

SHOUT OUT TO MY EX:

HOW TO INVEST IN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY, POSITIVITY AND PROFITABILITY







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Introduction

Four times more. 400% more. Companies that invest in employee experience are four times more profitable than those that don't. However you care to look at it, investing in employee experience (EX) makes clear business sense. Companies that are able to build seamless and innovative employee experiences have double the customer satisfaction reflected in net promoter scores compared with those that don't. Highly engaged employees deliver 20% higher rates of productivity than those who are not. And finally, companies with highly engaged employees outperform their competitors by 147%.

And yet today, customer experience (CX) managers and executives report that their organisations are not investing enough in employee experience and nearly two-thirds feel their CX success is hindered as a result.

This report combines exclusive third-party research conducted with brand decision-makers and senior executive insights from an exclusive Zone webinar. The latter saw leading EX executives Patti Alderman and Lauren Coe of Zone and Cognizant Digital Experience, Gina Arangio of GSK and Tina Rudzinski of Lloyds of London discuss how EX is the foundation of exceptional CX. Pulled together, this wealth of information will help us to understand why EX isn't gaining enough traction when its benefits are clear, and how to go about pursuing an EX improvement strategy effectively, starting today.

2x

Double the customer satisfaction reflected in the net promoter score in companies able to build seamless and innovative employee experience

4x

Companies that invest in employee experience are four times more profitable than those that don't ²

20%

Companies with highly engaged employees experience 20% higher productivity ²



- Building Business Value with Employee Experience, MIT CISR Research Briefing, Vol. 17, No. 6 (2017)
- Forbes, '92% Of HR Leaders Set Employee Experience As Top Priority In 2021'



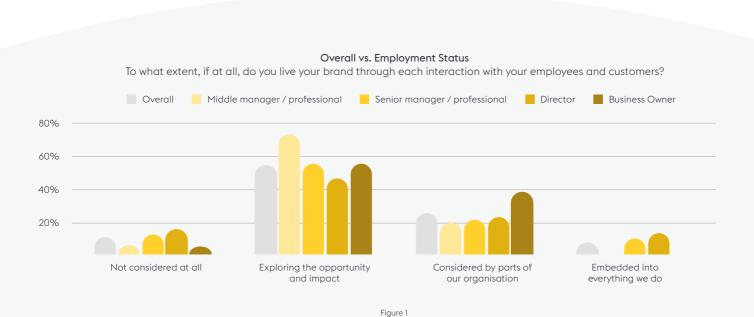
Manage your EX-centric mindset

Each of the everyday interactions of your customers and your employees showcases how you understand them, your business priorities and how well you are living your brand purpose. To do this, it is important to set and communicate a clear vision which aligns to **your brand, purpose and culture** as well as what you want everyday life to feel like for your employees so they can do their best work. Setting the right mindset within a business is essential. It's about making sure that all parts of the organisation understand that employees are big drivers of customer experience, and how that connects to positive business outcomes.

A successful mindset should exist and be understood in the same way at all levels of the business, and actions of the company and the individual should truly reflect that mindset.

Our research, conducted with decision-makers in Automotive, Financial Services, Retail, Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG), Travel δ Leisure and Food δ Drink, would suggest that, already, there are some issues to resolve when it comes to aligning behind an EX-centric mindset.

A dose of reality for leadership



When asked to what extent employers lived their brand through each interaction with employees and customers, overall, only a handful (8%) agreed that it was embedded in everything they did, with the majority (55%) of respondents stating that they were exploring the opportunity and its impact (see Figure 1).

However, what was revealing was that over 70% of middle managers felt that their organisation was very much at the beginning of this journey, while business owners were altogether more bullish, leaning towards the more positive end of the spectrum. This would suggest that those who set out the ideas had a more optimistic view of EX progress than those tasked to action it.

When asked if their organisation embedded ownership of EX beyond a single team or function, significantly more middle managers said they're only just scratching the surface of the task, compared to directors and business owners who state that it is considered at least in some parts of the business.

It seems that leaders may have an overtly rosy view of their EX maturity, while those 'at the coal face' are somewhat more realistic – and pessimistic – about progress.



