The
Career Experience

What It Is, Why It Matters and the Science Behind It

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The Career Experience

Many HR leaders praise the employee experience (EX) as the holy grail of their organizational initiatives, but things are changing. What if this view only captures a small fraction of — ironically — the employee experience?

What if there were a broader understanding of the employee's career? You would be able to see through employees' eyes why they joined your company, what they hope to do in life and where they're going. Then you could help them position themselves in your company to achieve their goals as well as yours.

You would both win.

We've written about the employee experience in the past, how creating great experiences and providing a framework for practitioners develops the holistic employee experience. Now we're expanding our view on what it means to have a truly great employee experience.

We call it the

career experience.

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Why Are We Using the Term "Career Experience"?

The career experience is a broader term than the employee experience. While EX initiatives focus mainly on objective measurables like engagement scores, performance goals, feedback and survey results, we believe the view of an employee's actual experience has expanded.

Measuring KPIs like these is only half the battle. What do you do with all that information? And what does it all mean?

An employee doesn't think in terms of these measurables. They want to know that they have a stable job and a growing future. They want to feed their families and send their kids to college while also growing at their organization and feeling challenged.

But you also care about more than just the employee. You care about job seekers and candidates. You care about the gig and freelance workers. You care about the retired workers and alumni.

Most organizations currently think in EX terms. But there's a problem. Without any real science behind those objective measures and data, EX falls flat and fails to improve business performance. Thinking in just objective, measurable terms doesn't account for the entirety of the employee's experience.

It's a *transactional* relationship rather than a *relational* one. The original intentions behind EX lead us to a new vision for relational perceptions of employees and their experiences.

In short, the employee experience is *really* about the career experience. That's why we developed a data-driven, science-backed framework to provide meaning and purpose to your measurables. It's called

RESPECT.

But first, let's explain more about why the "career experience" is a better term for explaining the employee experience, and how that affects business results and how providing a framework for practitioners develops the holistic employee experience. Now we're expanding our view on what it means to have a truly great employee experience.
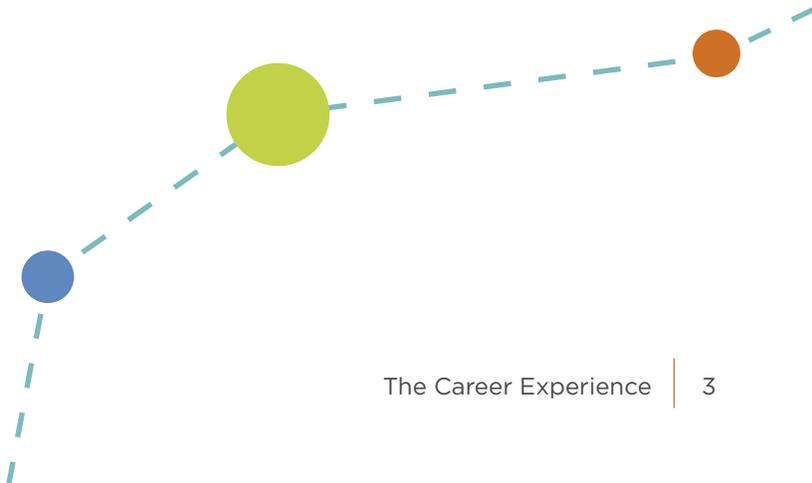
How We Got Here:
The Customer and Employee Experiences

What are customer experience and employee experience, and how do they lead us to examining career experience?

Accenture believes the customer experience (CX) is the battleground for *loyalty,* while the employee experience (EX) is the battleground for *productivity.*[1]

CX is all about understanding what customers value over the course of their life cycle, evolving into a broader view of addressing their wants and needs. It starts with imagining what the customer sees through their eyes. For example, think about interactions as "journeys" rather than "touch points."[2] This empathy creates more loyalty, brand recognition and lifetime value for the customer.

EX, similarly, is focused on a view of the entire work experience, from emotional and financial wellness to self-service tools and avenues for feedback.[3] Employees "journey" through their interactions with your organization in myriad ways depending on their generation, their device and their place in the org chart. They all want an experience that's tailored to their personal needs.

