

EMPLOYEE JOURNEY MAPPING: LIVING YOUR BRAND PROMISE ON THE INSIDE

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Everyday your employees interact with your customers and make decisions that impact the customer experience. Over the past decade, many organizations have embraced customer experience design and have focused considerable time and effort on it. Yet few organizations invest time or effort designing their employee experience.

Many organizations expect employees to treat customers in a way that reflects the organization's brand promise, yet few organizations treat their own employees in a way that aligns with that brand promise. The connection between employee experience and customer experience is clear – employees deliver your brand promise and create the customer experience. As such, employees are the most important touch point in your organization.

If you don't keep your brand promise to your employees, how can you expect them to keep the promise to your customers? Has your organization deliberately designed an employee experience that is aligned with your brand and your desired customer experience?

Employee experience is just as important as customer experience. In recent years, organizations have focused on improving employee engagement and numerous studies have promoted the connection between employee engagement and business results. A 5% improvement in employee engagement indicators can lead to a 1.3% increase in customer experience and a 0.5% increase in revenue growth¹.

However, engagement is really just a measure of the quality of an employee's experience. Employee experience goes well beyond engagement. It's not just about providing employees with over-the-top perks, it's about creating an experience for employees that reflects your brand and mirrors the customer experience you want them to deliver. Research has shown an 85% correlation between the way employees feel about a brand and the way customers feel about it².

What do your employees, and former employees, say about your brand to their family, to their friends, on social media? Are you keeping your brand promise internally and externally?

The Employee Journey

Just like your customers have a journey, so do your employees. Their journey lasts throughout their entire employment lifecycle with you. An employee's typical journey with an organization consists of five key stages. All employees, permanent or temporary; leaders, frontline or support roles; go through a similar journey.

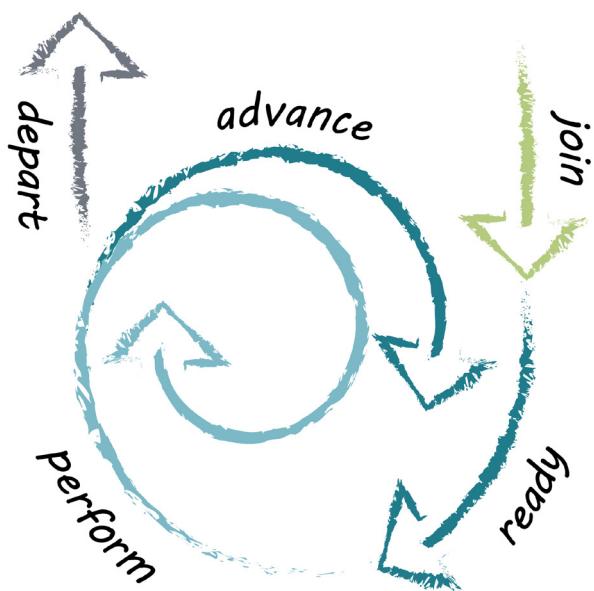


Fig.1 Fifth P's Employee Journey Model

Join

The initial phase begins with your recruitment and selection process. Your job posting and where you advertise for candidates sends a message about your brand. The interactions a candidate has during the interview process and how

you notify them of the outcome, positive or negative, all create perceptions and beliefs about your organization. ***Do you treat candidates like you treat customers?***

Ready

The first days on a new job tell an employee a lot about your organization. This is when critical impressions are made. It's also the opportunity to ensure employees truly understand who the organization is, their role, who they will interact with, and the skills and knowledge they require to contribute to the organization's objectives and achieve success. ***Do you welcome new employees in a way that reflects how you want them to welcome customers? Are they left with a positive impression of your brand at the end of their onboarding?***

Perform

This is the stage where employees spend most of their time – mastering their role and contributing to the organization's success. Every day they have interactions with your brand. Consider how they are treated by their leaders and peers. Reflect on your internal policies and practices. ***Are your internal communications, procedures, and rewards and recognition aligned with your brand promise and desired customer experience? Does an employee's work experience match the personality of your brand?***



Advance

How employees advance through your organization, either laterally or vertically, also contributes to how they perceive your brand. The opportunities for growth, the selection process for promotions, and the support employees receive before and after a promotion all impact their beliefs and future actions. **Are you promoting people who are aligned with, and who deliver on, your brand promise? Does your performance appraisal process consider qualitative and quantitative measures of how an employee's behaviour aligns with your brand attributes?**

Depart

When employees leave your organization, either voluntarily or involuntarily, how you treat them tells them a lot about your brand. If you have seasonal employees who perform well, you want them to return again. Former employees can also be a great source of referrals. **Would your former employees recommend the organization as a great place to work? Are they still advocates for your brand?**

Throughout the employee journey, an organization has many opportunities to reinforce the brand promise and demonstrate to employees that the organization is committed to delivering that promise both externally and internally.

