

WHITE PAPER

IT's critical role in the hybrid employee work experience



The world changed in 2020, and with it, the expectations of corporate IT organizations. Not only did their service delivery and support capabilities need to evolve to enable remote working better, but the increased remote-worker reliance on technology was raising employee expectations of IT.

Now in 2022, the pandemic-dictated home-working arrangements morph into hybrid-working scenarios — where employees can work in the office, at home, and in other locations. The new working arrangements mean that IT organizations need to continue supporting remote working. Perhaps, by formalizing and improving the capabilities they rapidly created as “IT band-aids” to solve the immediate remote-working need and adapting the capabilities to reflect the implications of the newfound flexibility in working location.

However, these are just the “mechanics” of successful IT service delivery and support in a hybrid working world. The rising dependence on technology — that both new digital workflows and remoteness bring — means that employee experience measurement and improvement are critical in what is now a hybrid working world.

To help, this eBook shares insights and guidance on the impact of remote working, what employee experience is and why it's important, and how IT organizations need to change to improve the employee experience in a hybrid working world.

The employee impact of remote working

The rapid migration of employees from office-based to home working in the first half of 2020 brought various challenges for corporate IT organizations, while home workers struggled with potentially unsuitable IT enablement.

Initially, there was a changing dynamic, from the initial employee unhappiness with their home working technology, such as VPN access and internet connections, to the ergonomics of “home offices” (which might not have been office-like). The latter included the absence of a second screen and other office equipment not initially immediately available at home.

IT teams worked tirelessly to iron out these migration wrinkles, and employee dissatisfaction moved from hardware to the challenges of working and collaborating with others. However, a key takeaway is that employee happiness with home working improved rapidly during the first six months of the pandemic and continued to rise through 2021.

Across this time-frame, the employee estimate of productivity lost through remote working has dropped from 5h 41min to 4h 43min, with the latter average based on 445,096 experience-focused feedback responses (Source: HappySignals, The Global IT Experience Benchmark H2/2021). This lost productivity figure is a critical factor when making a case for using employee experience measurement to better serve and enable hybrid working employees.

A quick introduction to employee experience and its importance

The term “employee experience” makes some people think of a happier workforce. Others might think of it as better meeting employee expectations increasingly driven by their consumer-world experiences. Both of these aspects are important. However, another factor needs to drive your IT organization's focus on employee experience, especially in a hybrid working world.

Some employee experience definitions mirror those for customer experience (CX). For example, "Employee experience is a worker's perceptions about his or her journey through all the touchpoints at a particular company, starting with job candidacy through to the exit from the company." (Source: TechTarget). It's a 2019 statement from Forrester Research that brings the importance of employee experience to IT organizations serving hybrid working employees into focus, that:

“

...the most important factor for employee experience is being able to make progress every day toward the work that they believe is most important.”

This statement emphasizes how IT services and support help or hinder employee productivity is a significant driver of the employee experience. Organizations can see their IT improvements based on experience data positively affecting business operations and outcomes directly (unlike their ability to quantify the benefits from the human resources (HR) and facilities team investments in improving the employee experience).

The growth in employee experience interest

The link with employee productivity improvement is why many IT organizations are increasingly focused on employee experience, especially when supporting a hybrid workforce. The AXELOS 2022 ITSM Benchmarking Report showed this interest:

Two-thirds of survey respondents

67%

thought their organizations understood the need to deliver a better employee experience, with another 18% expecting them to in 2022

Only

9%

thought that their organizations would never see the need to improve the employee experience

While these percentages relate to understanding rather than action, they indicate the growing interest and importance of employee experience and productivity to IT organizations and their operations and outcomes. It's no longer a case of whether employee experience is needed. Instead, it's a case of when it will be an IT "must-have" and, to quote a late-2021 Forrester Research blog title, "2022 will go down as the year executives were forced to care about employee experience."

Using experience data to deliver better business outcomes

While employee experience might seem “fluffy” and related to employee happiness (with the employer as a whole and IT in particular), the real value for organizations comes from capturing, analyzing, and actioning experience data.

For IT, this experience data provides IT leaders with insight into how their IT service delivery and support capabilities impact employee productivity, based on what works well and what doesn't (including where IT capabilities are misaligned with business and employee needs). For example, the corporate IT service desk's performance is viewed differently when experience data is used.

However, experience data and its insight will allow your IT organization to improve more than incident and service request handling. Using a digital employee experience (DEX) solution, your organization can gauge how the IT infrastructure and applications and services that run on it perform for employees and the business operations and outcomes that depend on their productivity.

Your organization can also benefit from experiencing data outside of day-to-day IT operations. For example, to assess the success of project and program-related changes in employee happiness and productivity terms. This insight could be when outsourcing the IT service desk, where employee lost productivity has increased rather than delivering better IT support to employees. Or the success of a “shift-left” strategy that moves employees to self-service capabilities for “better, faster, cheaper” IT support. Here experience data can show whether the strategy execution has been successful or whether employees are losing productivity by using what was meant to be a time (and cost) saver.

