

Co-creating your employee experience strategy

Author: Nick Lynn . November 2021

Employee Experience (EX) leadership requires a shift in perspective. In essence, it means moving from a top-down view of managing human resources to a focus on enabling people to excel in their jobs and to thrive at work.

This is one reason why EX marks a break from the previous employee engagement era. Employee engagement fits neatly into hierarchical people management. EX, by contrast, is messy, personal, and conversational.

An employee engagement strategy might look like a project plan. It would identify changes at different organisational levels in order to improve the way tools, information, and resources are deployed.

An EX strategy is a different animal. The focus is on understanding how you can simplify the way people work and remove obstacles. The point is to enable and empower individuals and teams so they can do their best work.

One of my clients describes their EX strategy as "Making it easier for employees to do meaningful work and be customer focused. We're always looking for ways to help people remove barriers and fix problems so we can achieve these goals."

Another client talks about "Creating a workplace where people love to collaborate and where innovation flourishes. We look at what we can get out of people's way. We do all that we can to help simplify things."

Making organisations more people-centred in this way is critical, because it is human capabilities (service, creativity, collaboration, etc.) that provide a competitive advantage in an experience economy.

The best way to think about strategy in the EX context is to follow Henry Mintzberg's description of it as "a pattern in a stream of decisions". As choices are made, to what extent is the experience of your people at the heart of your thinking? How are you ensuring consistency of purpose across all the key decisions you're taking?

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Your business strategy, your values and your employee value proposition should provide three anchor points for this process of decision-making. They can help to ensure consistency and cohesion. They provide a framework for prioritising options and making choices.

An additional and necessary step is a commitment to involving people and to co-creating solutions. It may be stating the obvious, but EX activation requires direct engagement with the front-line. It's not a desk-based topic.

Very briefly, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Make sure EX is owned by the business rather than HR. We spend a lot of time helping our clients run workshops with business leaders at all levels, effectively taking EX outside of the HR

function, where it can sometimes sit by default.

- Focus on the customer interface. Prioritise the areas where EX impacts CX directly. Think about your contact centre and your field force, for example. This might not be where you get the biggest return on your investment in EX in the end, but it is somewhere you can make gains quickly.
- Listen and engage creatively. Listening to employees is at the heart of EX leadership. Agile surveys, open feedback and text analysis provide rich insights. We also use approaches like [virtual focus groups](#) (with large numbers of people) and interactive whiteboards (with small groups).
- Personalise involvement. We have an innovative tool for involving employees directly in shaping their experience at work, which we call Real-Time Advice. In those key moments that matter when we ask for feedback, we provide nudges and tips for individual employees that are based on their input, so they can get directly involved.
- Design-thinking is a useful framework for EX activation, in terms of generating ideas and quickly prototyping and testing solutions. We often embed design thinking into our EX projects. EX is about understanding the employee's perspective and design thinking begins with empathising. In addition, an apparently small idea can snowball over time into a much bigger positive change.
- Empower existing communities. EX is not a stand-alone topic; it should integrate with your other priorities, such as diversity and inclusion, sustainability, and well-being. EX activation means engaging with communities (champion networks, employee groups) that probably already exist within your organisation and empowering them to deliver.

I have written about EX leadership in more detail [elsewhere](#), but one thing I emphasise is the importance of learning by involving. Employee experience is personal and conversational and in order to activate EX — to simplify the way people work and free them up to do their best — you need to listen and learn directly.

In this context, I really like the phrase used recently by [Rebecca Zucker and Darin Rowell](#), which seems to sum things up nicely: “Leaders must shift from a “know it all” to a “learn it all” mindset.”

For some organisations and for some leaders this is more than a shift, it's a step change, but it is key for moving on from employee engagement towards employee experience leadership.

The post "Co-creating your employee experience strategy" was first published by Nick Lynn here <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/co-creating-your-employee-experience-strategy-nick-lynn/>

About Nick Lynn

I advise some of the world's largest companies on how to improve employee experience and engagement. You can read about my work in my book "Employee Experience (EX) Leadership" and on my blog <https://exleadership.com/>

I am especially interested in using EX insights to solve business problems, such as simplifying the way people work and encouraging collaboration and innovation.

Areas of focus/projects include:

- EX insights such as personas, journeys, and moments-
- Culture-strategy alignment-
- Employee engagement-
- People analytics-
- Design thinking-
- Business transformation and behaviour change-
- Embedding vision and values-
- Building a compelling employee value proposition (EVP)-
- Total rewards optimisation-
- Talent management strategies-
- Leadership development and team alignment-
- Predictive workforce analytics-
- Communications and change management-
- Assessing and building manager capability-
- M&A culture alignment-
- Diversity and inclusion-
- Employee listening and feedback-
- Cyber risk-
- The Future of Work-
- HR technology

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/co-creating-your-employee-experience-strategy>