

BOOK REVIEW
THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE ADVANTAGE
HOW TO WIN THE WAR FOR TALENT BY GIVING EMPLOYEES THE
WORKSPACES THEY WANT, THE TOOLS THEY NEED, AND A
CULTURE THEY CAN CELEBRATE

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The central theme of the book is the Employee Experience, which has been on the rise in the past few years. Very few books have been published in this field, among which this is one of the best books. In our life, experiences matters a lot whether we are looking for a job, going for a party, long drive etc. It is also researched that people who spend money on experiences instead of physical things are more satisfied and motivated than anything else. We care for experiences because we spent a lot of time and money on it. Today, organizations should create places where employees truly want to work not where the employer wants to be the employees. This shifts the approach from need to want i.e. from utility to experience.

This book is mainly concerned with the evolution of employee experience. As in the business world, things evolve and change. The same is applied to the organizational priorities. Many years ago, work had been the basic component for an employer. Then it shift towards productivity, getting the most out of people. Then it comes to engagement of employees so that employees remain happy and engaged at work. Now, next is the shift to employee experience advantage.

Basically, the second chapter consists of research on employee experience. It includes various chief employee experience officers, directors, managers and even HR leaders who are responsible for employee experience and gave their views on this new shift of employee experience. The author researched that every organization basically focuses on three environments: technological, physical and cultural environments, design great employee

experiences and create a place where employees truly want to work. Employee experience attributes are basically divided into ACE technology (Availability to everyone, Consumer grade technology, Employee needs vs. Business requirements), COOL physical spaces (Chooses to bring in friends or visitors, Offers flexibility, Organization's values are reflected, Leverages multiple workspace options) and a CELEBRATED culture (Company is viewed positively, Everyone feels valued, Legitimate sense of purpose, Employees feel like they are part of a team, Believes in diversity and inclusion, Referrals come from employees, Ability to learn new things and given resources to do so and advance, Treats employees fairly, Executives and Managers are coaches and mentors, Dedicated to employee health and wellness). The cultural environment contributes 40 percent to the employee experience, and the technological and physical environment each contributes 30 percent.

Now the third chapter introduces employee experience drivers. The author looked at employee engagement. He categorizes three types of employees: first is that employee who is unhappy and frustrate their coworkers. These are actively disengaged. Second is employees who are checked out and sleepwalking through their jobs. These are not engaged employees. Third are those who work happily and feel connected to the organization. These are engaged employees. Main employee experience drivers included in this chapter are employee tenure, people analytics, transparency, technology, war for talent etc.

The author describes about the reason for being in an organization and the components of three employee experience environments. He tells various reasons to work with an organization. These reasons are to check whether organization focus on the impact on the world and people, whether they are centered on financial gain and what they think of employees or how they treat employees. The author also discuss about Employee Experience Score (ExS), which is determined by 17 variables inside of an organization. These are: consumer grade technology, technology availability, technology focusing on employee needs, workplace options, values reflected in the physical space, being proud to bring in friends or visitors, workplace flexibility and autonomy, a sense of purpose, fair treatment, feeling valued, managers acting like coaching and mentors, feeling like a part of the team, ability to learn something new, advance and get the resources to do both, referring others to work at your organization, diversity and inclusion, health and wellness and brand perception. Further the coming chapters give brief description about the physical, technological and cultural environment. The physical environment is that environment where employees actually work i.e. place where they sit, meals they get, cubicles etc. Everyone wants to work in the place which energize and inspire. To create a great physical environment for employees, organizations need to focus on the COOL environment. The technological environment includes what we use to communicate, collaborate and actually gets our job done. If the tools or technology break down, then everything else around them, including the human relationships also breaks down. It includes applications, hardware and software also. To create a great technological environment for employees, organization should focus on ACE technology. The culture of the organization determines how employees are treated, the products or services that are created, the partnerships that are established and even how employees actually get their jobs done. Corporate culture is like air, it does not depend on the organization to create it as in the case of technological and physical environment. Organizations must focus on CELEBRATED culture.

Next chapter tells about the employee experience equation which can be written as (culture * technology * physical space = employee experience). It is observed that organizations that focus on all the three environments will observe a larger impact than the organizations which focus on one or two environments. Employee experience equation shows that all three environments are crucial and have a much greater impact than the sum of their individual parts.

