

Competing in an Era of Choice

How putting people at the center of business strategy
gives your organization a competitive edge

In today's complex workplace, employers are struggling to attract, retain, and engage talent with the skill sets required to meet their strategic objectives. At the same time, employees are looking for alternative work arrangements, flexible hours, more control over their time, and a work experience that promotes wellbeing, belonging, and trust.

The current job market favors job seekers, meaning employees can choose where they want to work and how they want to spend their time — and they're being highly selective. Employees' ability to call the shots has become a new source of competition for employers, forcing them to think differently about the experience they're offering to potential candidates and current employees alike.

This eBook explores how organizations can use their HR solutions and technologies to prioritize their people and meet the modern workforce's expectations — demonstrating that they recognize what their people value most and have thoughtfully incorporated it into the work experience — which leads to attracting the right candidates, developing and retaining top talent, creating a standout organizational culture, and driving engagement, belonging, and productivity along the way.

Competing with choice in today's environment

There's no greater disruptor to the status quo than the choice people now have regarding where they want to work and how they want to spend their time. The fact is, employers and business leaders are being faced with dynamic forces impacting the work they're trying to do, including adapting to changing safety standards in the workplace, supporting an increasingly distributed workforce, and attempting to achieve business goals despite an unprecedented talent shortage.

Sure, your longtime industry rival or the company down the street with the new sign-on bonuses and updated benefits packages is still your competition, but at a time when 11 million jobs in the U.S. alone are unfilled,¹ employees have more control over whom they work for. For employers, there's no greater competition today than the freedom of choice your current and potential employees can exercise.

The fact is, your people are balancing a variety of career options — including whether to stay in their current role, stay with the organization but look for a new role, find a job with another organization, find alternative work arrangements and take on more entrepreneurial ventures, or continue their education — against increasing pressures and risk factors in their personal lives. These options represent new complexities for recruiters, managers, and team leads, requiring a new approach to attracting and retaining talent.

As an employer, your challenge is to put your people at the center of your decision-making processes, recognizing both their personal and professional priorities, to set your organization apart as a place where people not only work, but also belong. How do you do that? Start with trust and empathy — and keep the people side of your business flourishing.

How do you give your people the space and flexibility to truly own their roles and balance their lives outside of work? In what ways are you guiding professional development and providing transparent career paths? What steps are you taking to ensure physical and psychological safety? These are just a few possible ways to differentiate your organization with people-focused choices that not only help you better attract and retain employees, but also lead to better business outcomes.



In other words: People are more than their jobs, and employers that help people connect life and work will be the ones that thrive.

The rise of the resilience economy

Since early 2020, we've all faced large-scale events and disruptions that have changed the face of work. The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust us all into a new resilience economy where change and uncertainty are normal and constant. With that said, is it any wonder that people's expectations around work have shifted as well? Organizations need to listen carefully and truly hear their employees in order to survive in this new landscape. Regular, transparent avenues for feedback, clear standards for safety and wellbeing, flexible options like alternate hours or remote work, and recognition of shifts in people's personal lives around child care, living situations, access to goods and services, and many other factors are all facets of the new, people-centric approach that's required to move together into the future.

This is nothing new. For years, organizations have been talking about the employee experience and how organizations should design work to meet the expectations, wants, and needs of the workforce. We've just got to stop limiting our definition to only the employee experience and instead think of the full life-work journey each person at our organization is moving through. The reality is there are no longer clean transitions between the personal and the professional, which means strategies rooted in flexibility, empathy, and trust are essential.

92%

of highly engaged employees feel heard at their workplace, compared to 30% of highly disengaged employees.²

Connecting people and operations

If the definitions of the experiences HR professionals provide for their people are changing, that of course means the technology supporting those experiences also needs to change. An organizational culture that encourages your people to bring their whole selves to work each day is no longer a “nice to have,” but is essential for survival. For that reason, HR teams must invest in technology experiences that go beyond work to support employees in meaningful ways wherever and whenever needed.

So how do you build these kinds of experiences? It requires a shift in focus when it comes to HR technology solutions — to one that puts people in front of process.

In other words: It’s time to start thinking of the whole person when you decide on HR solutions.

What that looks like in practice can vary from organization to organization, but there are some core elements to keep in mind. Any solution you put in place, no matter what it looks like, should follow these three rules:

- 1 Enable transparent communication, regular feedback, and flexible access from any device
- 2 Allow your people to own their schedules, easily take the time they need, and adjust their work experience to fit their lives through personalized self-service
- 3 Promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging with fair, timely pay; clear career paths and performance goals; and built-in benchmarks and guidance

People-focused technology has two components:



People systems to inspire your workforce

Enabling real autonomy and flexibility, connecting people to their colleagues and roles with purpose, and amplifying human impact by understanding human signals



Work systems to help businesses thrive

Offering exponentially higher productivity, optimizing teamwork, and providing more opportunities for people to support one another and their communities

Find culture-building moments

To effectively design an employee experience that meets the expectations of your workforce, you first must understand the moments your people value most, both at work and in their personal lives. The way an organization handles these moments will shape employees' views of the organization and can significantly influence how they will contribute to the organization.

As you can see in the checklist to the right, there are many points of influence. And while all of these items are critical for people-focused outcomes, the good news for employers is that each of them can be supported by the right technology.

Is your organization people focused?

Are you looking at the full picture of what impacts your people? Use this checklist to reaffirm the HR processes that are critical touch points for employees, which of these you're already doing, and which you need to prioritize.

