Why the creation of the right Employee Experience needs to be on every business leaders agenda

The world is how we shape it

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Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic we have witnessed some organisations having to recruit thousands of new people, other businesses making employees redundant or putting them on furlough, retraining and reskilling coming to the fore as employees are placed into areas of work where their organisation needs them most and in some sectors the fight for talent and engaged employees has become even more fiercely competitive.

But what is the one thing that links all of these challenges and changes? Employee Experience

At the heart of every organisation is its employees. Without them your organisation can't function and deliver what your customers expect. This is why creating the right Employee Experience is important to an organisations success today and in the future. *The term Employee Experience* over many years has conjured up a wide range of initiatives, definitions and has sometimes been the victim of encompassing the latest *'fad'* in terms of user experience transferred to employees.

Creating the right Employee Experience is crucial to your organisations success and it must not be underestimated. Employee Experience is formed in the minds of prospective employees well before they become a part of your organisation. It starts with their experience of the hiring process (including touchpoints such as your website and third party recruitment agencies for example). Additionally for existing staff it isn't just a staff survey once a year and an accessible HR department by phone or email.

It's the work environment, the culture, the leadership style, the ease of accessing information, giving employees access to the right equipment to do the job being asked of them and of course the employee's impressions and perception of the organisation gathered through their thoughts, observations, and feelings.

> *A good Employee Experience makes employees feel welcome, appreciated and creates a personal bond between the employee and the organisation they are working for.*

I'm sure many of you reading this article can remember good and bad Employee Experiences and share them with your colleagues, friends and family. Employee Experience isn't just an idea or concept to keep your employees happy. It's a critical success factor for all business leaders both now during the Covid-19 pandemic and will play a crucial role in how organisations are set up for success in the future.

Understanding the impact of Covid–19 on Employee Experience

A recent Adecco survey suggested the proportion of employers intending to make redundancies had a relatively **modest increase from 16% to 21%** as redundancies had (at least in the short term) been avoided as a result of the introduction of the Government's Job Retention Scheme. But, as 'Furlough' arrangements wind-down, we can expect the number of redundancies to increase, just look at the retail, travel and transport sectors for example. This may mean many organisations are thinking the power of talent attraction and retention is back in their hands and solving all of their hiring challenges.
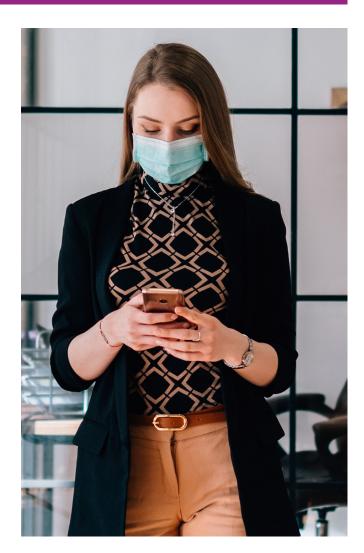
In many industries it may feel like this right now. But as we have witnessed from the Covid–19 pandemic, actually what has happened is many organisations have found that yes they may have too many employees in some parts of the organisation but gaps around operational resilience and delivering a great customer experience still exist. This means the need for pro-active talent management and the retention of good employees is as important as before the pandemic struck.

As mentioned in the beginning of this article **restructuring may be commonplace over the next 6–12 months** as organisations review their operations. However, the challenge to attract and retain the very best people will remain. Additionally there is another major challenge about to emerge – Brexit. With the new points-based immigration system Recruiters, Talent Managers and HR professionals will be under more pressure to keep their skilled staff as the employment landscape responds to this change.

These challenges require the convergence of technology, process and policy to create integrated approaches for attracting and retaining the best employees and talent in the marketplace.

This has never been more needed but equally, never been more possible with the acceleration of digitised solutions which enable HR teams to access and deliver rapid transformation of traditionally complex and difficult to integrate systems and processes.

Where should business leaders start with the creation of the right Employee Experience?

A truly *'digital'* Employee Experience capability is seductive but needs to be delivered within the context of a well thought-through and tested Employee Value Proposition, which also takes into account the understanding of the expected Employee Experience. If an Employee Experience solution is poorly delivered, does not take into account an employee's day to day requirements or is not sufficiently tested, organisations can be left with an expensive technology solution and disconnected/disillusioned employees or prospective candidates.

