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**EMPLOYEE  
EXPERIENCE  
MANAGEMENT**

**CREATE EMPLOYEE  
EXPERIENCE THAT  
ATTRACTS AND RETAINS  
THE RIGHT TALENT**



# CREATE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS THE RIGHT TALENT

## EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

by Alain Thys

### OVERVIEW

By doing what I describe in this article, you can create an employee reality that resonates with the deeper needs of your talent while creating an environment that encourages them to display the behaviours your business seeks. You'll also attract and retain the talent you need to continue growing your business and lift your own HR contribution to an even higher level.

In a [McKinsey Global Survey on future workforce needs \(2019\)](#), 87% of executives and managers indicated that their organisations either faced skill gaps already, or expected them to develop over the next five years.

### THE HR TEAMS THAT NEED TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE RIGHT EMPLOYEES ARE ON THE FRONT LINES OF THIS WAR FOR TALENT.

But they are increasingly finding that the traditional HR practices of offering nice salaries, job titles and company cars are no longer enough.

Millennial employees continue to gravitate towards organisations that share their values, provide a welcoming atmosphere and offer opportunities for growth and development. Rather than looking for a job, they are seeking an employee experience that helps them achieve their personal goals and realise their potential.



*"Millennials gravitate towards organisations that share their values"*

*Alain Thys, Experience Architect*



## **STRUGGLES LINKED TO EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE**

However, many leadership teams still struggle with this experiential approach to employment. In fact, according to the KPMG, Future of HR report from 2019, only 16% of senior management teams have identified it as a top focus for HR. The reasons for this are varied, but broadly fall into a few categories:

### **A DIFFICULTY TO RELATE TO THE MILLENNIAL/GEN-Z MINDSET**

Today's C-Suite has built its career in a world where employment was an exchange of work for money where you focused primarily on moving up the ranks. But much of the new talent flowing into business today has other priorities. They still want to get paid but they also want to make a difference, develop themselves and do fun stuff.

### **THE IDEA THAT EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (EX) IS 'FLUFFY'**

Unfortunately, too much of the dialogue about EX is about chief happiness officers, birthday cakes and pinball machines. While all of these can have value, they don't necessarily resonate with the process and performance mindset of the C-Suite. So when choices need to be made, this 'fluffy' EX often doesn't make the cut.

### **A LACK OF CLARITY REGARDING WHAT GOOD EX LOOKS LIKE**

Every major organisation has cupboards packed full of process manuals, shiny dashboards with KPIs and training programmes that are deeply embedded in a company-wide capability matrix. But only a handful can clearly describe how all of these



### **WHY DO SENIOR MANAGERS FAIL TO RELATE WITH THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT?**

A difficulty to relate to the millennial / Gen-Z mindset - which also prioritizes making a difference, personal development and an enjoyable work environment.

The idea that employee experience is "fluffy" - birthday cakes and pinball machines don't necessarily resonate with C-Suite's process and performance mindset.

A lack of clarity regarding what good employee experience looks like - If you cannot describe it, it's very hard to get any leadership team excited.

translate into a tangible, meaningful and differentiated employee experience.

## **AND IF YOU CANNOT DESCRIBE IT, IT'S VERY HARD TO GET ANY LEADERSHIP TEAM EXCITED.**

With this in mind, the primary challenge of HR over the coming decade will be helping businesses first describe and then deliver an employee experience that resonates with all generations and delivers against a set of business objectives in a measurable way.

This means doing three things:

### **#1 - MAKE SURE YOU REALLY LISTEN TO YOUR TALENT**

Using an employee-centric approach to discovering key employee insights is a powerful way of identifying the experiences that resonate with your people.

Make sure you complement any employee satisfaction surveys with real conversations that capture the (unspoken) rational, emotional and aspirational needs at every stage of the employee journey. You can then use these findings as an input for your experience design and to explain why certain initiatives you propose are important.

For example, I recently worked with a business where all employees seemed to be satisfied with their employers.



## THEY WEREN'T ECSTATIC, BUT GENERALLY, THE INDICATORS WERE POSITIVE.

In fact, some leaders wondered whether the business should work on employee experience at all. After all, there appeared to be no problems.

But when we started having some informal conversations, it was clear that these surveys were very company-centric and that a lot more was going on. Yes, the employees were indeed satisfied with the areas they'd been asked about but they had a lot more to say on other topics that hadn't been mentioned in the surveys.

We quickly found areas where the company was clearly neglecting opportunities as well as one area where it performed exceptionally well (which the leadership took for granted). We could then use this information to optimise the experience design for better performance on all levels.