Overall vs. Job Title

To what extent, if at all, do you live your brand through each interaction with your employees and customers?



Figure 2

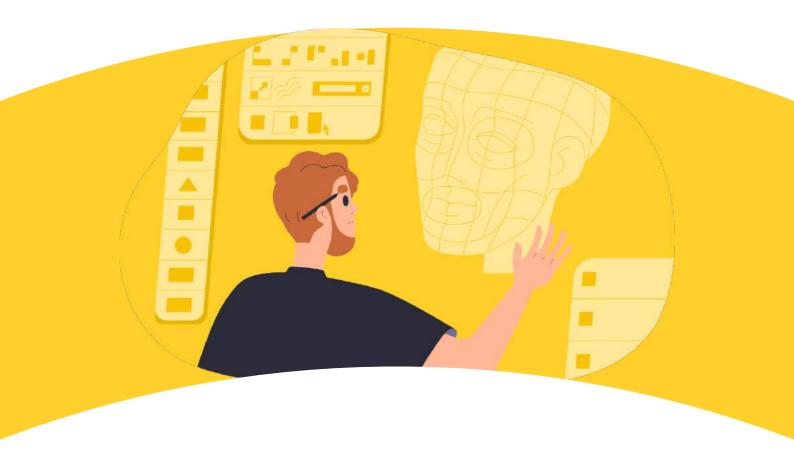
Interestingly, data officers appeared to be the least engaged of all in the process, with none stating it was embedded in everything they do and most (61.5%, see Figure 2) only at the point of exploring the opportunity. Perhaps an indication that it's time to shift a company focus away from bald numbers and more to brand connection?

So, how can the rest of the organisation be helped to match its leadership's slightly more rose-tinted

glasses view of progress? Getting everyone on the same page is vital.

Gina Arangio, Head of Change Management at GSK, insists: "Changing mindset is absolutely essential. It is the 'do not pass go, do not collect £200 moment' if you really want to create something that will be sustained in the organisation."





Uncover needs

We must look at the three-way contract brand plays between your organisation, your customers and your employees. Brand statements and lists of values are great for marketing and internal communication activity; however, customers and employees will define the brand of a business based on their own perception.

Perception is driven by lived experiences and therefore your brand needs to be authentic and true to your business strategy and your purpose. Organisations need to move away from a brand purpose that is driven by business activity and towards how their organisation will positively impact customers and employees and live that purpose through every interaction.

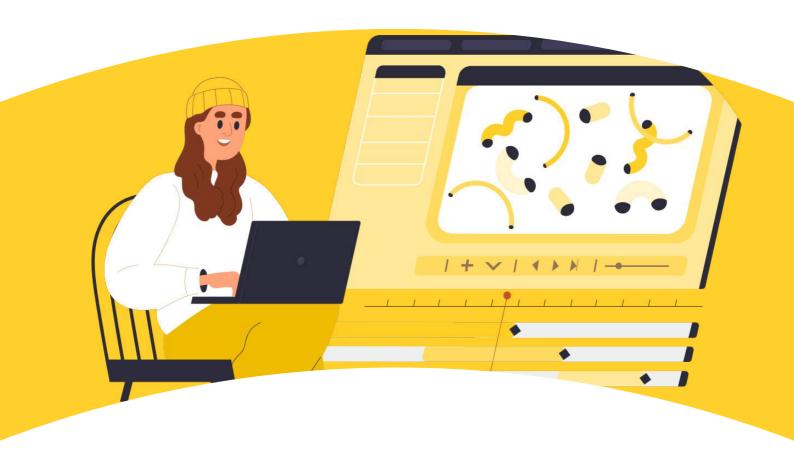
It isn't enough for leadership just to believe progress is being made. Leaders have to show what EX means in their organisation. Arangio says: "The results you get come directly from the actions or behaviours that are demonstrated. Our behaviour is fundamentally motivated by the beliefs that we hold."

In fact, the 'ivory tower syndrome' is often at the heart of poor EX, with leaders feeling underappreciated when their initiatives fall flat. Their goals – improve EX – are sound. Where things fall down is that they don't have the right mindset when it comes to understanding employees' needs.

