REVIEW ARTICLE

Relevance of the Employee's Experience in the Achievement of Organizational Goals

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to examine six models of employee experience as proposed by various authors and members of world-renowned consulting agencies, to specify the dimensions and practices related to each model as part of human resource management, and to find their relevance for the achievement of organizational objectives. The results of the literature review, carried out by searching for scientific papers on Scopus, revealed which models are most commonly referenced by other researchers, and made it possible to study the schemes proposed in more detail, as well as finding out the relevance of employee experience in the improvement of key indicators such as commitment, innovation, and performance. The study concluded that organizations need to create a more empathic and significant connection with their employees, in such a way that the effort and investment made is not only focused on their clients' desires, expectations and needs, but also on the employees', to design an organization based on experience and generate strong employee involvement in the achievement of organizational objectives.

Keywords: employee experience; organizational design; human resource management; organizational objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, organizations have realized that it is necessary to reconsider how they relate to their workers because the traditional model, which was focused on generating results through classical strategies only based on compensation or training schemes, needs to be adapted due to the increase in the multi-generational population currently employed in organizations. It is therefore necessary to increase workers' involvement and co-design experience that add value and meaning to the work they perform.

Employee experience has emerged as a need and a response to this organizational change dating from the last few years, where workers' voices have gained greater relevance and impact, requiring a work environment that addresses their individual requirements. For this reason, several authors and consulting agencies have developed their own experiential models, considering dimensions and practices that project what is known as employee experience; this is to say, the realization that employee expectations, desires and needs should be addressed through the actions and strategies used by the organization. All of this is part of an orientation to design and build an experiential organization focused on goal achievement thanks to its employees as a key element. In organizations which have previously adopted this approach, the results of designing a coherent and significant employee experience have been favorable according to various studies. Not only have there been improvements in job satisfaction, commitment and well-being, but client satisfaction, service quality, innovation, market positioning, profitability and other aspects have also experienced improvements. These aspects are closely related to achieving organizational objectives.

This article, apart from bridging the gap in the information currently available in Spanish about employee experience, also intends to call for researchers to review and analyze more recent schemes and/or models, and evaluate the importance of experiential practices in the achievement of organizational objectives in local and international companies.

PURPOSE

The aim of this review article is to introduce the main *employee experience* models proposed by members of consulting agencies, such as Mazor *et al.* (2017) from Deloitte; Nelson and Doman (2017) from Kennedy Fitch; and Liley *et al.* (2017) from Accenture Strategy, apart from the authors of reports and books on employee experience such as Lesser *et al.* (2016); Maylett and Write (2017), and Morgan (2017), aimed at better understanding this experiential approach which places the employee at the center, as well as learning relevant practices which positively influence the improvement of certain key indicators which finally lead to the achievement of organizational objectives.

ARGUMENTATIVE REVIEW

To prepare this article, which deals with the importance of *employee experience* to achieve organizational objectives, it is useful to review models which continue to be investigated in several studies and reference the organizations which decide to apply them.

The authors who have approached employee experience from various viewpoints and compositions agree that these experiences designed and focused on employees do not only generate an impact at the individual level by providing them with a greater sense of belonging, commitment, identity, well-being and others, but they also generate an impact at a macro level because they foster a workplace environment where employees and the organization are in complete harmony and agreement due to the fact that employee expectations coincide with their actual experience at work, especially when experiences are co-designed. When this continuous and growing link between both parties is demonstrated, the achievement of goals and objectives is only the result of applying this approach.

The definitions of employee experience coincide in that it is the sum of experiences of an employee throughout their working term at the organization, starting from the first contact, induction and even off-boarding (Wride, 2016; Bersin *et al.,* 2017; Plaskoff, 2017; Raia, 2017; Ludike, 2018). Both the organization and its employees must work together to create customized

and unique experiences that are significant and favor individual, team and organizational performance (Dhingra *et al.* 2018). It is also necessary that these experiences happen more than once, and that they are improved over time through feedback and continuous monitoring (Bersin *et al.* 2017).

For this review article, six model and/or scheme proposals on employee experience have been selected and analyzed. These models are not necessarily dimensioned and structured in a similar way. However, they have been referenced in various international articles, following the results obtained from searching *employee experience* as a key word on the Scopus database.

Firstly, the work of Mazor *et al.* (2017) is considered, based on the Simply Irresistible Organization model proposed years before by Bersin (2015), from the same consulting agency. They identified that the *employee experience*, which offers *moments that matter* through the interactions between employees and the organization, includes the following components:

- **Meaningful Work.** This requires work to fit the individual selected for a task, a sense of relevance in the activities performed, and having the necessary tools, autonomy and empowerment through small teams, allowing decision-making. This dimension even includes time to slack in order to prevent burnout syndrome and promote a certain degree of individual freedom.

- **Support Management.** It involves the management practices of leaders to guide, support, and direct their teams, determining and communicating clear and transparent goals, training teams through coaching, and investing in the development of managers, leading to an agile performance management of their teams.

- **Positive Work Environment.** This means that the workplace is not only flexible, but also humanistic, and a place where employees are thanked and congratulated. This is accompanied by actions that create a culture of recognition and promote a fair, inclusive and diverse work environment which is

replicated by all levels of the organization, from the leadership to first-line employees.