In recent years we have seen some of the best Customer Experience (CX) programmes revolutionise the way how customers can access information and interact with organisations. The most successful customer experience consultancy partners believe that what's best for the customer is best for the business.

For example a good Customer Experience consultancy will help an organisation to:

- Understand their customers like never before – taking into account the different touchpoints and interactions with an organisation. Making them easier to do business with

- Reimagine products and services so they are relevant and articulate how they can solve their customers problems and issues in a timely manner

- Bring new and better services to market which helps their customers today, in the future and differentiates them from the competition

- Put in place the right processes, communication tools and resources to become a truly customer-centred organisation

At Sopra Steria we believe we should take the learning's and best practices from these stand out Customer Experience programmes of work and apply them to the Employee Experience.

Your employees are just as an important asset to your company alongside your customers. So why should companies do all the hard work of attracting customers through a great experience and risk losing their employees who will ultimately enable the organisation to service them? Surely what would make sense is to create the right Employee Experience so employees remain part of your organisation and you can continue to deliver to the high standards set from your Customer Experience programmes of work.

An employee centric approach should be at the heart of all HR strategies defining not just what HR does but how HR does it. This will take time and is not an easy task. But starting with your employees requirements first before you start re-designing your Employee Experience journey will ensure that your digital and process simplification programme of work is clearly aligned with both corporate ambition and employee expectations.

If the last 6 months has taught us anything it is that HR is critical to corporate and individual wellbeing; this journey needs to be championed by HR professionals. Digital transformation projects aimed at improving performance, productivity and the Employee Experience are only going to be successful when they championed by HR even if the primary beneficiaries are *leaders and employees delivering wider business benefits including:*

Increased Productivity

Automating of routine tasks and processes that releases administrative effort and improves the Employee Experience.

Cost Reduction

Removing and simplifying process steps that liberate costs with obvious bottom-line benefit.

Improved Engagement

Improving employee perception and engagement with well-defined benefits for customers and the business alike.

Improved HR Effectiveness

Reducing the transactional and process burden on HR teams enabling them to commit to strategic projects and programmes of work.

Strong HR teams will embrace this but will need to position themselves as central to the debate on the digitisation priorities, benefits and investment case needed to maximise the likelihood of success. Having been on the journey ourselves at Sopra Steria we have found *4 critical success factors to creating an engaging Employee Experience:*

- **A single-minded focus on process simplification and integration underpinned by the technology, (including AI, Chatbots etc.) that makes delivery of a great Employee Experience repeatable, sustainable and cost effective**

- **Strong and compelling BI; timely qualitative and quantitative metrics underpinned by high levels of data integrity that ensure trust in the messages**

- **Technology and process changes which demonstrably empower leaders to manage and make better decisions and employees feel ownership of their own experiences at work**

- **Strong HR governance which enables HR teams to see and take action on real-time data**

Many of the technology advancements we have seen in the HR space regarding Employee Experience were unthinkable ten years ago. But technology is only one part of the equation. In the post Covid-19 world a positive Employee Experience is going to become a key differentiator in the search and retention of talent, as current and prospective employees seek meaningful work and want to work for organisations with a clear purpose.

Attracting and retaining high-quality talent requires identifying the right people and employing them combined with an Employee Experience which gives them access to the right information, tools, equipment and the development of a culture where they are rewarded not only with pay and incentives but a great working experience as well.

At Sopra Steria we believe it is the right time for business leaders to review their existing Employee Experience and plan for the future. Those organisations who take the time to create the right Employee Experience today will be at a real strategic advantage in a post Covid-19 world.

More Information

Sopra Steria is a global provider of strategic HR technology solutions. Our HR technology services have been specifically designed to help organisations overcome their people, technology and business challenges. By working with Sopra Steria, HR departments can unlock a range of business and technology benefits across talent management, payroll, time and attendance and the potential of their organisations data through our HR analytics platform.

To find out more about the HR services we provide please email **fiona.petrie@soprasteria.com**.

We look forward to working with you.

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