

A top-down photograph of a person sitting on a wooden floor. They are wearing a brown cardigan and are focused on typing on a light blue laptop. In their left hand, they hold a yellow mug filled with coffee. The scene is lit with warm, soft light, creating a cozy and productive atmosphere.

THE FUTURE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

CREATE A BETTER WORKER EXPERIENCE — STARTING WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In a world of smartphones, tablets, and “wearables” that track everything from baseball scores to your heart rate, we now have all the technology we need to ensure generations of repeat customers. Unfortunately for today’s workforce, the same technological advances don’t often extend to the workplace. But with employees at the heart of every important customer interaction, it’s time to start focusing your organization’s efforts on employee engagement.

Here we’ll focus on the future of employee engagement — everything from mobile solutions for employees to the shift toward a nontraditional way of working.

Building the Worker Experience

We toss the phrase “Worker Experience” around quite a bit when talking about employee engagement, but why? Are Worker Experience and employee engagement the same thing? The short answer is no. The longer answer is this: Worker Experience is about building a platform for employee engagement. And while engagement should be a priority for organizations, Forrester Research has shown that only about one-third (34 percent) of employees around the world are engaged.¹

¹ Forrester Research: Maximize Employee Value By Aligning With Customer Imperatives by Paul D. Hamerman and TJ Keitt with Holger Kisker, Ph.D. and David Murphy, May 9, 2014

In the interest of raising the bar for employee satisfaction and productivity, here are the 4 main ingredients in a successful Worker Experience platform:

- **It’s social.** According to Forrester, the majority of the engaged workforce uses at least one social tool (53 percent) and/or one communication and collaboration tool (83 percent).
- **It’s mobile.** How do we connect with information as consumers? Employee engagement is no different. That’s why Worker Experience platforms should look more like Facebook on an iPad than SharePoint on a desktop computer.

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- **It's integrated with your organization's Human Capital Management (HCM) software.** Archaic yearly reviews are giving way to instant, actionable feedback (but more on that later...). This switch is made easier by integrating your Worker Experience app with your organization's HCM app. That way, everyday tasks like requesting time off or having HR-related questions answered becomes less cumbersome.
- **It's fun and uncomplicated.** Much like recent innovations in Customer Experience, Worker Experience cultivates an intimacy with your brand that builds loyalty among employees. Having an interface that's both simple and fun makes processes more enjoyable and efficient for employees.

While the goal of Customer Experience is to make the organization easier and better to work with, the goal of Worker Experience is much the same — for employees. In truth, employee engagement is largely a byproduct of Worker Experience, the fruits of a labor spent cultivating a positive, productive working environment for internal talent.



The Benefits of Worker Experience

Now that you know the what and the how of Worker Experience, let's focus on the why. What's in it for your organization? Here are 4 significant benefits of making Worker Experience a priority:

1. Increased employee engagement. Organizations need to know whether their employees are happy with their technology and work environment. And then they need to work to make sure that happiness continues.

2. Increased customer happiness. Engaged employees are more productive and facilitate better relationships with customers, which in turn creates happier customers.

3. Increased brand loyalty and recognition. Both employees and customers share their feelings about your brand (especially in the age of social media), so it's important to pay attention to both sides of the employee-customer relationship.

4. Decreased attrition. Happy employees don't tend to stray from companies and jobs they enjoy. By making your employees feel recognized, valued, and challenged, you'll retain top talent going forward.

The common thread here is employee engagement. Without tools to train, motivate, and secure employees, every facet of your business will suffer — from sales to Customer Experience. So while it's obvious that engagement is a key component of any successful business, how do you begin to make employee-centric changes within your organization?



Mobile Solutions for a More Engaged Workforce

When the mobile movement in business began, it was about streamlining the usual HR and admin functions (like accessing email and requesting PTO). But while mobile development is still focused on increasing efficiency and empowering end-users, employees now require mobile access to CRM systems and other business-specific apps to succeed at work. Today when we talk about the importance of mobility, we're really talking about the importance of mobile apps — for employees *and* the customers they serve. But simply mobilizing your CRM web experience isn't enough; our expectations are that mobile apps are focused on taking advantage of “mobile moments.”² Forrester defines these as moments when a mobile app makes an interaction better for an employee.

