cultural, physical, and technological environments, where the cultural environment shows the feelings of employees for their organization, the physical environment for their work environment, and the technological environment for the tools and techniques available to them to get their work done. Employee experience leading to higher engagement of employees can create business value comprising innovations, productivity, profitability, growth, going green, overall happiness, and employer brand (Morgan, 2017).

Any organization's productivity depends on its workforce's productivity. Organizational culture directly impacts employee experience and engagement in the workforce. The Productivity of employees is generally dependent on their skills and knowledge, but in today's scenario, employees are looking beyond these to stay competitive. Employee experience (EX) plays a key role in boosting the productivity of the workforce and making them feel happy and engaged. Employee experience and productivity are a matter of motivation and theories of motivation can change the management game. McGregor's Theory Y is compatible with remote workers and their management where managers can trust and involve them in decision-making. According to McGregor, Theory Y discusses categories of employees who love their work and can handle it more responsibly. Insights from BetterUp, a platform to empower the workforce found three essential elements to constitute a positive employee experience: inclusive leadership, employee well-being, and support for hybrid employees. Employee engagement and employee experience are two terms that are sometimes misconstrued; although people believe they are interchangeable and similar, they are quite distinct in real-world applications. Employee experience is a key factor in employee engagement, which requires further attention. AI can be successfully integrated throughout the entire employee lifecycle, from hiring and onboarding to delivering HR services and determining career paths, creating a unique employee experience (CuteHR, 2022). Ulrich (1997) defined in his book "Human Resources Champions: Employee Contribution becomes a critical business issue in trying to produce more output with less employee input, companies have no choice but to try to engage not the body but the mind and soul of every employee" (p.125).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The key factors for employee satisfaction are workplace environment, reward & recognition, training & development, and teamwork. After conducting an empirical study, the researchers found that teamwork is the top reason behind job satisfaction (Rizwan et al., 2007). Companies expect their employees to take initiative, be proactive, work well with others in a collaborative environment, be committed to high-performance standards, and take charge of their professional development (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). The virtual workplace is the new standard, but virtual communication has its drawbacks that make employees more distracted and prone to conflict, less eager to work together, and less likely to exchange helpful information (Patil & Gopalakrishnan, 2021). Face-to-face communication has become obsolete as a result of remote work and improved communication technology. A smart workplace is the need of an hour which further necessitates the transformation of the workplace for a better employee experience (Attaran et al., 2019). Factors affecting the performance of employees at the workplace are employee experience, digital work environment, physical work environment, corporate culture, and management styles. Each stage of the worker

endeavour is included in the employee experience, including recruitment, onboarding, commitment, and post-exit interactions (Srivastav, 2021).

Google searches for "employee experience" have surged by 130% in the last five years. However, there aren't many reliable indicators of employee experience. Organizations that rank in the top 25% for employee experience earn a return on sales that is twice as high as those in the bottom quartile. The study shows that employee experience, effort, and work performance all are related to each other. A company's high turnover rate and unfavourable employee experiences are directly related (Mohyi & Sukmawati, 2023). The Employee Experience Index (EXI), which measures employees' personal experiences at work in terms of belonging, purpose, achievement, delight, and vitality, was developed as a result of this research (IBM Smarter Work Institute, 2018). Itam & Ghosh (2020) emphasized management practices of the multigenerational workforce. According to them, Positive employee experience is the new HR approach to increase employee satisfaction and productivity. The key drivers of employee experience are employees' needs and desires, embracing holistic thinking, radical participation, experimenting, and iterating, trusting and appreciating the process, making intangible experiences visible tangibly, better workplace practices, and leadership & management practices. The road to high-performance teams who are seen as loyal and willing to go above and beyond is invariably paved when a firm makes an effort to elevate the improved employee experience and prioritize it.

Employee experience can be used as an effective approach to employee engagement. These days the concept of employee experience is gaining popularity. Currently, a trendy topic in the field of HR is employee experience, a term borrowed from the consumer and IT industries. To design the best employee experience methodology, employers should first step into the shoes of employees, and then it should be framed. The use of empathic tools such as observations, interviews, and immersion helps to control and reframe employee experience (Tucker, 2020). According to a Gartner report, a positive employee experience boosts profitability, productivity, work performance, and staff retention (Rodenhuis, 2019). A smart EX solution simplifies all the other workplace operations, just like Microsoft Office made managing our email and documents simple. The EX-Program effectively boosts employee productivity, employment brand, and customer satisfaction. The Pandemic taught us that working at home, developing a safe workplace, and supporting people in their well-being, productivity, and career growth are essential. EX has crawled out of the corner of the HR department and landed on the desk of the CEO. Employee experience is now essential to the employer brand and goes beyond a program to increase productivity or retention (Bersin, 2021). Today's businesses must make sure that employees have a great experience working for them because it will impact their job satisfaction and spread positive word of mouth within the workplace (Soni et al., 2017).

3. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TRENDS TO IMPROVE WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY:

a) **Empowering People:** Employee empowerment refers to a corporate philosophy and practice where managers or supervisors allow their workforce more discretion at the workplace. Employees who are empowered by their managers have more authority over their daily tasks, the capacity to contribute to policy development and efficient methods for making important decisions. Employee satisfaction level and involvement in discretionary efforts are increased when they feel more empowered.

b) **Customized Careers:** People believe that they are the primary source of control for their professional lives. They are held more accountable for managing their careers. The "customized" or individualized model is characterized by greater individual autonomy in managing careers and greater organizational mobility in terms of switching employers (Harrington, 2020). Organizations should have a policy of customized career options as the needs of every employee vary from one another. This policy will aid in improving the superior-subordinate relationships at the workplace.

c) **Employee Personas:** As not all employees are the same, they shouldn't all be treated equally. Software engineers and sales staff cannot be considered equal. Separate policies should be developed for diskless workers and office workers in the modern world. Employers are becoming more aware of each employee's distinctive tastes, demands, and goals. Organizations are using personalized methods for many elements of the employee journey, such as onboarding, training, development, and rewards, to accommodate these individual differences. Organizations can improve engagement, motivation, and general satisfaction by adjusting experiences to meet the unique expectations of their employees.

d) **Employee Well-being:** Without building work environments where people feel empowered to put themselves first and address their general well-being, particularly their mental health, as openly as they might a broken limb, it is impossible to attain well-being. Employers should invest in training to give their staff the knowledge, vocabulary, and social norms necessary to facilitate these dialogues. Work-life balance, stress management, mindfulness, and accessibility to mental health resources should all be promoted by employers through programs and policies. By understanding the personal and emotional needs of employees, these programs can provide a supportive work environment and enhance the employee experience.

e) **IT Competencies:** In today's technology-enabled business environment, technology has not only automated the work but is also being used to improve employee experience. Advances in technologies in HR such as features of chatbots, user-friendly interfaces, virtual assistants, etc. have extended the concept and application of employee experience inside the organization. Technology developments have altered the landscape of the employment experience. Organizations are using digital platforms, like mobile applications, employee self-service portals, and AI-driven solutions, to improve communication, automate administrative procedures, and boost employee engagement. Technology-driven solutions will not only increase operational effectiveness instead more freedom and access to information to the workforce for a better experience at their workplace.

4. RELEVANCE OF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE IN TODAY'S POST-PANDEMIC SCENARIO

Due to the shift from a physical workplace to a hybrid work culture, corporates need to focus on different categories of employees having different work experiences. According to a 2021 Willis Towers Watson global poll, COVID-19 revolutionized everything. 92% of employers responded that improving EX will be a top focus for their companies over the next three years. Just 52% of respondents said EX was significant before the pandemic. The interactions and opinions that employees have about their jobs, interpersonal relationships, and development opportunities inside their enterprise are all included in what is referred to as the employee experience. One of the key lessons learned from COVID-19 is to promote employees' well-being, productivity, and professional development to stay competitive and relevant in this dynamic and complex work environment.

Colliers' study on small size, mid-size and large-sized organizations revealed that the majority of organizations (63 percent) are seeking hybrid work models in post-covid business environments. According to the study, approximately 28% of businesses believe that communication difficulties and a lack of collaboration are the greatest obstacles to hybrid working, followed by inconsistency in the office environment. Offices are now becoming hubs for innovation and collaboration, with the welfare of employees at their forefront. (Colliers's survey, 2022). Only 30% of employees say they feel comfortable talking to their manager about their mental health, according to a new McKinsey survey. Gallagher emphasizes a transition away from digital initiatives and towards what it refers to as the "people agenda" in its State of the Sector 2021 Report.

