

Are your Employee Experience efforts misguided?

In a [new report](#), market research firm Forrester says that while companies, HR professionals and executives are anxious to improve Employee Experience (EX), many of their efforts over the coming months will be misguided.



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“Companies and executives are paying attention to employee experience as never before. There are good reasons for this attention. Employees are quitting their jobs at the fastest rate since 2001. What’s more, companies that care about customer experience — and almost every executive at least pays lip service to customer focus these days — know that their potential to deliver high-quality customer experiences is limited by the quality of their employee experiences,” comments Samuel Stern, Forrester principal analyst and lead author of the report, *Predictions 2019: Employee Experience*.

Forrester believes investments in EX yield both tangible and intangible business results such as reduced recruiting costs, lower attrition, higher employee work performance, and increased discretionary effort.

The company has shared five EX trends to watch out for over the coming months.

1. The rise of “tribal” employment practices

According to the report, as traditional institutions of trust like government, religion, and community break down, employees will turn towards companies to be the champions of social responsibility and will choose their next employers based on their perception of the brand’s commitment to that responsibility. This will result in more companies taking sides on social issues and what Forrester refers to as the growing ‘culture wars’. By way of example, Forrester mentions Nike and clothing brand Patagonia on the one side and Chick-Fill-A and ExxonMobil on the other.

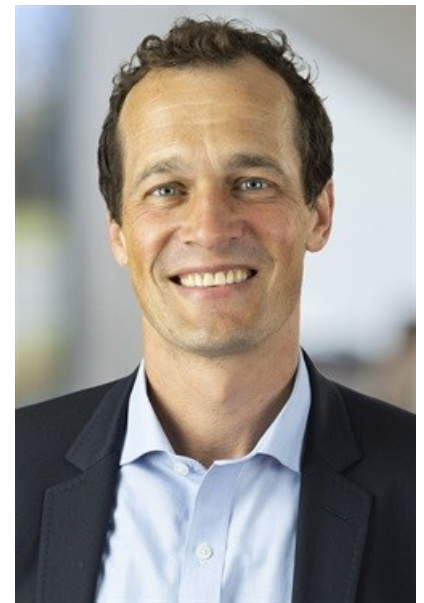
While Forrester believes some brands will be able to repeat Nike’s successful issues-based campaigns, the organisation warns that many more will stumble as they figure out when and to what degree they should take a stand on social issues.

2. Dealing with workplace distractions

According to a 2017 survey by Forrester, although 71% of global information workers agree that their work often requires deep concentration and focus, 38% of them also agree that they often get distracted while working. The company says that in 2019, businesses will rely on new analytics solutions to deal with the problem of workplace distraction. By actively monitoring calendars, analytics can help minimise wasteful meetings and increase employees focus time.

3. Figuring out the robot/ human collaboration opportunity

The advances in AI and robotics has been cause for concern for many when it comes to job security. However, Forrester believes the hype is inflated. The company says the main shift will be around how humans work as bots take over the repetitive or predictable tasks. Forrester predicts that in 2019, there will be a new focus on designing employee experience for the world of bots. This will include the application of design thinking and EX analysis for jobs that interact frequently with intelligent machines.



Sam Stern

4. More data doesn't equate to better understanding

Many companies will invest in people analytics solutions in an effort to introduce a more data-driven approach to managing and improving the employee experience. However, Forrester says even though companies may have more data on their employees, most firms will struggle to interpret or act on the data. Not incorporating qualitative understanding into the mix will not deliver the insight needed and could see Employee Experience professionals falling into a similar trap of their Customer Experience (CX) colleagues who also often neglect qualitative methodologies, to their detriment.

5. Metrics obsession could negatively impact EX

As companies strive to improve CX delivery, measurement tools (eg the ability to track and measure empathy on a service call) will create an obsession with data. Forrester warns against the lure of using these detailed metrics for goal setting and pay-for-performance schemes.

"Focusing (and compensating) employees on CX metrics will create a worse employee experience because it will undermine key EX drivers like making progress and the sense of purpose that comes from meaningful work," Stern warns.

Finally, Forrester believes that what's missing from most workforce technology plans is an understanding of what makes employees truly engaged and productive, and how this affects both customer experience and financial performance. What is required, it says, is a new approach to employees and technology that will drive business performance.

Source: Predictions 2019: Employee Experience, 5 November 2018. Authors: By Samuel Stern with Maxie Schmidt-Subramanian, Andrew Hewitt, Kelly Price, J. P. Gownder, and Amanda LeClair

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel Stern is a principal analyst in Forrester's customer experience research practice. His research topics include customer-centric culture, employee engagement in delivering better customer experiences, and how to deploy different research techniques to create better experiences. Sam is also the host of CX Cast, Forrester's weekly customer experience podcast.

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