Arangio reveals how a 'return to office' programme fell wide of the mark for her organisation. In getting meeting spaces fit for purpose, the business decided staff should enjoy the very latest technology to help them manage the new hybrid working environment; technology that was deemed so advanced and intuitive, anyone could use it.

She explains: "But when we installed staff in our super cool meeting rooms, it was not easy to use. The result was we had employees complaining. There were some really early warning signals with people telling us that it was easier for them to meet and connect virtually from home. So we have a real barrier to entry, now where do we start? We start with mindset."

Tina Rudzinski, Head of People and Culture at Lloyd's, agrees that leadership is the key to bringing everyone on board with a shift in mindset.



Rudzinski says: "At an organisational level, it's really difficult to bring about some of these changes without the leadership team being on board."

But, she adds, with so many other priorities crossing their desks, it can sometimes be hard to find a compelling reason to get started. "Often [the catalyst] is brought about through a burning platform - the business is struggling and you need to do something different. If you just want to future proof the organisation, it's harder because you don't have a major issue as a platform to raise it on."

Instead of creating a major issue, during her time at Lloyd's Banking Group Rudzinski developed a narrative to help the business understand the need for change and to get the whole organisation behind it.

She explains that her team articulated what they thought digitalisation would look like and got leadership backing. "The insurance industry isn't

well known for having a digital community so we set out in a very planned way, telling the story, bringing in the right talent and showcasing the individuals that we did bring in. We brought the rest of the corporation with us to understand that there was going to be a very different way of working. That explanation is absolutely critical. That creates the swell of people moving with you."

Clarity of purpose is essential and Zone's Employee Experience Associate Director, Lauren Coe, says: "We always start with setting the ambition. We want to bring in external challenges – what's happening in the market, what's happening in your business and what are your employees saying, what's your strategy and creating that ambitious statement around where you want to drive it.

"By doing that exercise, getting the leadership team to listen to some of the challenges happening externally, that shifts the mindset," she adds.

Take action

In order to deliver this aligned brand and experience, we truly believe that ownership should be embedded beyond a single team or function. However, business leaders will not pursue a new philosophy indefinitely if there is no concrete proof that they're heading in the right direction.

"There are always really positive people who are ready to get on board with a new initiative. But influence is really driven by results. People need to feel the change to believe the story," Rudzinski insists.

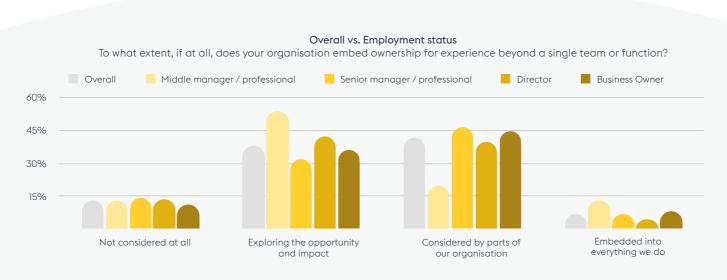
There's a clear argument for the 'show, don't tell' approach to changing company mindsets around EX. Coe reveals: "We did a direct engagement with a company's workforce and the leader saw some of the comments around the impact of a [traditional, inflexible] attitude towards return to office was going to have. We could have presented that data and talked him through it but it wouldn't have had the same impact as actually seeking and seeing verbatim comments. That really shifted his mindset and he did a complete 180."

GSK's Arangio advises: "Whenever you can, get people out of their heads. Slide decks and journey maps are all

great, but get them away from a situation that lets them ask 'Is this really a problem?' In particular, the senior people who hold the purse strings. Give them an experience. Get them to use the room booking tool, let the system crash, let them scream down the hallway for help. Then follow that up with data."

The organisations in our survey were slightly more mature in this area, with 41% agreeing that embedding cross-functional experience was considered by parts of their organisation: however there is still room for improvement to collaborate across the C-Suite and embed experience-led thinking into every decision.

Indeed, getting everyone across the organisation into 'hands-on' mode could be critical in making sure every tier of the business is as engaged with EX as necessary. According to our research, there is a significant discrepancy between layers of management as to how well embedded EX is across the business. While senior leaders and business owners believe EX is spreading beyond a single team or function (46% and 44% respectively, see Figure 3), middle managers state there is much lower spread (only 20%).