57%

The HR community largely believes in EX initiatives. In fact, **57%** of HR leaders hold EX as their top priority for 2019.[4] The struggle to bring out the employee value proposition in their everyday work is the biggest problem for achieving a great EX. What's the solution, according to Gartner? Empathize with what employees value.

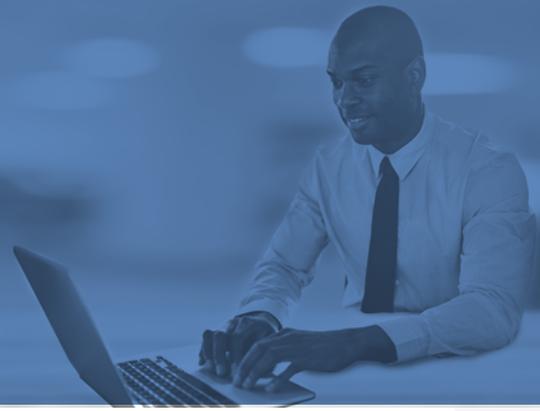## So, how does all of that lead us to the **career experience?**

1. Michael Liley et al. Employee Experience Reimagined. Accenture Strategy. 2017. https://www.accenture.com/us-en/_acnmedia/PDF-64/Accenture_Strategy_Employee_Experience_Reimagined_POV.pdf

2. The CEO Guide to Customer Experience. McKinsey Quarterly. August 2016. https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/operations/our-insights/the-ceo-guide-to-customer-experience

3. Josh Bersin et al. The Employee Experience: Culture, Engagement, and Beyond. Deloitte. Feb. 28, 2017. https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/improving-the-employee-experience-culture-engagement.html

4. 2019 HR Executive Priorities. Gartner. 2019. https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/trends/2019-hr-priorities

The Career Experience

The EX initiatives cited earlier focus solely on one event in the employee's time horizon rather than their journey with your company extended through time. This journey starts even before the employee is hired, and it continues long after they've retired.

All too often, organizations serve up an empty promise. They follow the hype that millennials, for example, are at your company only for a short time because of their lack of loyalty. Taking this perspective, many leaders simply want to make that short window the best experience possible.

But by focusing on a longer time horizon and a broader view, you can actually increase engagement, retention and employee experience for the long term, rather than just accepting that the employee will be there for only a few short years.

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Why is all of this important? Here are a few reasons why we're addressing this now.

YOUNGER WORKERS ARE FINANCIALLY INSECURE

It's well known that young people are financially insecure.[5] Between crushing student loans, rising healthcare costs and stagnant wage growth, young workers are aching for a holistic approach to their careers, especially regarding soft skills, recognition and rewards, benefits and work-life balance.[6] Workers are putting more demand on organizations to fill these needs than ever before.

THE WORKFORCE IS AGING, AUTOMATION IS INCREASING AND SOCIOPOLITICAL INSTABILITY IS MORE INTENSE

Bain's Labor Report 2030 cites three big shifts in the workplace in the coming years that will affect not only work but the cultural milieu in which your employees are immersed. There's a demographic shift in an aging workforce, a lack of productivity and wage growth due to automation, and rising inequality and instability between classes and governments.[7] All three of these factors force a kind of paternalism onto the organization because they are in a position to provide stability to their workers.

EMPLOYEES HAVE NEW EXPECTATIONS

From a more micro-perspective, employees have new expectations that companies are finding difficult to wrap their minds around and effectively serve. Fueled by consumer products, direct-to-consumer supply chains and mobile experiences, employees want the best of all possible worlds. This is not a bad thing. Employees are consumers after all, and their expectations have bled into the world of work.

Employees expect more personal and holistic work experiences similar to their journeys as a consumer, what Mercer calls "careers people crave," especially when it comes to technology.[8] They have these personalized, consumer-like expectations at every stage of their career, from their experience as a candidate to their experiences in retirement.[9]

This sounds great and all, but how can you actually create a great career experience for employees? What does it look like?

We're glad you asked.