Designing your Ideal Employee Journey

The same deliberate approach that is used for customer experience journey mapping is required for your employee experience. The following 5-step process is an effective way to design a branded employee experience. It is grounded in your brand, leverages existing employee data and engages key stakeholders to ensure you create an experience that is unique to your brand, operationally feasible and appealing to employees.

- 1 Start with your brand
- 2 Select an area of focus
- 3 Design the Ideal Employee Experience
- 4 Create a blueprint for success
- 5 Activate the experience

Fig.2 Fifth P's Employee Experience Design Process

1. Start with your brand

When designing the Ideal Employee Experience for your organization, start with your brand. There are a myriad of techniques for creating unique and engaging employee experiences, but you



want to create one that aligns with the organization's brand. A well-defined and articulated brand provides the foundation for a unique employee experience. If you have already created a shared purpose statement, use it, along with your brand, as the foundation for your employee experience.

2. Select an area of focus

Employee experience is broad and there are many areas of the employee journey where you can choose to focus. Instead of trying to fix everything at once, select a few key areas to focus your initial efforts. Refer to existing data to determine the best place to start. Perhaps your employee engagement survey tells you employees don't feel they are properly onboarded. Or maybe your business plan calls for growth and you aren't confident in your hiring process. Or maybe new leaders aren't performing as well as you had expected. This type of analysis will help you identify where you can focus for the greatest impact.

3. Design the Ideal Employee Experience

Now comes the fun part – re-imaging the employee experience. Using interactive, co-creation design sessions, you can engage employees and managers, along with human resources and marketing team members, and other key stakeholders in the process. The sky is the limit in these sessions. It's time to get creative.

Forget about all challenges that exist today; focus on the future and imagine anything is possible. What would your ideal experience look like? When you think creatively and extend beyond the possible, you will uncover ideas that may not be viable, but it is that exploration that eventually leads to the best ideas.

Take your ideal experience to employees, managers and senior leaders to test it out. Find out what they think: how would it make them think and feel?; does it align with their expectations of the organization and the brand?; is it possible to get there one day?; and do they have more ideas to make it an even better experience?

In the end, your Ideal Employee Experience should be one that is aspirational, beyond what the organization is doing today, but not beyond what is possible in the future.

4. Create a blueprint for success

Now, it's time to begin the journey toward delivering your Ideal Employee Experience. A blueprint will provide you with clearly defined steps to get you there. To create the blueprint, start by capturing all the barriers that prevent the organization from delivering the ideal experience today. Of course, time and money are always barriers, but dig deeper – what would you do if you had time and money? For example, maybe a current policy prevents



you from delivering the Ideal Employee Experience, a required tool doesn't exist, the technology doesn't work the way it needs to, or people don't know how, or aren't capable of doing it the new way. For each barrier, identify the initiatives you would need to undertake to overcome the barrier and move toward the ideal experience. The list may be long, but it is important to be comprehensive and identify everything that would be required to deliver the ideal experience.

Finally, it's time to prioritize the list of initiatives. Consider the impact a single initiative will have, how much investment would be required, and how long it would take to implement. This will help you define where to start. Look for some quick wins that can have a meaningful impact on employees and incorporate the larger initiatives into your long-term plans.

5. Activate the experience

After you have completed the design and blueprint for your employee experience, it's time to begin the process of activating the experience throughout the organization. Activation is more than just an announcement or communication. You need to create a common understanding of your desired employee experience and promote an ongoing dialogue that encourages key stakeholders and decision makers in the organization to change the way they think about employee experience. A successful activation will inspire all employees across

the organization to live the brand and help them see how what they do, and how they do it, impacts the employee experience.

Conclusion

Your employee experience is just as important as your customer experience. If your employees don't feel they are being treated in a way that aligns with the way you want them to treat your customers, they will not be fully engaged and committed.

A branded employee experience can create a real competitive advantage. Not only will it ensure you attract and retain employees who are aligned with your brand, you will also have employees who want to deliver your brand promise and your desired customer experience. That is a winning combination that is hard to beat.

SOURCES:

- 1 Shaun Smith and Andy Milligan. *Bold: How to be brave in business and win*. Kogan Page. 2011
- 2 Rucci, A., Kirn, S., & Quinn, R. (1998, January). The Employee-Customer-Profit Chain at Sears. Retrieved February 1, 2014, from <https://hbr.org/1998/01/the-employee-customer-profit-chain-at-sears/ar/1>.





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