

What Netflix Can Teach Us About Delivering HR

By Meg Zolner Day

As digital-era consumers ourselves, many of us are familiar with Netflix.

A media services provider — primarily known for its subscription-based media streaming service — with headquarters in California, Netflix has grown at a rapid pace since its founding in 1997. Over that 21-year span, Netflix has grown to become a nearly \$12 billion company with 137 million total subscribers worldwide.¹

Netflix's success story has been closely studied by media industry experts, but HRBPs may be surprised to discover they can also learn lessons from Netflix about delivering HR.

Today's HR Solutions Provide Employees "On-Demand" Access

Before discussing how Netflix can help HRBPs improve HR delivery, it's important to clarify today's common delivery approach. HR delivery — the step that typically follows HR's strategy-setting and solution design — has been a particular, recent focus for HR functions. The digital era has brought more and different in-kind technologies for HR functions to use to deliver HR solutions to the workforce at scale.

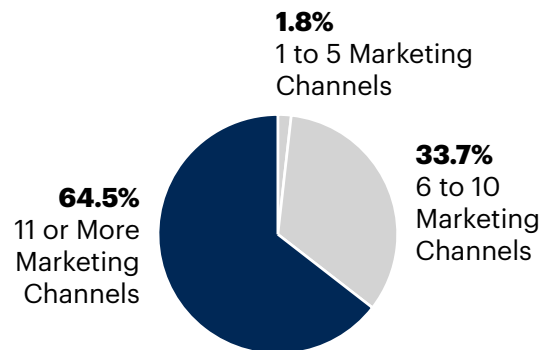
For HR functions, more technology has meant more opportunities to provide on-demand access to HR support for the workforce. We share with employees that they can access HR

solutions anytime, anywhere. In practice, this often looks like:

- **More Channels to Access HR Support** — Sixty-five percent of HR leaders shared that their HR functions use 11 or more marketing channels to promote available HR services and solutions (see Figure 1).
- **More Information About HR Support** — Sixty-five percent of heads of HR agree that, compared to three years ago, people within their organizations expect more information on almost all HR services.

What's the goal of this type of on-demand access? Empower employees with more choice about how they want to use HR solutions and in turn, improve employees' experience.

Figure 1: Number of Marketing Channels Organizations Use to Promote HR Services



n = 5,873 employees.

Source: Gartner 2018 Digital Employee Experience Survey.

Note: Most common marketing channels include: email, internal communication platforms, videos, voluntary manager communication cascades, and posters.

Employees Want an Effortless Experience, Not On-Demand Access

While this goal is an important one, providing on-demand access is having the opposite effect; in most cases, it is actually harming the employee experience, not helping it. For example, only 29% of employees agree that, after HR implements new technologies, they like the new systems better. Further, in a recent survey, when we asked employees about their reactions to this approach to delivering HR, their responses weren't positive (see Figure 2).

Lessons From Netflix

This is where learning from Netflix comes in. If you are a consumer of Netflix, what would you say makes that product great? When we asked that question of HR professionals, they shared responses such as:

- “It keeps track of what I’ve watched and my interests.”
- “It gives me recommendations for new things I should watch based on my preferences.”
- “It’s generally user-friendly and pretty intuitive.”

In short, Netflix is a successful business because it's easy for consumers to access and use.

Figure 2: Common Employee-Feedback Themes About On-Demand Access



n = 5,873 employees.

Source: Gartner 2018 Digital Employee Experience Survey.

Netflix's consumers have an effortless experience interacting with the product, making them loyal repeat customers. Employees expect and want HR to provide a similar experience. An effortless experience also has a measurable impact. Relative to delivering on-demand access, delivering an effortless HR experience can have an 11% greater impact on employee performance (see Figure 3).

HRBP Keys to Success

As an HRBP, you may not be involved in the selecting technologies that will deliver HR support or creating an HR communications plan. But you are, more often than not, the face of HR within your client group. To help shape an effortless HR experience for your client group, keep two principles in mind:

1. Constrain choice; don't provide more of it.

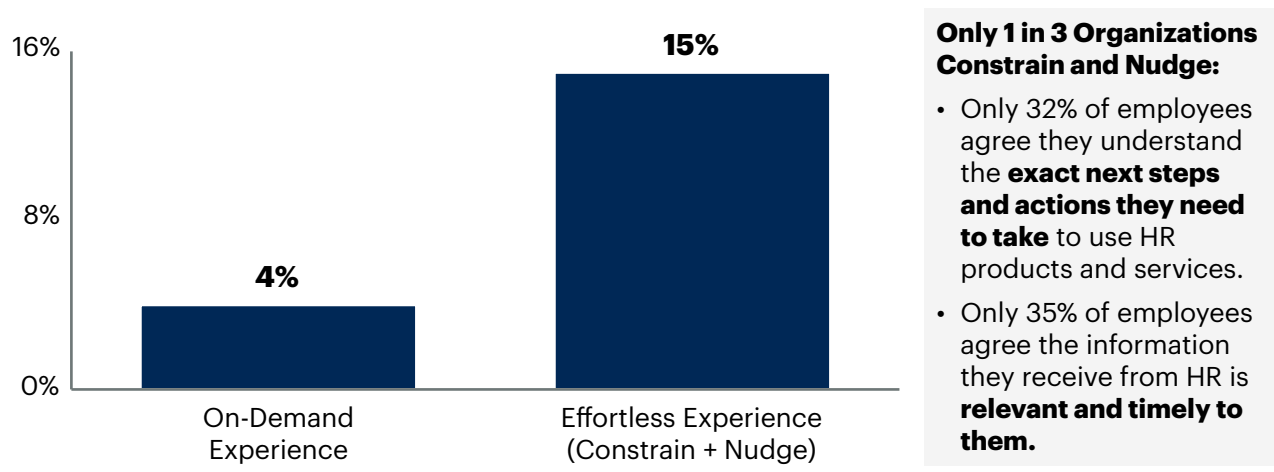
Netflix users see a constrained set of options from which they can choose based on their preferences and past viewing behavior. Similarly, HRBPs, given their familiarity with segments of their workforce, are most familiar with how their clients do — and want to — get value from HR solutions. Use that knowledge to highlight the need-to-know HR information or the need-to-use HR solutions based on an

employees' personal circumstances or a team's developmental needs, for example. While some of this work may occur one-to-one, HRBPs can also ensure their manager coaching sessions highlight how managers can help drive use of certain HR solutions based on the needs of individuals on their teams.

2. Nudge employees to use HR solutions at the right moments.

Netflix users receive specific guidance at designated points while using the service to nudge them about (i.e., suggest) how to best use the product. In contrast, only 35% of employees agree that the information they receive from HR is relevant and timely to them. In practice, timely support often means the difference between employees' using valuable HR support or not. As an HRBP, you are aware of critical times or events over the course of the year that should trigger employees' use of HR solutions; think of the year-end performance review process or open enrollment for benefits offerings. To avoid overwhelming employees, overinvest in sharing guidance about what employees need to do at those particular points in the year. In those moments, it's also appropriate to dramatically decrease the information you share about other

Figure 3: Maximum Impact of Delivery Drivers on Employee Performance



n = 5,873 employees

Source: Gartner 2018 Digital Employee Experience Survey

HR solutions. As the main “deliverers” of HR, you should have the ability, whether through formal authority or informal influence, to coach your varied HR colleagues on how and when to adjust their communications accordingly.

Infosys Technologies Limited’s Effortless Experience

One particular HR organization, Infosys Technologies Limited, provides a great example of this Netflix-informed effortless experience. Infosys, a \$10.1 billion software and programming company headquartered in India, created a personalized manager platform, with the goal of improving people managers’ quality use of the development offerings designed for them.

First, Infosys’ HR team wanted to be able to give managers a clear understanding of their development needs. To do this, its talent analytics team sifted through dozens of available metrics and identified the six most important metrics against which managers should be evaluated. These metrics were relevant and controllable by managers.

Next, the team synthesized data on the six metrics from a variety of data sources. The result was a personal narrative of the manager’s performance aimed at helping managers see why they needed to take action (see Figure 4). Rather than present more data via on-demand reporting and multiple feedback channels, the HR team decided to house the prioritized list of metrics for improvement in one place.

Finally, Infosys helped managers act on this data by pushing them toward the internal and external resources that fit their current development gaps and workflows (see Figure 5). Infosys offers three different kinds of development resources:

- Quick actions (simple on-the-job actions that will strengthen a core competency)
- Learning avenues (e-learnings, trainings and online certifications to get a deeper understanding of a core competency)
- Feeds (internal or external articles and videos intended to expose managers to other ways of thinking about a topic area)

Each of these three types of resources can support managers at different points in their development. Based on managers’ unique development needs and the time of the year, Infosys’ platform pushes tailored resource recommendations to them, rather than sharing a list of all available developmental resources. With this approach, Infosys saw both a three-fold increase in manager time spent on their personal development and higher overall team satisfaction with their managers.