When breaking down our survey responses into individual roles, it was interesting to see that Commercial Directors felt strongly that EX was spreading across the business (67%), although none believed it was fully embedded, while the heads of CX and People Directors were much more ambivalent (58% and 53% were exploring the opportunity respectively).

Do directors with a close eye on revenues, having been told that positive EX = positive CX = revenue growth, assume the company's efforts are already bearing fruit? Maybe. But those closest to employees and customers, and therefore the teams having to implement strategies most closely, are not seeing as much integration as they'd like.

Possibly the corporate mindset is aligned with the idea of embedding EX but there is still a lot of work to be done in making that mindset a reality. Our survey creates as many questions as it answers, but this does clearly signpost areas where businesses need to move next. It's important to take any approach to improving EX beyond the hypothetical into action and that means investment. Every business, regardless of size, has to prioritise spend and like any other initiative, EX has to justify itself financially.

Our research showed that EX appears to be much more the preserve of 'big business', with companies turning over £500m or more demonstrating much more EX progress (see Figure 4). This begs the question, have we hit on an EX paradox? Does more money mean more resources to invest in EX, or does a more mature approach to EX generate larger profits? Either way, it's an opportunity to create a virtuous cycle.

But smaller firms need not feel excluded. Whatever the budget, if there is an appetite for progress, it can be made. With tangible, financial benefits to EX already proven (remember that 400% more profitable?), there is a clear argument to invest in EX.

Rudzinski advises: "Talk about it in terms of the impact on the bottom line. There are all sorts of research about how engaged colleagues are more productive and retention levels go up. There's all that anecdotal research but translating it to the bottom line and impact on the customer is looking at what the risks are associated with not doing it. The biggest salary isn't what's important to the next generation coming through, so how you attract and retain talent, the impact on your customer base and the reputation of your organisation creates quite a compelling argument."

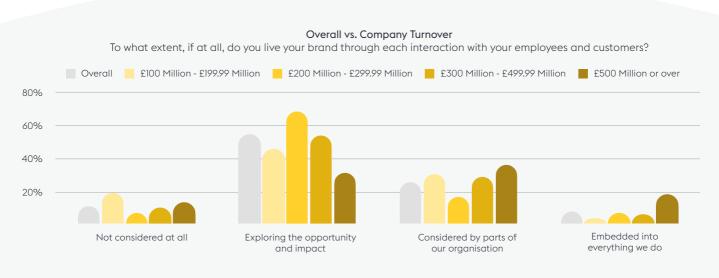


Figure 4



10 steps to setting effective EX mindsets

- 1. Demonstrate the desired behaviours
- 2. Find the face of EX and CX in the organisation who speaks the language of the C-Suite
- 3. Leadership buy-in is essential
- 4. Tell the story articulate what the end-result will look like
- 5. Understand your deficiencies research the internal market
- 6. Get out from behind a desk
- 7. Demonstrate don't just show results to reinforce buy-in
- 8. Don't declare what you're doing, just do it
- 9. Set out your ambitions
- 10. Instil mindset change/recalibration as an ongoing process



Find meaning in your method

The question of how to go about building exceptional employee experience begins with establishing the right principles.

Zone's Coe explains: "Right up front, one of the best ways is to use design principles and shifting towards a people-centric way of thinking. This creates a framework that empowers people to make their own decisions based on those principles. That creates simplicity but ensures consistency."

Critically, when embarking on a new project, or even a new philosophy, there can be a sense of entering uncharted waters and anxiety over whether the techniques used in other areas work and how much leaders will need to explore new ways of doing things.

Learn and flex

While the best EX is going to be embedded across the organisation, becoming part of its DNA, the tentative first steps can be a pilot. The ability to learn as you go, gain a new perspective and embed the flexibility to change course if needed are absolutely vital in the modern organisation. Coe advises creating an EX team that can break out of the day-to-day to explore and become the pioneers for the rest of the business.

"How can you offer experiences or services to the rest of the business, creating a kind of accelerator model?" she suggests. "Individuals or teams are immersed into a people-centric way of working and design thinking and develop these ideas with the psychological safety to experiment and then scale them out to parts of the business. You're building capability as you go."