In order to encourage and maintain a productive, happy workforce, businesses need systems that provide a mobile-first approach to their employees.

The move to mobile is bigger than the primary vehicle for employee engagement changing from computer to smartphone/tablet; Forrester says that the shift to mobile is “like the move from mainframes to client/server or from client/server to the Web. Development leaders need to understand how customer adoption of mobile computing is changing business models and requiring a new class of software: systems of engagement.”³ These systems of engagement help businesses provide their customers, partners, and employees with more control — all with the development of context-aware apps and smart products.

² Forrester Research: Mobile Moments Require A New Technology Strategy by Michael Facemire, Tyler Shields, and Ted Schadler with Christopher Mines, Phil Murphy, Jeffrey S. Hammond, Sharyn Leaver, and Eric Wheeler, October 20, 2014

³ Forrester Research: Build Mobile Apps That Drive Engagement by Jeffrey S. Hammond, Michael Facemire, and Rowan Curran with Christopher Mines and Eric Wheeler, February 23, 2015

Why employ consumer-grade technology for your employees?

Although nearly 2 billion people currently have smartphones and tablets, Forrester says that “mobility is not simply another device for developers to support via a shrunken website or a screen-scraped SAP application.” Mobile has become a part of everyday life — the preferred way for people to not only communicate with friends and businesses, but also with their colleagues and internal systems at work. In order to encourage and maintain a productive, happy workforce, businesses need systems that provide a mobile-first approach to their employees.

Two of the greatest perks of a mobile app are the ability to leverage internal talent from anywhere and the ability to accelerate speed to market. Forrester describes the current global shift toward mobile as happening “not only with powerful customers who have incredibly high expectations, but with the empowered employees of your enterprise who demand to use any mobile app or cloud service to better serve them.”⁴ Basically, mobile apps have the power to engage employees, just as mobile apps engage us as consumers.



⁴ Forrester Research: Secure And Protect Mobile Moments by Stephanie Balaouras and Tyler Shields with Laura Koetzle, Chris Sherman, and Thayer Frechette, June 12, 2014

The role of mobility in your organization

Glasses that store information about your friends' faces, apps that get food from any restaurant delivered right to your door, home security at the virtual click of a virtual button — these are things we as customers expect from future technology. In fact, many of us expect these things right now, *yesterday*, even 5 minutes ago, when it comes to our interactions as consumers.

But are these expectations too high? The good news is no; even present-day technology has the means to make customer interactions more efficient, sometimes even with nearly instantaneous results. The bad news is that many organizations aren't taking full advantage of today's technological offerings.

Implementing hands-on services like video chat and remote control of customer devices make customer interactions more personal and efficient.

Take customer service, for instance. Most of our everyday interactions happen in a digital space now, and customers expect the same approach when making a purchase and interacting with a company. Making customer service accessible through emerging channels like web self-service, digital, and social (like online chat) is necessary to facilitate positive, efficient interactions between customers and employees. Unnecessary steps (like a phone call in lieu of an online FAQ) not only wastes your employees' time, but also can easily deter a customer from completing a purchase.

Forrester Analyst Kate Leggett writes that in 2015, customer service professionals “will explore new communication channels such as video chat with screen sharing and annotation as well as remote control of customer devices to perform tasks on the customer's behalf.”⁵ Implementing hands-on services like video chat and remote control of customer devices make customer interactions more personal and efficient — 2 things customers (and customer service reps!) want customer service to be. By improving the quality of the technology your customer service reps use, you enable your employees to provide more strategic value and foster a better Customer Experience.

⁵ Forrester Research: Trends 2015: The Future Of Customer Service by Kate Leggett with Stephen Powers, Ian Jacobs, and Arelai Ephraim, March 2, 2015

The benefits of employee-centric mobile apps

As the use of mobile devices expands into all areas of business, employee-centric mobile apps have become an important part of a successful organization. The key is to make the end-user experience valuable by streamlining tasks and systems for employees. Here are just a couple of ways mobile apps help employees at every level of your organization:

- **They deliver real-time content or services.** A mobile app is a direct link to your employees, which gives you the ability to push information (like a sales guide, case study, etc.) to them instantaneously. The ability to push useful, relevant, and highly specific information to employees will boost morale, facilitate knowledge sharing, and increase productivity.
- **They personalize the user experience.** Through personalization, things like purchase history and location certainly help create a better Customer Experience. Workers need the same personalization in mobile apps for work. If it's easy to find and share information and even make simple requests that much simpler, employees will be more engaged.

