

Improve Employee Experience to Drive Improvements in Customer Experience

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Organizations recognize the importance of great customer experience but are often challenged to identify why the employee experience is equally critical. Application leaders must recognize how employees impact the customer experience and the steps needed to improve the employee experience.

Impacts

- Employee experience can negatively influence operational performance and customer experience when employees are not personally invested in their jobs and organization.
- Multiple factors affect the day-to-day and year-to-year employee experience. Employees can become disengaged when organizations are unable to identify these factors and empathize with their workers.
- The relationship between employees and technology in the workplace is changing and employees expect flexibility and autonomy. When technology is overly complicated, or there is a lack of technology, employee engagement decreases.

Recommendations

Application leaders responsible for digital workplace and customer experience programs should:

- Improve the customer experience by identifying how the employee experience can impact the organization.
- Drive employee experience by identifying the key factors that affect the employee journey and design a strategy from the heart and not the hierarchy.
- Empower employees by providing easy-to-use technology and by developing a multichannel, multidevice, multimodal and multiexperience strategy for the future.

Analysis

Customer experience (CX) comprises customer’s perceptions and related feelings caused by the one-off and cumulative effect of interactions with an enterprise’s employees, channels, systems or products. One unexpected positive act by an employee, done over and over, creates a positive customer experience. Yet organizations cannot force employees to go above and beyond for their customers. Engaged employees who feel a personal investment in their jobs are more willing and empowered to positively impact the CX.

Figure 1. Impacts and Top Recommendations for Application Leaders

Impacts	Top Recommendations
Employee experience can negatively influence operational performance and customer experience when employees are not personally invested in their jobs and organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the customer experience by identifying the employee experience can impact the organization.
Multiple factors affect the day-to-day and year-to-year employee experience. Employees can become disengaged when organizations are unable to identify these factors and empathize with their workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drive employee experience by utilizing voice of the employee, employee persona and employee journeys.
The relationship between employees and technology in the workplace is changing and employees expect flexibility and autonomy. When technology is overly complicated or there is a lack of technology, employee engagement decreases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empower employees by providing easy-to-use, powerful technologies and by developing a multichannel, multidevice, multimodal and multiexperience strategy.

Source: Gartner (November 2019)
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Impacts and Recommendations

Employee Experience Impacts Customer Experience

In Gartner’s 2018 Customer Experience Innovation Study, respondents were asked how they would rate the impact of employee engagement on customer experience versus other factors. Of the respondents, 86% indicated employee engagement was of equal or higher importance that other factors.¹ Yet organizations fail to deliver the expected employee experience new hires were looking

for on their first day. In a 2019 Employee Experience Panel Survey, when asked if their overall experience at work is very different from what they thought it would be when they joined the organization, 44% of the respondents agreed.² Of the respondents that agreed, 10% had a lower level of engagement with their peers and were 2.6 times more likely to say they were less productive than their peers. Organizations must first acknowledge the direct link between the employee's experience in their position and the experience the customer has when interacting with that employee. As defined in the following, organizations must look beyond engagement to the employee experience to drive improvements that directly impact the customer:

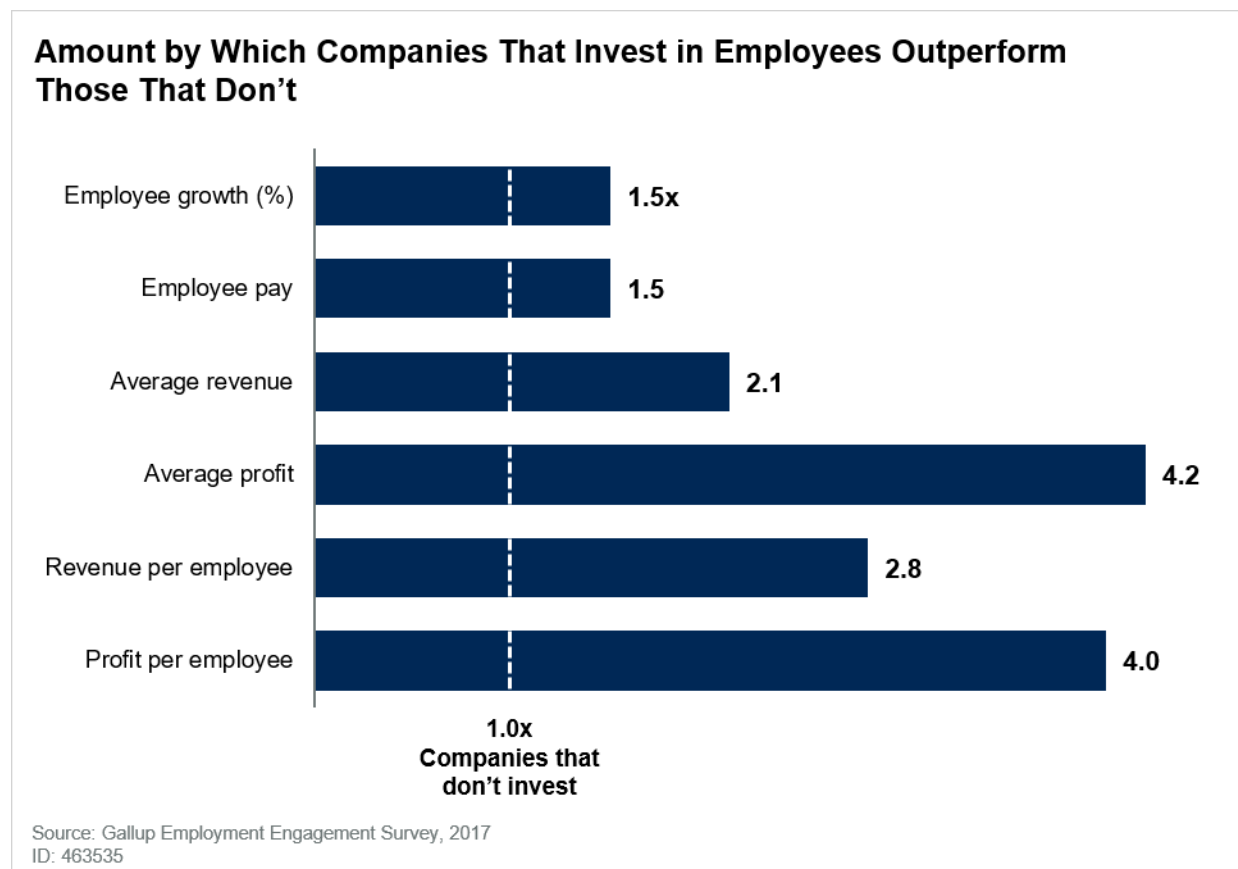
- **Employee engagement:** Gartner defines employee engagement as the extent to which a worker is willing to apply discretionary effort in order to achieve organizational goals and feels the organization enables employees to do their best work.
- **Employee experience:** Gartner defines employee experience as the employee's perceptions and related feelings caused by the one-off and cumulative effect of interactions with their employer's customers, partners, leaders, teams, processes, policies, tools and overall work environment.

Improvements in employee experience lead to improvements in employee engagement.

Investing in employee experience is not just for improving CX: retirement and full employment make employees scarce resources that must be protected. Over 10,000 American Baby Boomers are retiring every day. That same number also retires in Western Europe. While labor markets vary around the world and across industry segments, in America, per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The unemployment rate declined by 0.2 percentage points to 3.6% in April 2019. This was the lowest rate since December 1969."³ Employee acquisition and retention are critical focus areas for organizations. Attracting and retaining top talent is a critical success factor for enterprises.

As seen in Figure 2, companies that invest in the employee experience are also more profitable on a per-employee basis, and not just by a little.

Figure 2. Amount by Which Companies That Invest in Employees Outperform Those That Don't

**Recommendations:**

- Improve customer experience by identifying how the employee experience can impact the organization.
- Focus on employee acquisition and retention.
- Invest in the employee experience.

Proactive Steps Can Drive Improvements in Employee Experience**Identify What Drives the Employee Experience**

Organization must take the first step by identifying what drives the employee experience and then invest in the areas that will see the greatest impact. Based on established and mature practices to improve customer experience, we recommend the following to improve employee experience.