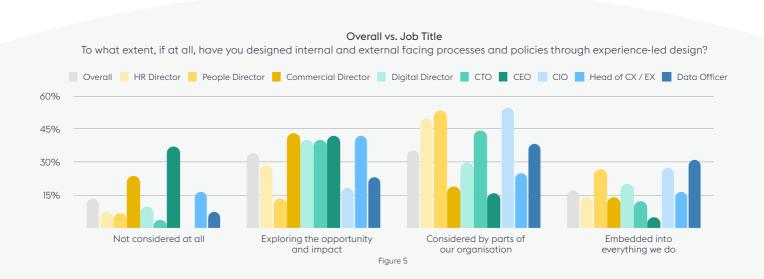
Lloyd's Rudzinski agrees: "The idea of a safe space to fail is a great one because if you give people permission to fail and go for it, leaders can support them in a very different way. Do regular check-ins and see what happens. So long as you do that within the confines of your appetite for risk then it's a great environment."

Rudzinski advocates a certain 'hands-off' approach from leadership. While the temptation may be to guide, this also has the potential to inadvertently stifle innovation: those lower in the hierarchy may become nervous about challenging the status quo. Instead of having to micromanage the team, by stepping back leaders don't just liberate their team's creativity, they help them develop new skills.

"You get a team that feels really empowered and a leader who says, 'I got 30% of my time back and nothing's gone horribly wrong as a result'. It's experiential learning and building capability in tandem. That's really powerful," she adds.

Especially in pilot mode, there is a sense that taking a wrong turn is part of the process, and the stakes are not too high to try.

"With a lot of change agendas, we have in the past built huge change programmes with a master plan and if anything goes wrong, whose neck is on the line? If it's okay to try something and fail it creates a completely different atmosphere and really starts to shift some of the culture," Rudzinski insists.



Break out of siloes

Once again, when we delved into what companies are actually doing when it comes to designing EX processes, we found large disparities across organisations. Those involved in data, technology

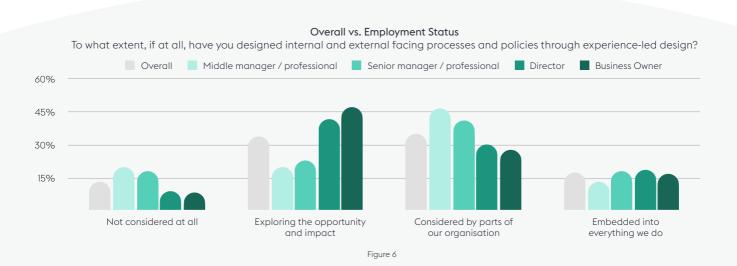
and people management felt there was deeper business involvement in experienceled design than those in commercial or digital roles (see Figure 5). Interestingly given their titles, the heads of CX or EX were more likely to be only exploring experience-led design (42%), but these also tend to be newer roles. It is probable that the responsibility for creating EX processes typically fell to those in either employee-facing disciplines, or operations such as CIO or Data Officers.

Alarmingly, there was a strong response from CEOs where 37% had not considered designing processes at all – a full 13 percentage points adrift of the next highest respondents, the Commercial Directors.

You might argue that, at C-Suite level, the nuts and bolts of developing an EX strategy would not garner

much visibility but, as we've seen, to change mindsets and allow teams to operate with the freedom to experiment, there must be overt leadership buy-in.

When the roles are grouped by seniority, we can see this even more clearly. It is obvious in Figure 6 that the managers on the ground are working on developing experience-led design (47% of middle managers state it's considered vs 28% of business owners), but directors and owners have much lower overall experience of the process (42% and 47% are only exploring vs 20% of middle managers).



Those businesses mature in their thinking understand how collaborating across the organisation to design experience-led processes and policies will improve their overall experience maturity. In a recent interview, the new European CHRO for PepsiCo stated that in her new role she needed to build a strong focus on collaboration "ensuring we are aligning our people priorities to our overall sector and businesses strategy, that we enable our people to transform while we

perform, managing critical changes including embedding sustainability across our business, harnessing digitalisation and becoming an even more diverse and inclusive company".

