



3 Ways to Foster a Human-Centered Workforce Experience

The notion of developing a positive workforce experience (WX) that organizations can design and measure for effectiveness is drawing growing attention among company leaders. As HR teams traditionally mobilize to create programs or implement the latest perks, research shows that many organizations are still missing the involvement of the most important stakeholder: the worker.¹

While engagement surveys are common, worker agency in designing experience is a critical component for fueling innovation and agility. Experience can also emerge as a pivotal factor in driving engagement, productivity, and business results. Organizations can design an inclusive, worker-centric experience by adopting some of the approaches listed below.

1. Sharpen leadership capabilities that build trusting worker relationships.

To build a culture that reflects humanistic values, organizations can begin with the behaviors of a key influencer of cultural norms—leaders. Research shows that high-performing leaders continuously model “good” behaviors through knowledge-sharing and acceptable levels of risk-taking.² When organizations create transparency through line of sight and connect workers with the organization’s strategy and purpose, better workforce experiences follow.³ More mature organizations tend to cultivate environments that enable learning and growth as well as leaders who actively foster trust and build a sense of purpose and ownership over work.

At a local level, established feedback channels provide managers and workers alike with a space to discuss worker-specific needs or engage in conversations around potential future changes. Feedback discussions increase worker dialogue with leaders and widen the path to understanding how personal needs align with broader organizational strategies. High-performing organizations reinforce leadership capabilities that communicate the purpose of feedback, facilitate learning from mistakes, and create on-the-fly development. When leadership behaviors reinforce trust, the impact resonates throughout the WX.

Leaders in high-performing organizations are . . .



. . . than are those in low-performing organizations.

Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2018.

Call to Action

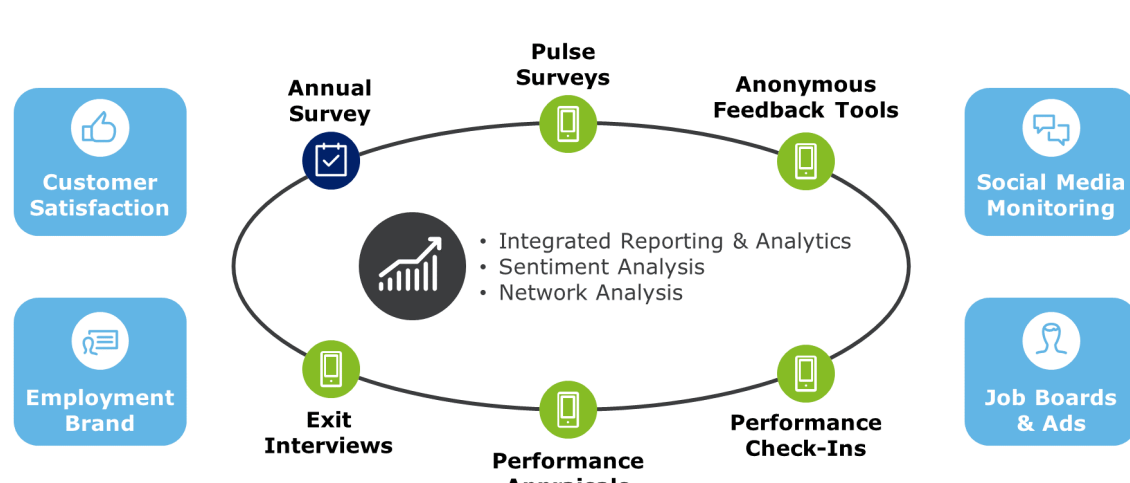
- Ensure manager 1:1 conversations are occurring at every level of the organization—all individuals deserve a space to share input.
- Train leaders on organizational strategies that may influence or alter workforce experiences to better prepare them for challenging worker conversations.
- Connect leadership 1:1 meetings with ongoing change initiatives and communicate how worker feedback will be taken into consideration.

2. Design sensing and monitoring approaches to gather feedback around topics most relevant to workers.

Designing a human-centered WX requires organizations to not just listen but to listen to the things that *matter most* to the workforce. However, rather than surveying workers because it’s the thing to do, organizations should seek meaningful feedback with a purpose in mind.

Listening architectures that allow workers the flexibility to express feedback selectively can broaden the scope of their input. Thus, it is crucial that companies keep all possible listening channels open to effectively gauge worker sentiments and perceptions.

Example of a Listening Architecture



Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2017.

An organization’s approach to measurement should empower workers with greater control over the feedback they provide rather than dictate when information will be collected. To make the measurement process more personal and relevant, organizations should consider how to make surveys more flexible so that they allow workers the opportunity to provide feedback on topics that are of most concern to them, rather than topics talent wants input on. Further, workers should be offered the opportunity to provide real-time, qualitative responses to critical moments.