Implement Voice-of-the-Employee Programs

Voice of the customer (VoC) is a critical program supporting technologies to understand the wants, needs and desires of an organization's customers. It is composed of surveys, polls, customer advisory boards, focus groups and just in time (JIT) questioning from contact center, web and mobile interactions. This same type of program, and the same technologies, can apply to employees. A voice of the employee (VoE) program is essential to stay plugged in to the employee base and is a critical aspect of improving employee experience.

Invest in the Cultural, Technological and Physical

Where to invest is critical as well. Organizations should invest in the cultural, technological and physical elements that will enhance the employee experience.

- **Culture:** The cultural element relies on a culture of customer centricity and how that translates to employee experience. It includes the processes, mindsets, decision making, trust and customer service orientation of the organization, its leaders and employees.
 - Part of culture is the employee's feeling of empowerment. According to the Gartner Perceptions of Corporate Culture Survey, 89% of employees believe that their company considers what is important to the customer, but only 73% of employees feel that they have authority to take actions to meet customers' needs. Employees have the will to be customer-centric but often lack the skills and autonomy to positively change the customer experience. If companies teach customer-centric values but don't teach employees how they can improve the customer experience, employee behavior will change little.
- **Technology:** The technology element includes the technologies that the employees use from their perspective that the organization cares about them. The technological element includes the technology that the employees use to do their jobs, from the corporate intranet to laptops to mobile devices to collaboration devices — for example, Google Jamboards, Microsoft Surface Hubs — to augmented reality (AR)/virtual reality (VR)/mixed reality (MR).
- **Physical:** The physical element is the employee's workspace. This could include a desk space in an office, a standing desk, hoteling, huddle spaces, design thinking studios, remote working and telecommuting.

Recognize Key Digital Worker Personas

Diversity in organizations is essential, but diverse personas in the workplace can create challenges. As seen in Table 1, Gartner has identified five digital worker personas (see "Understand Five Key Types of Worker to Energize Your Digital Workplace").

Table 1. Digital Worker Personas

Persona	Description
Engineers	Technology elite, confident in digital skills Use “latest and greatest” In tune with the organization’s digital strategy Prefer work-provided technologies
Mavericks	Look for flexibility in working with technology Keen users of technology Most likely to use apps their organizations did not OK
Pilots	Work with new apps Stretch digital skills Use both company-provided and personal apps
Caretakers	Least usage and confidence with technology Less likely to use technology not provided by their organization Access to less up-to-date work technology Less productive
Navigators	Technology proficient Mostly use “traditional” technology Digital skills are highly valued Less productive outside the office

Source: Gartner

Identifying the different personas can help you focus on the work styles, management styles, and technology to apply to each individual worker.

Utilize Empathy and Employee Journey Mapping

Empathy is critical! Everyone, including the CIO, must walk a mile in the shoes of their employees. The first big shift in perspective for process people has to be from “watcher” to “doer.” Managers must often make decisions regarding positions they have never held. Before you attempt to change the work of others, live their job, don’t just observe it. The whole experience will be very different than you can imagine just by observing it.

One tool organizations can use to better understand the voice and persona of their employees is through journey mapping. Employee journey maps are similar to customer journey maps. They provide step-by-step documentation of how employees actually engage. This includes multiple scales — from high-end employee life cycle to “day in the life of an employee” and task execution. Journey maps should be tied to the roles and personas of the employee and based on reality rather than aspirational. An employee journey is an employee-facing process, from the employee’s perspective.

Employee journey mapping looks at the emotional experience, the employee's work-life balance and other human activities that impact the workday. For example, the whole picture of a day in the life of a call center agent includes more than each call. There's the wider human perspective of that work — lots and lots of repetitive calls running that process. Then, there's the even wider worker experience for that day — more than just taking those calls. So, does this wider and broader perspective matter? Yes! One must understand that employees live a 24/7 life, and employee journeys must understand their world outside the office and standard work hours.

Consider an employee in a single-parent family who has to get multiple children up, fed, dressed and to school, all before the workday starts. And that same single-parent employee has to pick up the children from after-school day care, get them to soccer practice, feed, bathe and get them to bed. Add complications like rush hour, flat tires and sick children and it is easy to see how events before and after the workday can have a dramatic effect on the employee. So their employee journey starts when they wake up and ends when they go to sleep.