Even if CEOs believe they don't need to get into the detail of experience-led design in terms of day-to-day execution, they must demonstrate an interest and be actively engaged in its progress.



Guiding principles for experimentation

What is important, whatever the scale of the project, is that the team does feel supported and has a structure to operate within.

5 methods to embed successful employee experience

- 1. Build a framework of actions to simplify but provide consistency
- 2. Create principles people can use to make their own decisions
- 3. Use an 'accelerator hub' model to experiment and scale
- 4. Build a safe space to fail but build guardrails or guiding principles
- 5. Follow S.E.A.M











Sponsorship

E Empathy

Λmk

M

Ambition Measurement

Arangio says this is the point where leadership moves from dictating to guiding: "It might be hands-on support, guiding people through a process then dialling that back to be more coaching. I'm a huge fan of guiding principles – if you want to experiment, these are the few things you need to keep in mind."

She points to the mnemonic S.E.A.M. to help structure the process.

"Sponsorship is the first – people who get what you're trying to do and will go to bat for you. Empathy is huge – you have to build empathy anywhere and everywhere. There are so many things in the toolkit for this and they're not hard to do – employer research,

focus groups, surveys – whatever is in your bag of tricks, use it to build empathy everywhere you go.

"Then ambition. Making sure all the key players have a representative voice and have clarity on ambition. And finally, measurement. You get what you measure, and measurement drives focus."

Indeed, visualising the destination before setting out on the journey minimises unnecessary detours. Creating a measurement framework doesn't just help define success for the rest of the business, it creates targets and helps build a sense of achievement when important waypoints are reached.



Measurement that leads to success

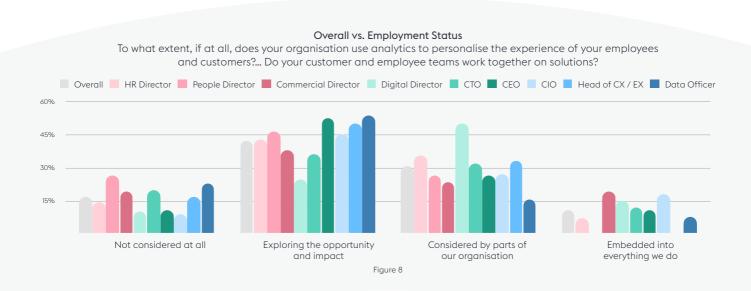
There cannot be a business operating today that isn't aware of the need to measure and understand what success looks like. Indeed, since the advent of digital, it is possible to measure what customers are doing to the very last click. But can the same be said of the internal experience?

Build a joined-up picture of the internal customer



The research suggests that businesses have a good awareness of what it means to use analytics to personalise experiences of both employees and

customers although, once again, lower-level roles exhibit a degree of scepticism as to how well data is used across the business (see Figure 7).



Interestingly, when you dive into individual department views on the subject, Data Officers are much less bullish about their prospects than Digital Directors

(see Figure 8). This may be because each role has a different expectation of what analytics can deliver.

The second part of the survey question could be revelatory – 'do your customer and employee teams work together?' Anecdotally, we might well expect a company's Data Officer to be painfully aware of the siloes that prevent a 'joined-up view' of strategy. However, Digital Directors have been working towards omnichannel CX for some time and have more experience of working with their internal partners to present a consistent experience to customers.

This will naturally lead to more internal collaboration and to their responding in the way noted above.

Much has been written about the challenges companies face from a tech stack perspective in terms of joining up systems to get a view of the customer and their needs. This may not necessarily be the case when it comes to understanding the depth and breadth of EX.



Move beyond a tick-box exercise

"The traditional survey is the start of it. Articulate what your aim is, what the strategy is and then build a set of questions that are tailored," Rudzinski explains. "We go out with surveys at least annually and at a local level more frequently. I think some organisations have got to a different level of maturity and do it more frequently."

Of course, the survey has to be more than a tick-box exercise, in every sense of the word. Developing EX means getting to the heart of employees' issues and these can't always be revealed by a simple questionnaire.