Infosys was able to achieve an effortless HR delivery experience via a technology platform that was developed for this purpose. Some HRBPs may be able to shape similar technology solutions as they’re being developed within their organizations. However, you don’t need to have a technology platform to apply elements of Infosys’ approach. Consider taking these actions:

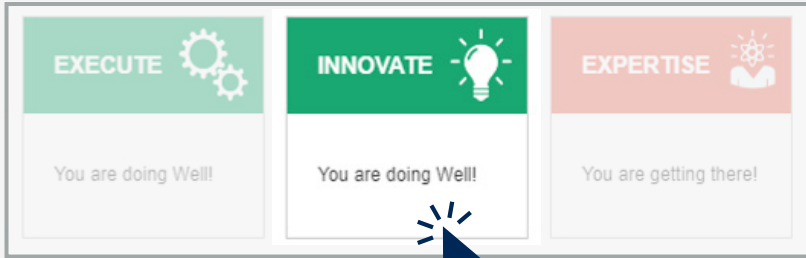
- Create a “month in the life” or “year in the life” calendar to capture the ongoing experiences of different employee segments within your client group. Share that calendar with your internal colleagues involved in HR delivery to help them clarify what HR support would be most relevant at each point of the year.
- Capture examples from leaders, managers and employees of instances when the delivery of HR support felt helpful (e.g., timely, informative) and when it didn’t. Summarize that feedback and share it with your manager and other HR peers as stories of success and lessons learned.
- Work with your internal marketing or communications team to automate or set triggers for the communication of specific HR-related information.

The ultimate guidance for HRBPs is not that you should deliver HR exactly like the Netflix experience. Instead, consider Netflix’s example — and likely examples of other user-friendly products we use outside of work — and think critically about how you can advance those types of effortless experiences in your own context.

Endnote

¹ “October 16, 2018 Shareholder Letter,” Netflix.

Figure 4: Infosys' Approach: Consolidated Story of Manager Capability



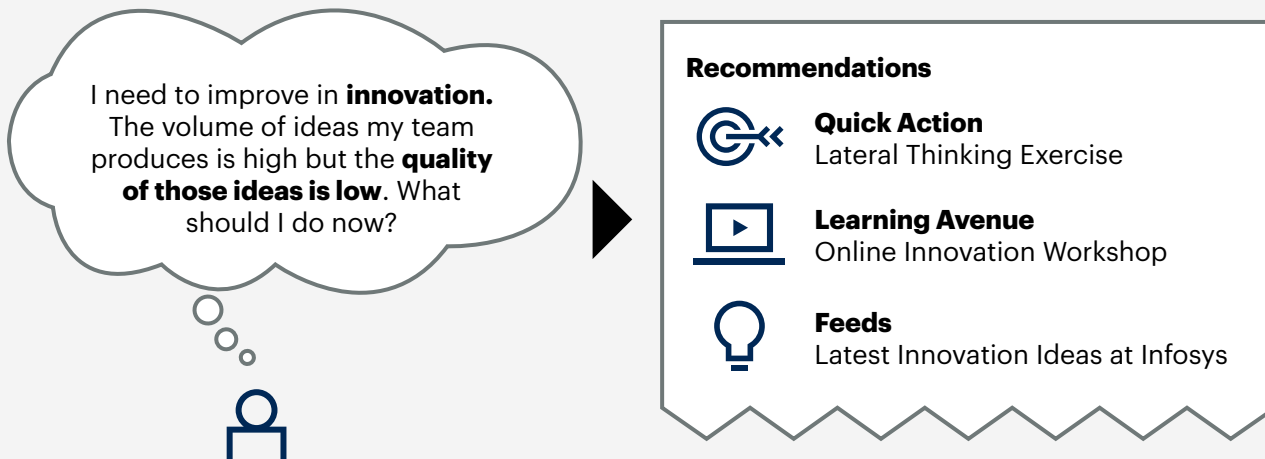
- ✓ Managers have all metrics in one place for easy comparison.
- ✓ Managers have a clear view of which core metrics deserve priority.
- ✓ Managers can access analysis showing pressing behavior change needs to improve core metrics.

Comments from Team Feedback indicate that more needs to be done to improve the innovation quotient in the team. Sign up for a Design Thinking session along with your team.

12 Zero Distance ideas submitted by your team. Showcase your innovative ZD ideas by contributing to our blog today!

Source: Adapted from Infosys

Figure 5: Sample Next Steps Recommended to Managers Through MaQ (Manager Quotient)



Source: Adapted from Infosys

Note: The Manager Quotient (MaQ) platform measures each Infosys manager on six core people management responsibilities and helps them improve on those competencies.