Design New Journeys From the Heart, Not the Hierarchy

Once you understand the elements that can impact the human perspective, you can design new employees journeys from the heart, not the org chart or corporate policy manual. Use the following guidelines to create these new designs:

- Business-led with IT support
- Adopt “outside-in” approach
- Start with a blank canvas
- Align to personas
- Think 24/7 not 9/5
- Involve employees
- Audit and track to limit scope creep
- Embrace innovation via IT
- Start small and prove the concept through continuous measurement

Even minor employee experience improvements go a long way. Some organizations allow employees to donate vacation time to another employee in need. Others have established a peer-to-peer recognition program that can be redeemed for small perks. Ask your employees and develop a program that would motivate them.

Recommendations:

- Identify what drives the employee experience and invest in the areas that will see the greatest impact.

- Invest in the cultural, technological and physical elements that will enhance the employee experience.
- Identify five digital worker personas and focus on the technology that applies to each.
- Utilize empathy and employee journey mapping.
- Design new journeys from the heart and not the hierarchy.

Technology Enhances the Employee Experience

The relationship between employees and technology is changing in the workplace. Where the relationship was once reactive, driven by technological constraints, it is now a proactive experience from learned preferences, movements and emotions. The technology of the past was complicated, so digital dexterity is key for the modern workplace. Employees need easy-to-use technology and a wider range of options. Consider these leading technologies for your next round of investment in employee experience:

- **Ambient knowledge** — The extraction of knowledge from unstructured data. Ambient (tacit) knowledge has the potential to make employees aware of information that can help with their daily activities and ensure they find other employees with similar interests and needed expertise. Graph technology — for example, Microsoft Office Graph — is a leading application of ambient knowledge.
- **Easy-to-use analytics** — Allows employees to make better decisions through data.
- **Process hacking** — Low-code/no-code development tools coupled with robotic process automation (RPA) enable employees to develop and integrate applications and improve processes.
- **Modern intranet** — Well beyond the limited content delivery of traditional intranets, modern intranets include robust content management, personalization, team/ad hoc collaboration, employee communications, video streaming and file sharing capabilities.
- **Virtual personal assistants** — Adaptive software assistants designed to perform a wide array of personal and business tasks. These allow employees to delegate simple and complex tasks.

Employees have connected homes, connected cars, and so on. Organizations must develop a multichannel, multidevice, multimodal strategy for the workplace. In the modern workplace, employees expect flexibility and control. Use consumerization as a guide to plan for the future channels, devices and modalities. Multiexperience is a new concept that deliver websites and apps that encompass this approach; and multiexperience development platforms (MXDPs) are a new market for the tools to deliver a multiexperience. Also, consider in the new strategy options to allow employees to bring their own applications (BYOA) and their own devices (BYOD).

There are incredible parallels between customer experience and employee experience. Gartner's key framework for CX, our "building blocks" research, is applicable to employee experience (see "The Eight Building Blocks of CRM: Overview" and "To Achieve a Consumer-Grade Employee Experience, HR Must Follow CRM").

The link between the customer experience and the employee experience is a continuous loop. The customer experience should drive the employee experience and that in turn should drive the customer experience. Let them impel each other.

Recommendations:

- Empathize with employees, don't just leverage resources.
- Think outcome experience, not just work.
- Use customer experience skills for employee experience projects.
- Prioritize employee experience investments.
- Utilize a "building blocks" approach to organize people and activities.
- Make human experience the goal for projects and products: find or be the change leader.

Gartner Recommended Reading

Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.

"Use Journey Maps in User Experience Design and Digital Workplaces"

"Designing for 'Employee Experience' Will Increase Engagement and Business Impact of IT Projects"

"Designing a Digital Workplace That Works the Way You Do"

"Measuring Employee Engagement: Past, Present, Future"

"How to Harness Voice of the Employee Insights for Continuous Employee Experience Improvement"

"Understanding Employee Barriers to Customer Centricity"

Evidence

¹ **Gartner's 2018 Customer Experience Innovation Study.** This survey was conducted online from February through March 2018 with business and IT leaders (n = 209) across North America (n = 57), Western Europe (n = 50) and Asia/Pacific (n = 102).

² **2019 Employee Experience Panel Survey** (n = 5,219 employees).

³ **"Unemployment rate 3.6 percent in April 2019, lowest since December 1969,"** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Gartner's 2019 Digital Workplace Survey.

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