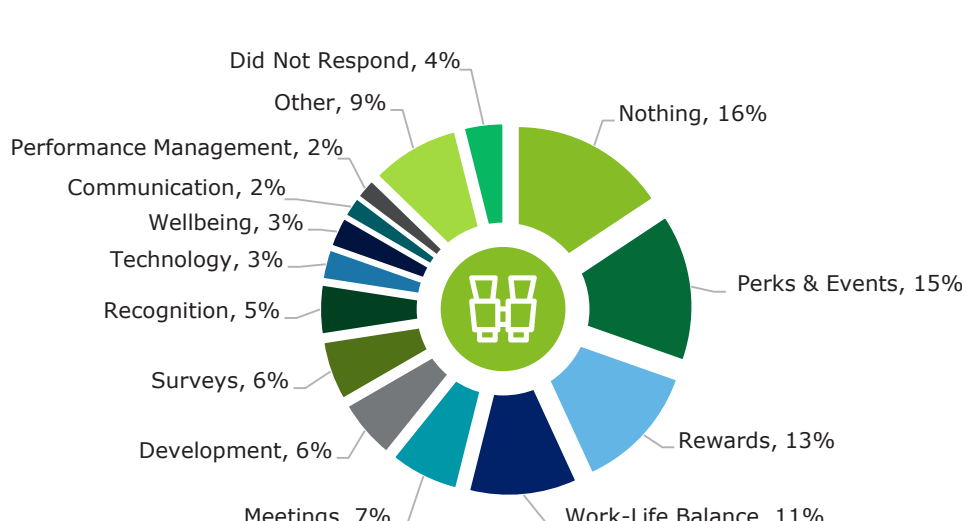
Call to Action

- Screen all probable listening channels—for instance, are you reviewing external sources of worker feedback like social media or professional networking and salary and benefit review websites?
- Continuously think of ways to make survey content more relevant to various worker segments.
- Build in more choice and freedom for workers to provide feedback when and where they want to—without compromising on methodological rigor.

3. Extend ownership of experience design to different worker segments.

Two-thirds of workers do not feel their perspective or feedback is incorporated when organizations design improvements to WX.⁴ Further, our focus group findings show that 16 percent of workers perceived that nothing significant or relevant was being done to improve worker experience.⁵ Some respondents perceived small changes in traditional offerings such as perks, work-life balance, and rewards. Even fewer perceived changes in areas such as development, technology, or the organization’s approach to performance management—all focus areas that may enable feelings of success and productivity.

Employees Lack Insight into More Challenging Changes to Experience*



*Percentages represent surveyed respondents reporting on what their organizations are actively doing around workforce experience in noted areas, with “Nothing” (or no changes) being the most frequently perceived action. Respondents were queried in an online forum on workforce experience conducted on August 6, 2018. Responses were unprompted and open ended.

Source: Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2018.

A large opportunity exists to enhance worker agency and ownership when designing WX. Organizations should involve different segments of the workforce in prioritizing and planning a meaningful experience design. Often, planning teams may include the same set of individuals year after year. However, through a diverse mix of teams that are frequently reshuffled, organizations can realize a great connection to the worker segments and gather better perception for improvements.

Call to Action

- Include human-centered design principles while designing or refining your listening architecture and action planning.
- From designing questions on surveys to prioritizing actions.
- Build a communication strategy to inform employees of changes and improvements that can impact worker experience.

Bersin Recommended Reading

- *Three Innovative Practices for Getting Actionable Insights from Employee Engagement Surveys*
- *Design Thinking in HR*
- *Seven Top Findings for Enabling Performance in the Flow of Work*
- *The Employee Perspective on Employee Experience: Three Top Findings*

¹ The Employee Perspective on Employee Experience: Three Top Findings, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Melissa Cavanaugh, Matthew Deruntz, and Madhura Chakrabarti, PhD, 2018.
² High-Impact Leadership: Three Top Findings, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Andrea Derler, PhD, 2016.
³ Creating a Systemic Relationship with Talent: Putting Employees at the Center of the Talent Experience, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Stacia Sherman Garr and Emily Sanders, 2017.
⁴ The Employee Perspective on Employee Experience: Three Top Findings, Bersin, Deloitte LLP / Melissa Cavanaugh, Matthew Deruntz, and Madhura Chakrabarti, PhD, 2018.
⁵ “Understanding Employee Experience” forum conducted on Remesh.ai, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP, August 6, 2018.

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