5. Ben Steverman. "America's Millennials Are Waking Up to a Grim Financial Future." Bloomberg. June 21, 2018. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-21/america-s-millennials-are-waking-up-to-a-grim-financial-future

6. The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018. Deloitte. 2018. https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html

7. Karen Harris et al. Labor 2030: The Collision of Demographics, Automation and Inequality. Bain & Company. Feb. 7, 2018. https://www.bain.com/insights/labor-2030-the-collision-of-demographics-automation-and-inequality/

8. Global Talent Trends 2019. Mercer. 2019. https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/career/global-talent-hr-trends.html

9. See the March–April 2018 issue of Harvard Business Review, The New Rules of Talent Management. https://hbr.org/2018/03/the-new-rules-of-talent-management

The Science Behind the Career Experience

The career experience is more than objective measurables. It's more than subjective experiences for the employee. It's a combination of both, and it has a science-backed framework driven by over 30 years of research in employee attitudes and perceptions.

Let's first uncover the three main stages of the career experience.

Before the Job: The Candidate Experience

Just like a consumer's experience with a brand, employees have a similar experience with companies before they're even hired on. Forrester's 2019 trends report explains the importance of CX, branding and purpose when it comes to the future of the workforce.[10] All three of these elements combine to create a sense of what it's like to work for your company, from how you communicate on social media to how you communicate with candidates during the hiring process.

In this way, building a great candidate experience involves marketing, educating and making your employer value proposition more social.[11] Candidates are researching your company on LinkedIn and Twitter, on Glassdoor and Reddit, and in phone calls, texts and chats with friends, and with friends of friends. They're very likely well aware of your perceived strengths and weaknesses before you ever see a resume.

By creating an unforgettable experience for your candidate or day-zero employee, you can be sure that you've not only found great talent, but that you will keep them around after day one.

SUGGESTED READING

One company that created a great candidate experience is Par Pacific.

- Par Pacific report for recruiting employees: Creating Great Employee Experiences

Supporting resources

- Five Hiring Managers Discuss Today's Toughest Challenges
- Transforming Recruitment

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10. Predictions 2019: The Year Transformation Goes Pragmatic. Forrester. November 2018. https://go.forrester.com/research/predictions/

11. Sharyln Lauby. Four Ways to Improve the Candidate Experience. Society for Human Resource Management. April 11, 2018. https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/four-ways-to-improve-the-candidate-experience.aspx

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During the Job:
The Employee Experience

Once a candidate becomes an employee, you're still not done working to win them over. The focus just takes a different perspective. To strengthen your vibrant culture, engage your unique employees and drive better business results, it's important to appreciate everyday excellence.

They say younger workers are flighty, but research suggests that their loyalty is strong once they buy in.[12] Recognition is a key to retention and engagement. Our own research has shown that when recognition is tied to business objectives and when managers celebrate the wins big and small, retention and engagement respond favorably — to the tune of 81% of respondents agreeing that they intend to stay with their current company.[13]

In short, be loyal to your employees and they'll be loyal to you.

SUGGESTED READING

Supporting resources
- Why Do Employees Leave?
- Recognizing Performance

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12. The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018.

13. Why Do Employees Leave? Engage2Excel Trendicators Report. https://www.engage2excel.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Engage2Excel_Why_Employees_Leave_Report-WEB.pdf

Well into and After the Job: Engaging Employees and Retirees

So, you've built great recruiting, engagement and recognition competencies within your organization, but what happens when an employee's career starts winding down? A lot of trust has been eroded among younger workers because of the way companies treat their more senior counterparts. We've all heard stories of someone who's been at a company for 30 years only to be let go in a "cost-reduction measure" to "decrease headcount and labor costs."

Employees want an engaging experience the entire way through their career, from start to finish. When employees experience a career they love, they're all-in, fully engaged and highly motivated, giving enormous discretionary effort. But they can't get there without some structure.

Engagement is a critical element to the career experience, particularly toward the end of a career. More experienced or retired employees often act as coaches or mentors to the younger generation, creating a feedback loop for your organization's long-term cultural health. Using engagement and experience surveys is one way to measure how connected employees are with your organization.[14]

Respecting the Career Experience with Science

Without a doubt, the career experience is a science, developed over time through recognition and appreciation, exciting work, a sense of security and confidence, being paid fairly, career growth and transparency from leadership. But do you know where your employees are in their journey?