Rudzinski reveals the range of fact-finding at Lloyd's: "There are a lot of opportunities for people to write

down comments and we spend a lot of time in employee listening sessions. There are a number of qualitative and quantitative things that we do. And sometimes, you will get things that just don't tell you the answer. It might be unique to a particular group and then we just have to have the dialogue and say, 'we have a confusing set of results, what could that mean?'"

Appreciating the variety of measurement tools you can use to understand and develop EX can be baffling. But, just as a company would with its customers, it helps to see the wider picture, gaining both individual and wider market insight for context.

When it came to understanding how employees would react to its return-to-work policy, GSK sought to take the temperature both of its internal stakeholders as well as people's attitudes in general.

"When we think about optimising the return to office experience, that's a play our global support functions are making. We started by doing a lot of external research into what will drive business value.

Then we said, 'let's pause'. We went to our people and asked them what matters most. What would they like to get out of our spaces," Arangio reveals.

"We thought people were going to come back saying we want virtual reality. That's not what our people were asking for. Ask the people who are going to be impacted and respect what they say."



Becoming a truly experience-led organisation

As with all other areas of EX and CX maturity, most organisations (43%) are stuck in exploring how to align the metrics through which they reward and recognise their people with the desired experiences they are trying to achieve with their employees and customers.

For many businesses the translation between the experience they are trying to achieve and how this relates to how their employees are rewarded and recognised has been lost. For example, many organisations will have culture and value statements focussed on collaboration, integrity and diversity and yet, when it comes to rewards and recognition, the main category used to determine the performance of an individual is based on business financial performance and an individual's contribution to that.

It is interesting to see that the Retail sector is behind other organisations in the industry in agreeing that aligning reward and recognition metrics against the desired experience for employees and customers is not considered at all (12%) or they are exploring the opportunity (60%).

This is an industry that you would expect to be mature in experience-led behaviours; however, for many, that development from being customer-focused to experience-focused has not yet translated to their business metrics. CPG are outperforming other industries in this area, with 46% of respondents stating it is considered by parts of their organisation and 15% stating it is embedded into everything they do (see Figure 9).

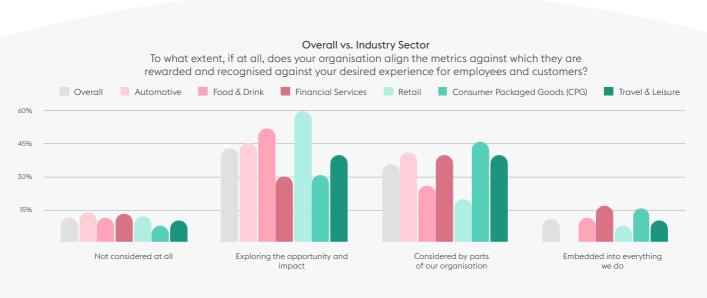


Figure 9

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to setting out your metrics. The metrics used to reward and recognise individuals should be directly linked back to your ambition and your mindset. You need to remain true to your brand and purpose, not only in how you live your culture through experiences but also in the measures and benefits you offer to your employees.

This bespoke approach to finding out how best to measure CX and EX is an important exercise. Coe warns: "There's not necessarily a set of metrics because every challenge and organisation is slightly different. Going back to, what are you trying to achieve and what have you heard from your employees, how have you used that information?"

The reason most organisations get stuck at the exploring phase is that although they understand the need for living their brand and purpose through everyday interactions, they are struggling to turn this

into tangible actions and outcomes, particularly when it comes to rewards and recognition.

When designing your desired experience, it is not only important to identify what it feels like at the key Moments that Matter for each of your employees, and your workforce ecosystem as a whole, but also to design the enablers of living this experience.

For many, this will start with technology solutions and changes in processes but only when you consider the behaviours and expected outcomes of individuals within your different teams will push your organisation along the maturity curve. In order to mature and embed experience into everything they do, organisations must then define the expected measures of these behaviours and their impact. By undertaking this exercise, organisations can easily translate their experience, brand and purpose into how they reward and recognise their people.



In our recent survey, HR & People Directors stand out for their above-average belief that their company metrics do not align with desired employee and customer experiences today, with 55% between the roles stating that they are currently exploring this concept and a further 11% stating it is not considered

at all. These roles should feel empowered to challenge the business on organisation metrics and advise how they can live their desired experiences by how they reward and recognise their people (see Figure 10).