### #2 - CONNECT EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TO BUSINESS IMPACT

Employee experience isn't just about making employees happy. Yes, the conversation may involve funky desks, flexible benefits and pinball machines. But underneath these more frivolous topics, there is a harder core of increasing productivity, engagement and business results.

As an HR leader, your second task to keep everyone focused on these core objectives. Make it clear that improving employee experience will not just make your people feel at home in your organisation.



### CONNECTING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TO BUSINESS IMPACT REQUIRES MORE THAN NICE POWERPOINT SLIDES, IT MEANS TO:

Understand the behavioural expectations at every stage of the employee journey and then crafting triggers that allow these behaviours to manifest.

Review the various HR initiatives your team could implement and then prioritising those that generate the most value.

Report exactly how these better experiences lead to better retention, higher engagement and improved productivity.



It will also enable them to become more motivated, productive and driven as individuals, measurably improve the company's KPIs and bring the company's values to life at every interaction.

Making sure that all your experience initiatives are rooted in business logic will also ensure that no one will refer to your experience team members as 'the happy-happy-happy team'.

### #3 - BE VERY VERY EXPLICIT

HR can help design the employee experience, but it cannot be solely responsible for its delivery. This needs to be done by the leaders of the business. That's why you - an HR leader - need to get very specific about what a great employee experience looks like.

For example, in a major international business I once worked for, the onboarding of new employees was left to individual team leaders. They received a general briefing on the importance of making employees feel welcome as well as information on safety and confidentiality specifics that every employee needed to know.



**HOWEVER, THE INSTRUCTIONS WERE TOO VAGUE SO ONBOARDING WAS DRIVEN BY THE PERSONALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL TEAM LEADER.**

Some created true celebrations for new talent arriving in their team and personally introduced them to all the key people they needed to know. Others left the compliance manual on the desk of new recruits and weren't even present when the new talent arrived. Despite their different approaches and exactly because the instructions were too vague, all thought they were doing a good job.



*"HR cannot be the sole responsible for delivering the employee experience"*

*Alain Thys, Experience Architect*



*As an HR leader, you need to clearly describe the **WHY, WHAT AND HOW OF THE EXPERIENCE** at every stage of the employee journey. You also need to do it in a way that each participant understands exactly what they need to achieve.*



## **WITHOUT THIS CLEAR DESCRIPTION, YOU'RE TAKING A GAMBLE THAT THE DIFFERENT LEADERS ACROSS THE COMPANY WILL GET IT RIGHT.**

Some will because they intuitively know what their people need to deliver the best possible results. But others will struggle, or let their own opinions and biases get in the way, despite the best of intentions.

The end result is variability. The quality of the employee's experience will largely depend on the department or even the direct manager they work for. Some may get very lucky. Yet some may end up wondering whether they are working for the right company.

### **ALAIN THYS THE AUTHOR**



Alain Thys is an experience architect who has led transformation programmes impacting employees in 100+ countries. He specialises in the development of customer, employee and stake/shareholder experiences that delight and transform.

### **SOURCES**

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# HR & STRATEGIC CHANGE

## AS AN HR LEADER, YOU SEE THE CHANGE

Digitalisation brought us a world of new business models, eco-systems and complexity. New collar jobs require a lot of blend digital, technical and soft skills. Change has truly become a constant. Talent shortage is real.

## YOU WANT TO EXPAND YOUR ROLE, BUT LACK THE TOOLS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

In the 2020s, HR leaders will need to become true talent managers, proactively helping the business to manage the human aspects of digitalisation, uncertainty, engagement and supply chain transformation. And while you want to create tomorrow, your toolkit still focuses on improving yesterday, assuming that HR is only about attracting, developing, retaining and especially administrating employees. If you want to do more, the white papers on Google offer beautiful buzzwords but they provide little practical guidance.

## HR & STRATEGIC CHANGE: Key services & tools to support you

- ▲ Personal coaching and assistance from global experts to expand HR to talent management.
- ▲ Craft employee experiences that increase employee engagement and help align behaviour to the company strategy.
- ▲ Engage your people with an organisational purpose that delivers profit and a sense of personal fulfilment.
- ▲ Create a tech positive culture, that uses automation and digitalisation to augment the performance of the talent in your business.
- ▲ Leverage the talent in your company's ecosystem for maximum value to your organisation.

**CONTACT US TO DISCOVER THE NEXT STEPS  
FOR YOU AND YOUR COMPANY**



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