Culture Amp

Employee Experience

Customer experience changed the way that companies think about their customers. Now, forward-thinking organizations are using the same thinking to revolutionize how they engage with employees.

In recent years, employee experience has emerged as a major trend in HR. But using the word 'trend' fails to capture its importance. Creating an engaging and inspiring employee experience is the new baseline expectation for employees – the new social contract between employer and employee.

It's a change in thinking so fundamental that innovative companies like Airbnb now have an Employee Experience department, rather than a Human Resources department.

Seeing the employee experience through your employees' eyes requires a new approach that gathers data on the entire employee lifecycle, from candidate through to alumni.

In this People Geek Guide, we'll look at:

- Why your organization should assess and understand employee experience

- The key milestones in the employee experience lifecycle

- Four steps to start gaining insight into your employees' experience

Why assess employee experience?

The way employees experience work has changed. It wasn't long ago that an employee could spend their entire career at one organization. Today, the average tenure has shrunk to five years and the data suggests tenures will continue getting shorter, particularly among younger employees.

With millennials now the largest generation in the workforce, organizations

are faced with the prospect that their largest group of employees is unlikely to stay around for very long. Add that to a job seeker's market, and a large pay premium for switching jobs, and retaining employees is more challenging than ever before.

To really understand how people feel about their experiences with your organization, you need information from the source. Requesting feedback from people who apply to and join your company will help build a picture of what attracts people to and keeps them at your organization. At the other end of the spectrum, you'll also learn what leads people to disengage and ultimately leave.

Employee experience surveys are one way to assess and understand an employee's full lifecycle with your organization. A well-designed approach to surveying employee experience should:

- Track engagement, and other factors driving engagement, across the entire lifecycle

- Assess effectiveness of your recruiting, onboarding, learning and development, and performance management programs

- Connect multiple sources of data across the employee lifecycle to get a more holistic view of employees' experiences

Key employee experience milestones

When done right, each step in the employee lifecycle can be a lever that impacts the bottom line. Deciding which aspects of the employee experience to survey depends on your organization's priorities. In this guide, we'll look at three key stages:

- Attraction

- Onboarding

- Exit

The attraction stage

The candidate experience creates an opportunity to ensure people become advocates for your organization regardless of whether they join your organization or not. This stage is not only about judging fit for your organization, it's also your first chance to introduce your company culture and establish trust. When we ask people to give us feedback, we are giving them hints at what we value and consider important by virtue of the very questions we pose. Getting feedback at this stage is a great opportunity to improve both the process and experience of applying to work at your organization.

The onboarding stage

Once hired, your onboarding program enables people to reach their full potential faster and stay longer. It starts when a new hire accepts your offer and continues through a new employee's first weeks, months and even their first year on the job.

It encompasses everything you do to get new hires up and running. At a very basic level it's about foundational considerations (do they have a designated place to sit or work?) while more innovative programs focus on fostering new employees' sense of belonging in their team and the organization.

Getting feedback at this stage not only helps improve your onboarding process, but also identifies gaps in knowledge and training which can be fed into your talent management plan and highlights any inconsistencies in how managers deliver your program - both good and bad.

The exit stage

Ultimately, when someone leaves your organization, an exit survey allows you to understand the reasons behind that decision so you can make necessary adjustments to reduce regrettable churn.

With average tenure at organizations on the decline and the contract between organizations and employees shifting from one of lifetime employment to something much more transitory, it's vital that you do everything you can to keep your best employees engaged with the organization as long possible. Even with your best efforts, you can assume that most employees will look elsewhere at some point. When that happens, you want to be in a position where you can capture and understand their reasons for leaving. In addition, sometimes people leave for personal or professional reasons outside the purview of your company. This change in relationship still provides an opportune time to collect candid feedback about what you as an employer might do better, think about differently, or continue pursuing.

Whatever the reason for the departure, your alumni hold a wealth of information that you don't want to leave untapped. Getting candid feedback from all exiting employees can be invaluable in understanding what you need to do better to keep your key employees engaged as long as possible.

Four steps to getting started with employee experience

Setting out to assess employee experience can seem daunting, but these four steps will help your organization get started on the right track.