To grow and sustain in post-pandemic times, organizations need to provide a complete workspace setup for the efficiency of remote workers. They should ensure remote workers for fast wi-fi, ergonomic furniture, time for child care, etc. Employee experience may seem straightforward, but it's a complicated initiative that covers all of an employee's interactions with a company, from the good times to the bad. It all depends on how well employees feel their expectations are met at work. A human-centered approach is known as "design thinking" emphasizes the solution rather than the problem. When done correctly, it is inclusive and charts the highs and lows of an employee's relationship with the company, aiming to improve the experience to satisfy the needs of both employees and the company. An organization with strong EX strategies can compete in today's cluttered world.
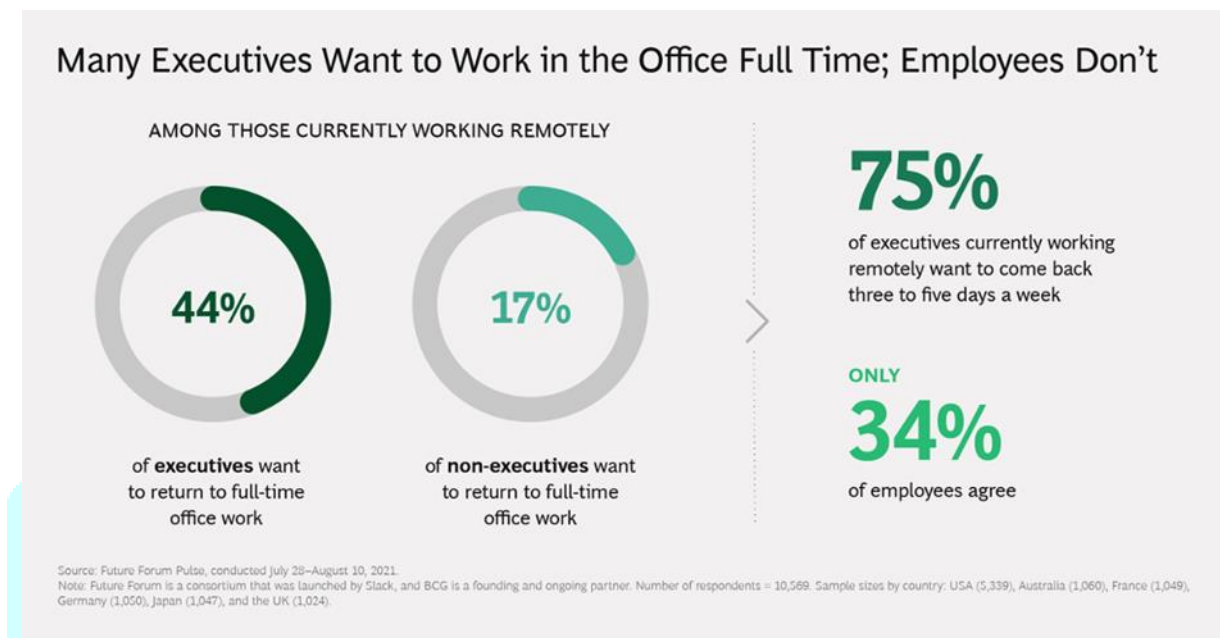
Source: Future forum pulse 2021

5. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (EX) OF REMOTE WORKERS

As most organizations are open to the hybrid-work environment, they are facing the big issue of meaningfully communicating, collaborating and connecting with remote workers. Feeling lonely and isolated is one of the biggest problems being faced by remote workers in the WFH setup. Furthermore, this can be harmful to their mental as well physical health. According to a study by Microsoft, 1 in 10 workers who work from home don't have a sufficient internet connection to carry out their duties, and 42% of employees report that they don't have the necessary office materials at home. Another study by Microsoft's World Trend Index also discloses that more than 46% of employees claim that their employees do not cover the costs of their remote work, which should be a basic step in assisting workers in being productive (Harvard Business Review, 2022). Reasonably, in a hybrid or remote work environment, employers should begin by asking employees if they have the necessary tools and technology to perform their duties. Once employers are aware of the potential to enhance digital experiences, they must move to close any gaps and demonstrate to workers that their concerns are being taken seriously. Remote workers should be given autonomy to set their schedule and manage their work. Remote workers should have the freedom to schedule their work around personal obligations like childcare, exercise regimens, or engaging in hobbies which will surely add positivity to their work environment. It improves employee well-being and lowers stress levels to be able to balance work and personal life. Positive employee experiences for remote workers can also be created by relationship-building or virtual team-building. Employees should feel connected to the organization and to the people who are working in the same organization.

6. CONCLUSION

Employee experience (EX) is the new reality of today's HR world. It is an "active strategy" to attract and retain the best brains inside the organization. Instead of just monitoring organizational employee experience, it should be well-defined as well as designed. In today's post-pandemic scenario, working on employee experience is the key to unlocking the growth and productivity of the workforce. EX is directly related to the customer experience (CX). The concept of Personalized employee experience should come into existence to meet the expectations of all its workforce (office + WFH). The managers should engage in getting regular feedback for better efficiency and maximum outputs. If organizations need engaged employees, then they should first work on employee experience. Recent advancements in employee experience necessitate organizations to alter their strategies accompanying both office-based and WFH workers. This research endeavours to improve the EX of employees for better job satisfaction and productivity while working.

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