Employee productivity links employee experience with better business operations and outcomes. While improved employee happiness will help hybrid worker motivation and ultimately retention, it's the reduction in lost productivity that provides the hard benefits that arm an experienced management business case.

Measuring and managing the digital employee experience

There aren't yet industry definitions for employee experience and experience management, which flows through to how best to measure and improve employee experiences, plus the available experience management solutions.

However, experience management solutions are available to organizations. At a high level, these can be classified as those that:



Capture employee feedback on IT's performance



Use technology to assess IT performance from an employee's perspective



Use technology to evaluate IT performance and capture employee feedback (or sentiment)

The latter two are considered “digital employee experience (DEX) management” solutions.

These DEX solutions offer a variety of capabilities, that are commonly enhanced with machine learning, including:



Technology-based experience and performance monitoring



End-user sentiment capture



Experience scoring



Root-cause analysis



Real-time automated remediation, including preventative capabilities



End-user-initiated remediation tools

Plus, analytics and reporting, and integration capabilities.

Examples of where traditional IT service delivery and support metrics fail

While DEX solution capabilities look attractive, an IT organization might not see the added value they bring relative to existing IT performance mechanisms and monitoring tools. The difference is best articulated as that the traditional approach takes a service-provider view of IT performance, whereas DEX solutions assess the service-receiver experience. Because while IT organizations, and their IT service desks, in particular, have a wealth of performance metrics, these often measure the wrong things and in the wrong places.

The focus of these traditional metrics is usually on the “how fast?” and “how many?” aspects of IT operations, i.e., the “mechanics” of IT service delivery and support. This focus is often what the IT organization deems essential rather than what the service receivers value most. Plus, organizations usually measure their performance at the point of service creation rather than at the point of consumption, such that it at best measures outputs rather than outcomes.

While this approach offers valuable insight into IT efficiency and effectiveness, the latter relates to IT operations rather than business outcomes; this is where and why the experience-related issues that affect employee productivity get hidden.

This “gap” between where success is measured can mean that the traditional IT service delivery and support metrics fail to identify employee experience and productivity affecting issues (such that they can then be remedied). For example, an IT organization has reported that the agreed level of incident tickets was closed in line with agreed service level targets. However, the experience data shows that one of the most common causes of end-user dissatisfaction is that their issue wasn’t resolved (despite ticket closure). This example demonstrates the disparity between operational efficiency and effectiveness and the experience and outcome.

A second example is employee self-service, where the delivered capabilities fail to meet employee expectations related to ease of use and the immediacy of resolution. As a result, employees either continue to use the faster telephone channel or, when they use IT self-service capabilities, they lose productivity rather than gain it.

A third example is when traditional monitoring tools report that a service is available and meeting agreed on service-level targets. However, this is the supply-side view, while end-users perceive their ability to use it differently (due to either availability or performance issues). A DEX solution would identify this end-user issue, ideally before it affects people and gets reported to the IT service desk.

5 practical tips for improving the IT experiences for hybrid working employees

Once your organization is convinced of the value of employee experience to IT service delivery and support, it needs to make any associated ambitions a reality. The following five practical tips will help:

01. Understand that experience management and its benefits aren't something that happens overnight. Instead, a longer-term view needs to be taken, with organizations often taking over a year to fully benefit from the experience data they are capturing, analyzing, and basing improvements on.
02. If not done already, start to understand how hybrid working employees are impacted by, and feel about, existing IT service delivery and support capabilities. Assess whether your ITSM tool can capture employee attributes related to their workplace mobility such that issues and requests can be handled in context. For example, a device-based problem is likely to impact a home-based worker more than an office-based worker.
03. Appreciate that experience management is more than the addition of new IT metrics (and the mechanisms that help provide experience data and insights) to the IT status quo. Instead, the adoption of experience management requires a different approach to IT service delivery and support that will change the organizational culture over time.
04. Recognize that experience management isn't about saving money. Instead, it should focus on value through an employee productivity lens. So, for example, rather than reducing IT service desk costs at the expense of employee productivity (and business outcomes as a consequence), experience data might recommend additional IT support costs are incurred to deliver more significant benefits at a business level.
05. Create a business case for employee experience even if it's not initially required. This measured approach will help articulate what experience management is and how it will help employees and business operations and outcomes. Then start by base-lining the experience status quo against which to measure the success of improvements.

Next step

Experience data and the insights it provides will allow your IT organization and IT support teams, in particular, to improve operations, services, experiences, and outcomes to better meet the needs of your business and its hybrid working employees. It's key to maximizing the employee productivity required to optimize business operations and outcomes and why experience management will become an IT and IT support staple during 2022. Not only for hybrid working employees but the whole organization.

If you would like to learn more about how experiences and productivity can be improved

[Request a demo](#)

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