

From Application to Exit Interview

Your Guide to the Employee Experience Stages





The employee experience journey consists of every touchpoint a prospective, current or former employee has with your company. And we mean every touchpoint.

This includes the obvious employment milestones, like when an employee is hired. But also the not-so-obvious ones, like when an employee is let go. Your company's employee experience is a conglomerate of what your employees learn, do and feel during their tenure with your organization.

The employee experience encompasses so much that it ultimately impacts the success of your entire business, so cultivating a positive one is crucial. But you certainly can't do so alone. There are just too many people in various departments (HR, talent acquisition, legal, etc.) who influence the employee experience.

How do you ensure your employee experience is cohesive and positive? You must de-silo your departments and optimize your employee experience holistically. Start by understanding the components of an employee experience.

The trickle down benefits of an exceptional employee experience

A positive employee experience means more satisfied employees and a higher employee retention rate — and a positive impact on your business's bottom line.

Think of it this way: Recruiting and onboarding is costly. If you're getting the right people through the door the first time thanks to your company's positive employee experience, you minimize those costs.

What's more, if you're retaining top talent, it's at least in part due to your positive employee experience. After all, employees want to feel valued and cared for. They also want an environment that nurtures their growth. A positive employee experience does that by engaging employees. Engaged employees are more productive. Productivity equals more ROI for your company. And, coming full circle, more ROI means more business success.

The kicker? A good employee experience is reflected in your employer brand — the way people perceive your company as a place to work. And if your employer brand is rock-solid, you'll attract the best employees. You even stand to bolster your consumer reputation.

5 stages of the employee experience

Remember, there are lots of cooks in the kitchen when it comes to who influences the recipe for your company's employee experience. So improving your employee experience can only happen when you have a handle on its various stages and the departments involved in each stage. Complicating matters, employees are interacting with all sorts of people, systems, policies and workspaces during their employee experience journey.

Without further ado, let's dig into the five stages of the employee experience so you can begin to better yours, and learn how to navigate this complexity.

Stage 1:

Attracting and hiring right-fit talent

The employee attraction stage of the employee experience starts before you even post a job opening. That's because potential applicants already have preconceived notions about your company, either based on your consumer reputation or your employer brand. Maintaining your status as a good place to work (and do business with) is paramount to getting qualified candidates to even consider your job opening in the first place.

A word to the wise: People will notice if your employee experience is a huge departure from your consumer experience, so mind the gap between the two.

After attraction comes hiring. The hiring piece of a person's employee experience can also be called the candidate experience. And it includes every interaction the person has with recruiters, hiring managers and any other individual involved in the hiring process.

It's critical to communicate openly with job applicants during this stage and provide a positive experience. Even if someone decides not to accept an employment offer, or they're unfit for the role, the employee experience and employer brand will leave an impression — for better or worse. Make it for the better.

Stage 2:

Onboarding new employees

The onboarding process should be so much more than doling out handbooks and employee benefits information. When done well, onboarding sets the right tone for an employee's entire experience with your company.

Companies with positive onboarding processes offer:

- A welcoming environment
- A deep sense of belonging and inclusion from day one
- Open dialogue around the company's values, mission and strategy



Audit your job ads. Many job descriptions push potential candidates away before they even apply. Make sure yours aren't too long, and consider whether your job requirements are realistic. For example, is a bachelor's degree truly necessary for the role? Don't limit your applicant pool because of rote or outdated job ad language.

- Clear expectations for what employee success looks like
- Opportunities for employees to provide and receive feedback

There are lots of departments involved in onboarding your employees — from IT to HR. Be sure you have a handle on all of the paperwork and information new hires need from each department. That way, you can parse it out appropriately without overwhelming new people with copious amounts of directions on day one. As a result, employees will experience your company as organized and attuned to their needs, again setting the scene for how they'll feel about your organization in the long run.

Stage 3: Keeping employees engaged

Onboarding sets the tone for the employee experience. The engagement stage keeps employees tapped into your company from then on. “Retention stage” is another apt term for this portion of the employee experience because engaged employees generally stay put.

Work to keep your people happy and fulfilled in their roles.

Continuous feedback is an important part of employee engagement. Pulse surveys, open discussions, one-to-one manager meetings and company-wide satisfaction surveys all go a long way in maintaining open lines of communication.

You should also ensure employees feel tethered to your organization through your culture. That might mean offering employee resource groups, team-building opportunities or spirit awards. Anything you can do to show your team they're a part of the fiber of your company and have a role in shaping its future will enrich your employee experience.



It seems mundane, but relaying details like where to park (if employees are onsite) or how to login to their new laptop (if they're remote) before the first day matters. Having this info can mean the difference between a stressful and smooth start for a new employee.



Be transparent about the state of your company, or encourage leadership to be. The employee experience is automatically more engaging when people are let in on pertinent information.

Stage 4:

Offering employee development and learning opportunities

During onboarding, training consists of providing employees the information they need to do the job you hired them to do. During development, training consists of opportunities for continuing professional education and development for employee growth.

Of course, development also keeps employees engaged and is related to stage three. But it's important enough to warrant its own section here.

Employees' work experiences go hand-in-hand with their learning experiences. And professional development increases employee engagement and productivity, resulting in better overall employee performance. The bottom line? Invest in your people to augment your employee experience. Nurture their growth and celebrate their accomplishments, including promotions.

Stage 5:

Transitioning employees away from their roles

The employee experience shouldn't halt simply because an employee is leaving your company. In fact, you miss a prime opportunity to improve your employee experience if you're not conducting exit interviews with retiring and otherwise departing employees.

These people provide a window into what is and isn't working from an employee experience perspective. Bonus: A positive exit interview leaves a good taste in an employee's mouth. Even though they are leaving your company, they'll speak well of it as a place to work, bolstering your employer brand in the marketplace.

Exit interviews aren't only for employees moving on from your organization. You can also conduct exit interviews with people transitioning into new positions *internally*. You stand to learn a lot about certain departments within your company by doing so.



Development means more than just encouraging internal upward mobility. Sometimes it's as simple as supporting employees in their current roles by offering ample training on new softwares and protocols so they can do their jobs well.

No matter the type of exit interview at hand, you or whoever's conducting it should seek to understand why an employee is transitioning. The employee should feel heard and like their feedback is valuable. And of course, keep it professional and respectful. It's never fun to lose a team member, but you want them to walk away feeling good about their time with your company and their entire employee experience.



It's a good idea to have HR or another neutral party conduct exit interviews so the departing employee can feel free to speak openly about their manager and other people on their team. After all, only honest feedback will improve your employee experience.

Ground your entire employee experience in honesty

There's a lot more to your company's employee experience than you might have thought. It's five comprehensive stages — from before someone's hired to long after they leave your company. From an opportunity standpoint, you have so many chances to make a positive impact on future, current and past employees.

Much of the advice herein comes down to being authentic, honest and transparent with your employees. It all starts with understanding the depth of the employee experience so you can optimize each part accordingly. The result? An engaged workforce and a more productive company.



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