Overall vs. Industry Sector To what extent, if at all, does your organisation align the metrics against which they are rewarded and recognised against your desired experience for employees and customers? Overall HR Director People Director Commercial Director Digital Director CTO CEO CIO Head of CX / EX Data Officer Data Officer Not considered at all Exploring the opportunity and impact Considered by parts of our organisation everything we do

Figure 10

One organisation famous for living their purpose through all employee and customer decisions and metrics is Patagonia. Dean Carter, VP of HR, Legal & Finance at Patagonia, states that: "If you have a value, and you truly believe that is a value of the company then you better support it ridiculously. And if you don't have a way to support it ridiculously through an HR policy, a programme, a benefit, a reward, I question if it is a value."

To truly live your brand and purpose through all your day-to-day experiences with your employees and customers, organisations must look at employee experience as a true cultural and behavioural transformation. And this is not a one-time project but a continuous exercise in which you place your big bets

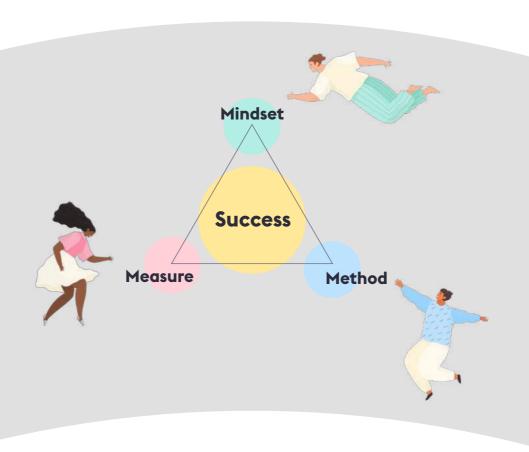
alongside small behavioural nudges, with your organisational metrics forming a key part of these.

You can communicate your culture to your employees all day long, however, if your organisational and individual metrics do not reflect this, you will never embed those behavioural changes that you need to become an experience-led organisation. Behavioural change will only become embedded through intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and rewards. This is backed up by the stats: in a survey by Achievers in 2020, they found that approximately 92% of workers said that when they're recognised for specific tasks, they're more likely to do them again in the future.

Conclusion

In both our exclusive survey, and in conversation with business leaders, it is clear there is an overall understanding of the importance of enhancing employee experience to benefit business performance. But while senior executives appear to understand the link between improved EX and a subsequent rise in CX and revenues, it would appear it has not yet moved beyond exploring the opportunity.

In order to mature to embedding experience in everything an organisation does, they need to consider the three pillars of mindset, methods and measures in their approach – each is reliant on the other to drive the cultural and behavioural shift required to become an experience-led business.



Experience is a cross-functional accountability, with every individual and level in the organisation responsible for delivering the desired customer and employee experience. As we have seen with the great resignation, employees are expecting that their individual experiences are supported and recognised at every interaction, and therefore sole responsibility cannot sit with HR. Instead, organisations should design and embed experience as a joint effort across all functions to combine their culture, digital and physical experiences into a single experience ambition and mindset.

By embedding experience throughout the organisation, businesses will not only benefit from attraction, retention and development of key talent but also drive key business benefits, including twice the customer satisfaction, four times the profitability and 20% higher productivity. With Forrester claiming that "2022 Will Go Down As The Year Executives Were Forced To Care About Employee Experience" now is the time to act..

By following some of the advice the leaders quoted in this report offer, organisations will have the tools they need to start progressing their EX strategy to the next level. To find out more about how you can implement a more developed EX/CX strategy and support your organisation, please contact Sarah Hackett at sarah.hackett@zonedigital.com



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- Research conducted online by CensusWide with 150 decision-makers including Commercial, HR and Digital Directors, CTO, CEO and CIO in the period October 28th, 2021 - November 1st, 2021
- https://www.hrgrapevine.com/content/article/2021-11-18-how-pepsicos-new-hr-chief-is-reimagining-employee-experience
- ${\tt 3} \quad \textit{https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-connect/ways-patagonia-built-ridiculous-culture}$
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