Without hard data to analyze and predict their progression and perception of their career — with a science-backed framework — there's no way to know. **To give employees a true engagement experience, give it the RESPECT it deserves.**

SUGGESTED READING

- **One company that comes to mind is UPS**
  UPS report for retiring employees:
  Creating Great Employee Experiences
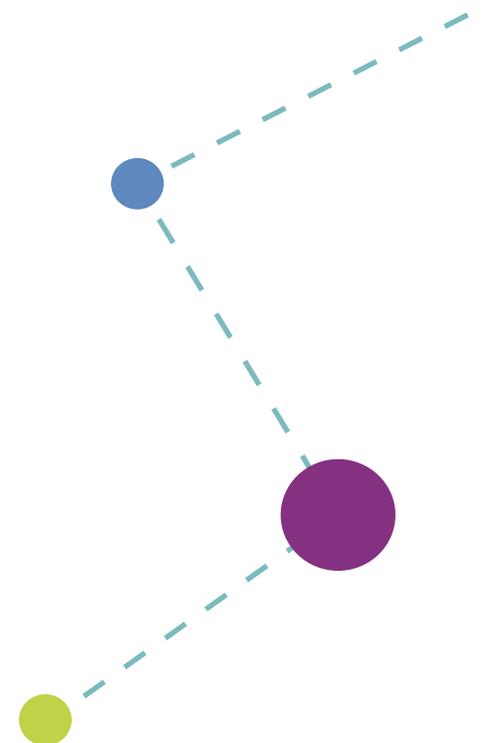
14. Measuring Engagement to Improve Your Company's Competitive Advantage. Engage2Excel Trendicators Report. https://www.engage2excel.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/E2E_Measuring_Engagement_TRBP1.V1-WEB.pdf?hsCtaTracking=d1a24354-9de5-4bfb-be88-7cd1c3cf7a0d%7Cca9998f1-14ec-4ea7-a5db-64e5d0033ced
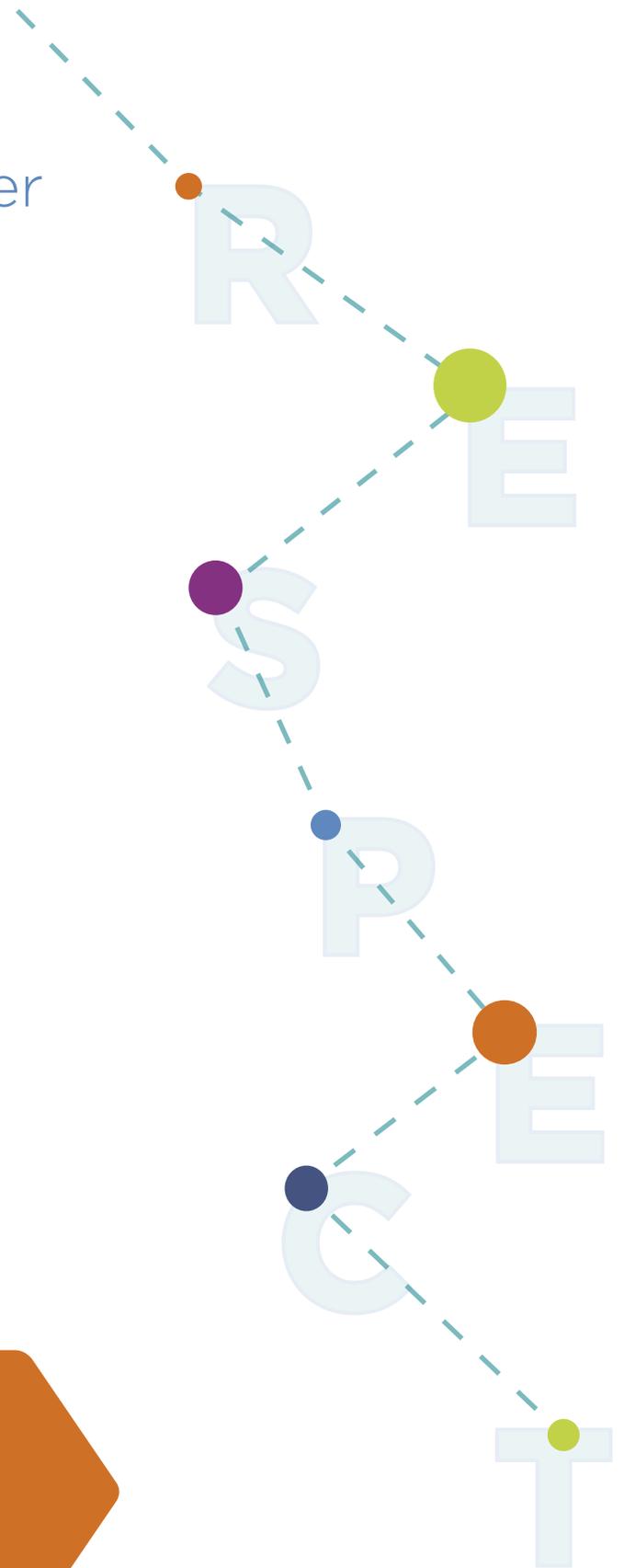
RESPECT:
A Science-Backed Career Experience Framework

