





*We explore how and why brands must deliberately embed purpose, transparency, and social connections into the employee experience.*

# Redefining the Employee Experience

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Companies have long recognized the importance of designing and tailoring experiences to attract and retain customers. In our current landscape, in which competition for top talent is fierce, organizations recognize that a positive employee experience is a critical component of the strategy to attract, engage, and retain talent.

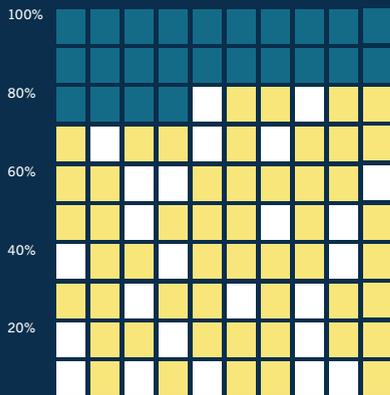
Employees hold the same expectations of their employers as they do of brands they engage. They want experiences with systems, processes, and policies to feel frictionless, intuitive, and personalized. And even beyond those experiences, employees also seek companies that espouse purpose and meaning beyond profit, demonstrate transparency of values and business practices, and provide opportunities for meaningful connections.

While some companies have focused on perks like Ping-Pong tables and trendy freebies, these features alone can feel like insincere gimmicks. Companies are better positioned to attract and retain talent when purpose, transparency, and connections form the foundations of the employee experience.

## **Purpose creates meaningful work**

Research shows that employees seek purpose beyond a paycheck. As most employees spend the majority of their waking hours at work, many aspire for the opportunity to create a positive and lasting impact in their jobs and through their jobs. Connecting purpose and meaning to day-to-day work is a powerful tool companies can use to engage employees and to build a solid foundation for a delightful employee experience.

Job seekers are paying attention to a potential employer's impact. According to a Cone Communications Study, 76 percent of millennials (who will make up 50 percent of the workforce in 2020) consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, employees may be more likely to leave for more purpose-driven companies if their employer fails to make a positive social or environmental impact. In a war for top talent and with the threat of high turnover, employers need to incorporate a greater social purpose into every employee's experience.



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For example, a Fast Company article highlights how the Ben and Jerry's purpose-driven business model promotes "linked prosperity," which helps everyone across the value chain (for example, employees, suppliers, local communities) prosper from the company's success through practices such as a livable wage policy, support for family farmers and sustainable practices, and partnerships with social enterprises.<sup>2</sup> The Ben and Jerry's mission for "linked prosperity" shows up in every aspect of the business and can generate a sentiment of purpose-driven work for the individual.

This example illustrates the important role of leaders to ensure the organization's purpose is not an esoteric concept but instead is visibly demonstrated and made real through the company's actions and decisions. A tangible purpose helps employees connect to the positive impact created by their company while fostering a shared goal among the workforce.

#### Transparency breeds trust

When employees trust their leaders, believe in the strategic direction of the company, and feel treated with honesty, they are happier, more productive, and more creative at work,<sup>3</sup> according to the NeuroLeadership Institute.

To build that trust, leaders must foster a culture of transparency from the top. Leaders demonstrate transparency by adhering to management practices that provide employees with the information, context, and rationale that influence the company's vision. Employees want to understand how any why leaders make decisions that impact them and what they can expect in the future. A lack of certainty leads to indecisiveness and eventually stress and anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, employees want visibility into their company's internal processes and procedures (for example, performance decisions). Understanding the processes that determine work allocation, promotions, and compensation can generate a sense of fairness. Alternatively, if employees feel decisions are made in a "black box," feelings of distrust and frustration can stifle creative thinking and motivation.

Cultivating a transparent environment in which leaders and colleagues readily share information and data, provide context for decisions, and are open about challenges and mistakes is a critical part of designing an attractive employee experience.

#### Relationships build loyalty

Humans have an intrinsic need to connect, engage, and form relationships with others. This desire does not turn off when employees enter the workplace. Employees expect the same from their employers as they do from other important relationships: a relationship that is based on mutual respect, acceptance, appreciation, and connection. Many employees view their employer as more than "just a business," and as such, companies should view their relationships with their employees as more than just a transactional contract.

Creating a more human-centric experience leads to higher engagement in the workplace and creates a partnership that better motivates employees. The failure to treat work as a relationships can affect people's willingness to work and build meaningful connections within the business. Employees who make friends at work tend to be more loyal and engaged, and they produce

higher-quality work because of a mutual sense of respect and trust that promotes collaboration and team building.

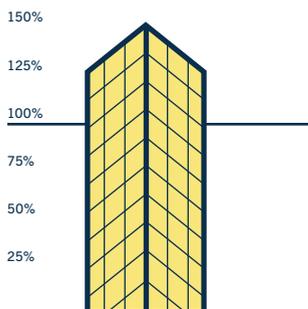
For example, employees with a best friend at work are 27 percent more likely to report that their work empowered them to do what they do best daily.

When designing the employee experience, consider how to create an environment that fosters and encourages social connection and collaboration. Employers that meet these expectations will reap benefits from greater productivity to increased profit. Companies with a highly engaged workforce will outperform their peers by 147 percent in earnings per share, according to Gallup.<sup>5</sup>

Being a competitive employer with a motivated, productive, and empowered workforce now means creating an experience that captures employees' desire for purpose, transparency, and meaningful relationships. To become this type of competitive employer, we recommend starting with the steps listed to the right:

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- 1 Clearly define and articulate the company's purpose and positive impact on the communities it serves and engages.
- 2 Intentionally build that purpose into the context of every employee's role to create meaning at the individual level.
- 3 Regularly review business practices, ways of working, and processes to ensure alignment with the company's stated values.
- 4 Develop a cadence of communication so that employees trust that desired information will be delivered consistently.
- 5 Foster collaborative and engaging experiences to build meaningful human-centric interactions across the organization.

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Sources:

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