	What's Important	Currently Doing
Offering a simple, online job application process	†	†
Providing a timely, respectful, and gracious interview process	†	†
Getting new hires engaged and excited before their first day through job offers and intuitive connections to team members, managers, mentors, organization culture resources, and registration forms	†	†
Providing a well-planned first day on the job	†	†
Making benefits enrollment as simple as possible	†	†
Giving new employees access to their schedules in advance and easy, flexible options for changing shifts or requesting time off that are approved quickly	†	†
Providing an accurate and timely first paycheck	†	†
Setting goals and tracking activities to determine progress	†	†
Making it easy to change or update personal information as life events take place	†	†
Giving real-time, transparent feedback in a positive way	†	†
Providing performance reviews that add value to employees' experience	†	†
Creating a sense of transparency and empowerment by regularly asking for employee feedback and making tangible improvements based on that feedback	†	†
Providing employees with opportunities to learn and develop new skills	†	†
Making it easy for employees to refer other potential employees	†	†
Clearly communicating career paths and opportunities to employees	†	†
Proactively and thoughtfully analyzing trends in employee activity and feelings using people data and feedback, so you can anticipate needs	†	†

Own the employee experience throughout its lifecycle

Organizations must now think about the experience they're offering at every point in the employee lifecycle. If most of HR's time and energy are spent on the recruiting and onboarding process, with relatively little time spent on engagement and retention strategies, what kind of experience are you really offering to current employees? And if you set experience expectations at the beginning of their employment lifecycle, you must live up to those expectations both 90 days and one year down the road. There is no single thing you can do to set your organization apart and make employees choose to work for you. Employees want you to have a well-rounded strategy that demonstrates you understand their needs and wants throughout that lifecycle.



Recruiting

Are you providing your candidates with a modern application experience that makes applying for jobs easy and accessible? Beyond that, are you showcasing flexibility through alternate hours, remote work, and other options that modern job seekers expect?

Over half of job seekers say flexibility is a top consideration when weighing a job offer.³

Without this level of transparency, potential employees will quickly gravitate to another opportunity.

74% of workers would prefer to work for a company that is viewed as trustworthy.⁴

Applicants will visit sites like Glassdoor.com to see if an organization is a good fit for them based on what prospective, current, and past employees have to say about factors like trust, transparency, and culture.





Hiring

What is the onboarding experience on the first day of a new job? After 30, 60, and 90 days? Are you using preboarding? Are you providing clear goals that align with new employees' career aspirations?

76% of employers agree that when a few employees resign, others are likely to follow.⁵

Bridging the gap between the candidate experience and the employee experience through your onboarding efforts can help reduce high turnover rates, since new employees are usually at the highest risk of leaving within their first month or year.



Managing

Do your managers have the information they need at their fingertips to manage the day-to-day and make more informed business decisions?

Only 26% of HR professionals surveyed were either very or extremely confident in the coaching and team development abilities of managers at their organization.⁶

HR has an unprecedented opportunity to build strong relationships with managers to help maximize the opportunities for choice and development given to employees. Ensure you have the technology required to communicate with managers transparently and empower them with relevant team data.



Paying

Are your payroll processes set up to produce the perfect paycheck accurately, on time, every time? And beyond that, are you actively assessing employee pay on an ongoing basis to uncover retention opportunities and ensure equity?

83% of employers say their companies are more transparent now about salaries, bonuses, and perks in their job descriptions than they were prior to the pandemic.⁷

Making sure hours worked, pay rate, pay equity, compensation evaluations, exemptions, tax deductions, and benefit deductions are current contributes to the employee experience.



Retaining

Do your employees have performance conversations throughout the year? Do you have succession plans in place? Do you communicate those plans to employees and actively provide learning and development opportunities? Can you anticipate when your people are experiencing burnout or may be considering leaving and make improvements for them?

Over half of HR teams at small to midsize businesses still either take a reactive approach to people-related data (54%) or don't use that data at all (25%).⁸

Ensure you have the tools needed to develop relationships with employees and get the guidance you need to proactively help them feel empowered and successful, so you can drive engagement and performance.

Take a people-centric approach to design

It's imperative that organizations keep their employees' needs front and center so they're designing experiences that will enable choice and flexibility. They should also note that the elements that create a compelling consumer experience also impact the employee experience. For example:



Personalized

Take the time to understand employee needs and pain points, and what's important to them personally and professionally.



Transparent

Make employees part of the discussion. Let them provide input, and give them visibility into the business and its processes so they understand the why, not just the what and how.



Available in real time

Make speed, efficiency, and timeliness a priority so the little things don't get in the way of employees focusing on what really matters for their role.



Technology-enabled

Use technology to its fullest to provide the level of self-service your employees are looking for. Employee experiences can't be created in a vacuum.

40%

of organizations say HR spends more than a quarter of staff time on tasks that could be handled through employee self-service, which reduces transparency and engagement while increasing administrative workload.⁹

Maximize choice with technology

Your people are your organization's most valuable asset. Today, business success starts with thinking more strategically about attracting, managing, engaging, and retaining your workforce, which means leveraging the right technology to put people at the center of every experience you design.

Connecting life and work at your organization can be broken down into three simple steps:

1. Keep your people's needs top of mind
2. Define what kind of experience you need to offer
3. Align your technology with the experience

Make sure your strategy and technology work together to meet the personal and professional needs of your workforce. The right technology, when aligned with a carefully crafted life-work strategy, can help employees choose to work for — or remain with — your organization and put you on the path to a people-focused mindset, a standout employer culture and brand, and improved business performance.

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