So many customer interactions are possible with just a few clicks in an app now — everything from buying movie tickets to mailing a gift. The same convenience at work is an essential part of today's Worker Experience.



Steps to building a mobile strategy

Every organization has its own unique set of challenges, wants, and opportunities when it comes to mobile. Developing and executing a mobile strategy that works for your organization requires management with know-how and diligence. Here are 4 steps to help you innovate, build, and deploy a successful mobile strategy:

1. **Come up with ideas based on employee activity.** Forrester tells us to be on the lookout for mobile moments. A mobile moment for your employees may be recording the results of a sales call, filing a status report, or something as simple as requesting PTO.
2. **Use rapid prototyping.** Once you've identified at least one worthy mobile moment, it's time to gather designs and clickable demos. Giving users something to click can help them critique its usefulness much more easily than if they're only given a written description.
 - a. One of the best ways to go about mobile app prototype development is to crowdsource the development through a site like appxpress.com. With appxpress.com, businesses can develop multiple app design options and a prototype in weeks, rather than months.

3. **Standardize on iOS.** Having one operating system for maintenance and security and one small family of devices lets you concentrate your efforts on whatever you're trying to produce. And in fact, iOS provides great security, innovative features, and better tools for managing your data and devices.
4. **Set up an organizational structure around learning.** Organizations need to be able to adapt in order for any mobile strategy to succeed. This is where great managers shine — by focusing on helping their team acquire and process new knowledge.



Welcome to the Future of Work

For some organizations, the 9 to 5 daily grind has come to a welcome halt. Employees are no longer shackled to the traditional way of working because there's a more efficient (and enjoyable) alternative: working from home. Thanks to smartphones, tablets, laptops, and cloud-based technology, we've moved into a new age of effectively working away from "work."

Are remote employees good for business?

According to Global Workplace Analytics, nearly 3 million self-employed Americans work from home. And another 3.3 million workers consider their homes their primary workplace, even though many of their employers have corporate offices. Meanwhile, nearly 80 percent of employees say they'd like to work from home at least part of the time and a third would actually take a pay cut for the opportunity.⁶ The reason isn't hard to understand: people want and need greater flexibility — not just *at* work, but in the way they work. Fortunately, there are significant benefits for businesses:

- **The ability to hire top talent.** Rather than choosing only from candidates within a 40-mile radius of your office, you can access talent from anywhere.
- **Less money spent on office space.** Unless you need an especially large, fancy space to show off to clients, you can save a considerable amount by cutting back on office space if many or all of your employees work from home.
- **More productive employees.** At the office, impromptu meetings and interruptions throughout the day add up. In fact, a 2015 study from the Harvard Business Review found that people who work from home are more productive than those who work in an office.⁷
- **Greater retention/reduced attrition.** According to Global Workplace Analytics, two-thirds of employees would take another job to ease their commute. 95 percent of employers say the ability to work remotely greatly impacts employee retention, and nearly half of the companies that currently allow employees to work remotely say the flexibility has reduced attrition.

⁶ "How To Successfully Work From Home." 2014. [businessinsider.com: http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-successfully-work-from-home-2014-10](http://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-successfully-work-from-home-2014-10)

⁷ Nicholas Bloom and John Roberts. "A Working From Home Experiment Shows High Performers Like It Better." 2015. [hbr.org: https://hbr.org/2015/01/a-working-from-home-experiment-shows-high-performers-like-it-better](https://hbr.org/2015/01/a-working-from-home-experiment-shows-high-performers-like-it-better)

How to ensure success from a distance

The number of remote employees grew 73 percent from 2005 to 2011, according to the Telework Research Network. As David Heinemeier Hansson said in a Forbes interview, “Once someone has experienced the lifestyle benefits of working remotely, they’re highly unlikely to pick another cubicle job.”⁸ If you want to hire and retain top-performing employees, your organization needs to be able to meet current technological and social expectations for work. The question is: how do you make sure remote work gets the job done?