1. Determine your top priority

2. Start capturing data

3. Build in linkages (content and analytics) from the beginning

4. Empower action

Determine your top priority

Identify what questions your organization needs answered most. Is it how candidates are moving through the hiring process, onboarding, or exiting? If you're about to increase hiring volumes, you may want to incorporate a candidate experience survey. If you have several new hires, you may want to start with onboarding, while an increase in turnover may mean that exit surveys are the best place to start.

Start capturing data now

Once you've determined your top priority, the most important thing is to start capturing feedback. It often takes time to capture enough data to begin to draw linkages and tell stories about the employee experience, but start with focusing on one thing (such as onboarding), iterate, and grow your employee experience data capture program from there.

We'll briefly look at who to survey, what to ask and when to request feedback for each of the attraction, onboarding and exit stages.

If you start at the attraction stage

Who: Any individual who was a candidate at one point (including candidates that weren't selected or were selected and declined). You may want to limit this group to candidates who experience your entire process, depending on your priorities.

What: This depends on your hiring process. You'll want to get feedback on the application process, the interview content and program, the demeanor

of individuals they met with, and the speediness of response. It can also be valuable for those that don't end up joining your organization to ask if they'd still be interested in hearing from your organization if the right position became available in the future.

When: A few days following a 'move forward' or 'reject' decision.

If you start at the onboarding stage

Who: All new employees.

What: Start with a basic onboarding template that covers the recruitment process, enablement, organizational alignment, engagement and role per- ceptions. Next, tailor your onboarding survey to reflect experiences you'd like all new hires to share and that are unique to your company and culture. These may include mentorships, training (e.g. tech bootcamps) or cultural immersion programs.

When: A basic setup would include surveying at the end of the first week and then again at the one month mark. Some organizations also check-in at one year. Keep in mind the 'honeymoon effect' - often lasting for six months to one year - where new employees are highly optimistic and engaged. Ramp-up time can vary widely, so this basic setup might not feel like the right cadence for you. The ideal program is flexible enough to be tailored to best suit your workforce.

If you start at the exit stage

Who: All voluntarily exiting employees.

What: Make sure to ask about factors contributing to their decision to leave,

their future plans, and standardized questions based on the common drivers of employee engagement at your organization. This information can also then be used to guide an exit interview.

When: Many experts recommend sending your exit survey halfway between when the employee gives notice and when they actually leave. However, the right time depends on the level of trust within your organization and how the feedback data will be used.

Build in linkages from the beginning

The goal of surveying employee experience is to build a comprehensive understanding of the entire employee lifecycle, so build in linkages to and from other content and data from the start.

Overall, each survey should include some foundational questions around employee engagement that you can track over time. Additionally, the design of each survey should depend on feedback you've received from other surveys. For example, your engagement survey data may inform which factors to focus on in your exit survey. Your surveys should be customized to include the factors that are relevant to your programs and include items that are actionable. A good employee feedback platform will provide template surveys and many will integrate with your HRIS.

Empower action

Employee experience surveys give you a lot of valuable information. But there's no point in having it if you don't use it to inform action.

From an HR leadership perspective, look at both the aggregate results to modify your organization-wide programs as well as detailed results. Drill down to see if there are particular hiring managers, departments, or team

leads that need extra support implementing programs or who could act as coaches for other managers.

Sensitively share results with hiring managers, team leads and any other important points of contact so they can understand how they're going compared to the company overall. This will give them the opportunity to independently make small tweaks to improve employees' experiences. Where possible, it can be great to provide them with inspirations from others who have experienced similar focus areas for how to take action.

Conclusion

The end-game of employee experience is to attract the best people and keep them once they've joined. Your employee experience feedback program is the key to creating a compelling experience. It's your chance to get real insight into what engages people at your organization as well as to identify opportunities for improvement, from first impressions to final farewells.

Culture Amp's [Employee Experience](#) surveys create opportunities for reflection and feedback at every employee milestone. They help you see through your employees' eyes, explore different perspectives and identify any hotspots that need attention.

A well designed employee experience program becomes more than simply a series of discrete surveys; it's a way to truly understand what constitutes success in your organization and connects other data points in your organization to further your culture of feedback.

How can we help?

We built Culture Amp, the world's most powerful employee feedback and analytics platform, so that professionals like you have the insights they need to help employees succeed at their fingertips.

www.cultureamp.com