One objective model to map the desire for a more holistic career journey to the psychology of your employees is a science-backed career experience framework: the RESPECT framework.

Jack Wiley, Ph.D., chief scientific officer of Engage2Excel, has spent three decades developing the science behind the career experience. His book _RESPECT: Delivering Results by Giving Employees What They Really Want_ summarizes 25 years of research into what employees most want from their employers. In their own words, employees from around the world identified seven things they want most. These seven factors form RESPECT.

SUGGESTED READING

- **Use these conversation tips to aid a STAY conversation using the RESPECT framework** The STAY Conversation

The RESPECT Framework

RECOGNITION
A pat on the back — acknowledgment for a job well done — from managers and the organization at large

Employees want to be recognized and respected for their contributions, even if those contributions are small. By recognizing employees' value to the organization and connecting that to business objectives, like we said earlier, research shows that employees are more engaged and have a better experience throughout.

EXCITING WORK
A job that's challenging, interesting and fun

Employees always want to be challenged, especially younger employees. They want a career that's rewarding not only for them but for broader society as well. By creating exciting work for the employee at an individual level, employees will feel more motivated to put in the discretionary effort, driving more productivity and more interest in their day-to-day responsibilities.

SECURITY
Confidence that solid work and a well-managed organization lead to job security

Knowing that the organization employees work for is financially sound and led by capable, intelligent leaders who look out for them shapes the experience of the employees for the better. They feel safe to take more risks, fuel innovation and push more creativity within their teams.

PAY
Fair compensation for a day's work

Fair pay is often overlooked in much of the engagement literature that's out there today. Many writers say that purpose and meaning are good substitutes for salary. However, there is a limit to that thinking. There is a base level for which employees need to be fairly compensated in order to feel safe and secure in their work. Without this kind of psychological safety net, engagement and experience suffer.

EDUCATION AND CAREER GROWTH
Opportunities to develop skills over the course of a productive career

Many younger workers are desperate for mentorship and coaching that will lead to a long, fulfilling career. The modern organization must push this into their performance and engagement initiatives for employees to continually produce and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

CONDITIONS
A well-equipped workplace that is physically comfortable and socially inviting

Comfortable working conditions are more than just open-office-versus-cubicle conversations. You've heard those debates time and time again, but there's something deeper. Employees want flexible schedules, meaningful relationships and support for when they fail or want to try new things. This means more than just headphones or free lunches.

TRUTH
Frank, honest and transparent communication from managers and senior leaders

Transparency and "radical candor" are hot topics today, but truth doesn't mean brutal honesty. It means being open about the right parts of the career: development and progression, performance missteps, as well as expectations and goals.

These RESPECT dimensions allow your organization to build a scalable, measurable model for implementing the career experience across departments, from the front-line employee to senior leadership.

So, How Do You Do That?

The right partner can create these incredible career experiences for your employees today.

For example:

With onboarding and preboarding accelerators such as personalized welcome gifts to new hires before their first day on the job to protect your recruiting investment

With recognition programs that hit on all cylinders — performance, service and social — to make employees feel appreciated and valued

With an engagement and experience survey model that's bottom-up and takes a strategic, scientific approach to measure the career experience

Bring Science into Your

Career Experience.

Engage2Excel helps organizations
create unique career experiences from
pre-hire to retirement.

We understand what employees really want, because we look at the entire
career life cycle through a scientific lens.

We conduct original surveys, validate best practices from our client base
of more than 2,700 organizations and rely on over three decades of
groundbreaking research by our chief scientific officer, Jack Wiley, Ph.D.

See what Engage2Excel's career experience platform can do for you — today.

To learn more, visit engage2excel.com.

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