



Why Employee Commitment, Not Just Engagement, Is Today's More Progressive Approach To Improving Employee Experience

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The concept of employee engagement has been the default approach to employee experience (EX) for close to 40 years, and its strengths and challenges have become especially pertinent in this age of The Great Resignation. Many brands, especially those that had insufficiently invested in employee support and contribution during the pandemic, are now scrambling to develop policies and programs aimed squarely at addressing employee needs so that they don't fall victim to the unprecedented churn transforming the job landscape.

These policies and programs, and the drive to update them, are conventionally seen as the apex of employee experience creation. The reality, however, is that there is another, much more contemporary and action-centered EX concept that every enterprise should embrace as its focus for achieving Experience Improvement (XI) for its employees. That concept is employee commitment, and it's a paradigm shift in how organizations have to address employee needs and wants. Here, I'll describe not only how significantly

employee commitment differs from engagement, but also why it's essential for your organization to embrace a commitment mindset if your objective is to create meaningful human connection and role contribution with employees.

DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As introduced above, employee engagement is principally a set of policy-focused processes. The brands and EX teams dedicated to developing and executing employee engagement see their responsibilities as building programs that a) listen to employees, b) gather feedback, and c) distill actionable insights and develop initiatives from all that data. The overarching goal of engagement, then, is simply to meet foundational employee job needs.

Other factors that set engagement apart from employee commitment include hard and soft costs. Many organizations measure engagement solely in monetary

terms. The hard numbers are certainly important, and there is some evidence (though inconsistent) that engagement measures impact business outcomes. That said, reducing employees to a set of numbers is one of engagement's key drawbacks, and engagement has largely failed to stem the flow and rate of employee churn. It also falls short of what companies can attain (culturally and operationally) with employee commitment.

DEFINING EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Whereas employee engagement's boundaries are derived by its focus on numbers and its more reactive conceptual philosophy, employee commitment is more holistic and progressive. Rather than dealing with employee performance improvement as policy modification, commitment is about driving supportive enterprise culture through transparency,

trust, and communication. It recognizes the need for employees to have an emotional connection to the organization and its purpose, not just general job satisfaction. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, commitment encourages organizations to demonstrate how (and how effectively) all employees, not just those who are customer-facing, impact customers' behavior and help forge meaningful relationships wherever customer and company intersect.

At this point, it's important to communicate that employees have sought this exact cultural and organizational dynamic for quite some time. The Covid-19 pandemic did not precipitate The Great Resignation—it merely accelerated employees' desire for roles and employer cultures built on deeper connection and meaning. And, as we're seeing with the current, unprecedented churn, it's clear that far too many brands failed to adequately support and encourage commitment (let alone invest in even basic employee engagement). This is why it's all the more urgent and imperative that organizations transition to commitment, building beyond engagement in their core employee experience strategy.

Employee commitment is, indeed, a more progressive and actionable EX construct.





WHY EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT MATTERS SO MUCH

A fundamental reason brands need to pursue employee commitment rather than just engagement is that building trust, connections, and relationships drives much more value for both employees and customers. Committed employees are seen as contributory assets, which facilitates pride and a sense of ownership that enables them to see how their performance is directly benefiting both themselves and their employer. This is a well-proven philosophy that can be embraced

throughout a company rather than stay siloed in any one group or department.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, commitment is about seeing employees as stakeholders and collaborators instead of just necessary costs of doing business. That differentiation goes a long way toward driving behavior which, in turn, catalyzes both retention and an array of other positive business outcomes.

Organizations that can achieve and sustain employee commitment will benefit not only from improved overall performance and business outcomes, but also from a more stakeholder-centric culture and

processes. Employees will return the favor of this transition with greater contribution, greater ongoing value creation, and a much more honed customer focus. Above all, remember to view employees as stakeholders and collaborators in this process instead of just a cost. They'll appreciate that distinction.

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