Here are some simple, transformative ways to make sure everyone’s needs are met away from a traditional office setting:

- **Set a schedule.** Employees need to be fully accessible and working during your organization’s standard business hours. But working remotely doesn’t mean 24/7 access; they also need to feel comfortable powering down once the workday is over.

⁸ Dan Schawbel. “David Heinemeier Hansson: Every Employee Should Work From Home.” 2013. forbes.com: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2013/03/29/david-heinemeier-hansson-every-employee-should-work-from-home/>

“Once someone has experienced the lifestyle benefits of working remotely, they’re highly unlikely to pick another cubicle job.”

- **Create a distraction-free work zone.** Working from home means fewer interruptions. But it’s important to create a distraction-free workstation at home — whether it’s an entire room or just a desk.
- **Always break for lunch.** It’s easy to get caught up in work when there aren’t hordes of people to go to lunch with, and no noisy break room to eat in. It’s important to remember not only to take breaks when working from home, but also to remember to take at least 30 minutes for lunch every day.
- **Communicate.** Team meetings, one-on-ones, impromptu huddles — all of these interactions can fortunately take place virtually nowadays. With Google Hangouts, Skype, or another form of video chat, coworkers, managers and their teams, and clients can make face-to-face contact as often as needed.



Cater to personalities, not predetermined roles

With the nature of work changing, talented people have more opportunities than ever to shape the way they work. For businesses today, this means a new era of employees playing to their strengths, not fixed job descriptions. And in fact, Gallup Inc. has done some work helping people identify their strengths with their StrengthsFinder test. To date, Forbes cites the workplace diagnostic quiz as

a favorite at powerhouses like Facebook and Harley-Davidson.⁹

While traditional career pathing puts climbing the ladder and managerial roles at the top, Tom Rath (author of the best-selling *StrengthsFinder 2.0*) and his Gallup colleagues believe that people should focus on making the most of their talents, rather than struggling to fix their shortcomings. According to Rath, people may fall into these categories: learners, achievers, includers, relators, arrangers... the list goes on. The StrengthsFinder test reasons that a strengths-based approach can pay off in 3 important areas: confidence, productivity, and hope.

Modern organizations encourage employees to appreciate and hone their talents, rather than risking stagnation and discouragement by paying more attention to flaws. Basically, if you want to retain talented people, you need to cultivate an environment that encourages exploration and individuality. Ultimately, happier, more capable workers **are** the Future of Work — all of whom help facilitate a better Worker and Customer Experience.

⁹ George Anders. "Need A Career Tuneup? Gallup's Tom Rath Has A Quiz For You." 2013. forbes.com: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgeanders/2013/09/04/how-gallup-hit-a-goldmine-with-strengthsfinder/>

Assess Your Current Worker Experience and Make a Plan of Action

Now is the time to assess your current company practices and work environment in order to optimize for a more engaged workforce. Here are a few questions to ask yourself as you move forward:

- What are we currently doing to engage employees?
 - What areas need improvement?
- How do we measure employee engagement?
- How does employee engagement contribute to achieving the strategic goals of the organization?
- How do managers stay engaged with their direct reports?

The future of employee engagement uses mobile as a primary means of communication, allows (and possibly encourages) remote work, and promotes working to strengths, rather than harping on deficiencies. If you want more engaged employees, your Worker Experience needs to promote collaboration, recognition, and organizational openness. Only then can you facilitate a happier, more productive workforce. And as an added business benefit,



happy employees power customer-first initiatives. Basically, when you focus on your employees, everyone wins.

All that being said, it's important to remember as you move toward a more engaged workforce that you can't engage *at* employees, only *with* them. Senior leaders need to find out what makes employees tick — through a combination of social and/or leadership events, routine face-to-face interactions, and surveys. By providing your employees with the technology and social support they need to succeed, your organization will have a distinct advantage as we move into new realms of engagement.