Further the author explores how and what the organizations can do to actually go about designing employee experiences that take all of these environments and variables into consideration. It consists of five chapters. First chapter tells about the nine types of organizations. These are: inexperienced (one that is not actively investing in any of the three employee experience environments. They simply exist for the sake of existing), emerging (Organizations that focus on just one out of the three environments: Physically emerging, Technologically emerging, Culturally emerging) , engaged (Organizations which focus on cultural and physical environments that create employee experience), empowered(Organizations that focus on technological and cultural environment), enabled (Organizations that focus on physical and technological environments), Pre-experiential (Organizations that do quite well on all the employee experience environments but they are not amazing i.e. employees feel that organization is doing a good job, but not great), Experiential (Organizations that are best at creating an environment what people truly want).

Next chapter discuss about the employee experience distribution i.e. what percentage of organizations lying in each of the category. Further chapter examine the business value of employee experience. It tells about different areas on which experiential organizations leads. These are: customer service, innovation, admiration & respect, top HR, employer attractiveness, employee happiness, brand value, green companies etc.

Next chapter is about business metrics and financial performance. Experiential organizations had 20 % fewer employees, 40 % lower turnover, 1.5% employee growth, 2.1% the average revenue, 4.4 % average profit, 2.9 % more revenue per employee and 4.3 more profit per employees as compared to nonExperiential Organizations (Data provided by the organizations such as Yahoo! Finance, PayScale, and Fortune). It is clear that these organizations are most productive, have higher customer satisfaction scores and rankings; have top innovation practices and have the best people teams.

Next is the cost of employee experience. Organizations always concerned about their budget. Different environment is having different variables which are associated with different cost. Some variables are free also. For example, being treated fairly, feeling valued, being a part of team, referring others, employee and well being etc. The interesting thing is that these are crucial business investments that are surely going to be profitable to every organization.

The author defines system1 versus system 2 experiences. System 1 thinking is very fast, is logical thinker and doesn't require much focus or attention. On the other hand, System 2 thinking is more purposeful, slower and more deliberate. Organizations must shift to system 2 experiences, which are conscientious and purposeful efforts that are based on data, design and employee contributions. Next chapter deals with employee experience design loop. It explains that employee experience is an ongoing and never ending back-and-forth interaction between employees and the organization. This loop is infinity loop which shows an ongoing relationship

between employees and the organization. There is no break and it's designed to flow a bit like water smoothly around the loop. It includes respond, participate, launch, design and analyze by the employees and the organization. Further chapter is about the Starbucks model of transparency. Starbucks has been a prime example of customer engagement and innovation through something it launched called "My Starbucks idea". It shows a transparent level of employee freedom and organizational control. Transparency acts as the balance between both of them. For example, if any employee gives an idea and that idea is not accepted or implemented, employer will give the reason of that. So that employee can understand the reason. Next comes the employee life cycle. It includes attract, recruit, onboard, develop, retain and transition of employees. These life cycles are great when the organizations operated like a finely oiled machine, where everyone went through the same process and did the same thing.

The author also discuss about the moments that matter or moments of impact. Mainly there are three categories of moments: Specific moments (the first day of work), ongoing moments (the continued relationship that an employee has with a manager) and created moments (fun events or innovation challenges). Further he explores moments that matter and its relation with employee experience. Then comes the employee experience pyramid which includes reason for being, three employee experience environments, 17 variables and the moments that matter i.e. personalization. Then the author explores how the actual work impacts the employee experience. The organization can change is how the work gets done, not what the work is. That's what made the impact.

Next is who owns the employee experience. According the author, it is initiated by CEO and executive team, owned by people team, driven by managers and championed by everyone. After this he gave an example of Airbnb (marketplace that allows people to rent out local listings in every country around the world) which was awarded as number one company to work in America. At Airbnb employee experience refers to the activities, programs, resources and approaches taken to make sure that employees are set up to be their best selves, they have feeling of belongingness and contribute to the success of the company mission and business results. Then the author tells about the role of employees. The employees should judge themselves firstly i.e. what they want to get, where they want to go, which career path they want to choose etc., only then they can succeed in life. For employee experience advantage, employer and employee both are responsible. The future of work is about completely redesigning the organizations to put employee experience at the very center of it. One should focus on the things which make them unique whether it is the case of an employee or the organization. Examples are: Facebook, Amazon etc. The size of the industry or location of an organization doesn't matter for investing in employee experience. It's simply a matter of priority and commitment.

Through this book, the author provides various ways of increasing awareness about employee experience advantage. It concludes that organizations should implement COOL spaces, ACE technology and CELEBRATED culture. It includes all the 17 employee experience variables into consideration for employee experience advantage. This book is recommended to everyone interested in exploring the advantages of employee experience. It will also offer some interesting insights and examples to the layman who can take a look on how to drive the employees in any organization. Several research hints are also provided by the author in this book for their further researchers.