- **Growth Opportunity**. It involves training and support on the job, as well as talent mobility, which makes it possible to generate dynamic, self-directed learning environments. Such opportunities encourage a high-impact learning culture where employees feel satisfied and rewarded for their growth and progress within the organization.

- **Trust in leadership.** It conveys the message that leaders should communicate the organization's purpose strongly, be transparent and open, demonstrate continuous investment in their team members, and inspire them through their words and actions. These actions generate a sense of identity, trust, and commitment among employees toward their leaders and the organization.

The authors recommend that, apart from considering the above-mentioned dimensions, it is necessary to first gather employees' comments and sentiments in order to design and/or adjust the department practices and, subsequently, according to this feedback, identify the factors that hinder the successful application of an employee experience strategy so that these can be addressed more closely.

Secondly, the model proposed by Nelson and Doman (2017) states that, even though many organizations claim that employee experience is important, only 6% reported signs of significant progress. Even so, the organizations interviewed stated that it was important for them to build an employee experience strategy because they believed that it would lead to higher commitment, innovation and productivity levels that, in turn, would translate into the creation of a competitive advantage, larger growth, and a greater business profitability. Therefore, the authors believe that, to create an employee-centered organization through design thinking, apart from a mindset change, active listening and insight analysis, it is necessary to follow the steps below:

- **Using multi-channel listening.** It means to pay attention and observe employees through different means, including sur-

veys, focus groups, hackathons or interviews, simultaneously and using digital tools to map the largest number of activities and interactions between employees and the organization.

- **Identifying holistic journeys.** They are the key moments identified by the organization when the employee experiences a journey on the job; reports are created detailing these events throughout the employee's journey.

- **Listening for emotion.** This involves learning about the employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction at the touchpoints in order to understand the emotions, and strengthen or eliminate experiences as required.

- **Creating personae.** It is a technique commonly used in marketing which helps organizations represent their target audiences, in this case their employees, through fictional personae and thus learn about their concerns, needs, desires, motivations, among others.

- **Designing experiences.** While defining the personae, the journey experiences are designed in accordance with the information gathered, thereby creating ideal and meaningful experiences.

- **Testing and prototyping.** Based on leadership support, it is advisable to identify areas where it is possible to apply and test the experiential model in order to obtain feedback and continue improving and developing it.

- **Launch the digital people strategy.** Experts recommend linking the employee experience model to digital tools in order to improve, customize and automatize the experience.

For Nelson and Doman (2017), the employee experience is a design process with predefined steps which should be followed and adapted in accordance with the interests and needs of each organization. Conversely, Mazor *et al.* (2017) and Bersin (2015) do define a more solid experiential model, including specific and mutually aligned dimensions and specific practices.

Thirdly, the work of Liley *et al.* (2017) is considered. They claim that there is parallelism between customer experience and employee experience because both are focused on retaining, generating loyalty, and creating an impact on the business results. To create an employee experience that inspires employees to perform at the best of their ability, there are three requirements. First is hyperpersonalization, which should become a distinctive element of the strategy and helps segment employees according to specific experiences. The second is investing in technology to generate the desired experiences through simple, easy and intuitive processes. The third is placing emphasis on the moments that matter, as Mazor *et al.* (2017) sustained, because these moments do not always occur at certain milestones of the work cycle; instead, they vary and are affected by both internal and external factors.

The new employee experience paradigm, apart from considering the above-mentioned aspects, comprises three dimensions: physical experiences, related to the work environment; human experiences, linked to interactions with fellow employees; and digital experiences, linked to the way in which employees carry out their work. In addition, the authors confirm the advantages of co-creating and designing the experiences, not supposing and/or generalizing, and staying in contact with employees to reinvent the employee experience. All of this, in addition to the customer experience strategies, translates into higher return on investment (ROI) levels.

The fourth proposal to consider is that of Lesser *et al.* (2016), members of the IBM Institute for Business Value. They argue that employee's experiences result from a close connection involving three main spheres: the social sphere, which includes the interactions between employees within the work setting; the physical sphere, which refers to the interactions between employees and the tangible environment; and the work sphere, which consists of the interactions between employees and their assigned tasks. The interaction between the three spheres results in the six facets of employee experience:

- **Community.** Related to the interaction between employees and other members of the organization, considering that individuals are social beings and their perceptions of the organization can be influenced to some extent.

- **Physical workspace.** It involves designing and furnishing both individual and group workspaces, in such a way that these spaces provide flexibility and tranquility to favor concentration and innovation.

- **Environment.** Apart from the design and furniture configuration for workspaces, it is necessary to also consider environmental factors such as temperature, noise, lighting and ventilation because it has been found that these factors affect employee productivity.

- **Tools.** Due to the advancement of technology and its integration into the work environment, several tools have been developed and designed to adapt to the organization's changes and needs, and to facilitate the inclusion of employees with auditory, visual or mobility impairments.

- **Activities.** It focuses on purpose, where there is a relationship between the position, department and organization objectives. In this structure, where activities fit with a higher purpose, employees find greater meaning in their work.

- **Social platforms.** These are particularly linked to the internal platforms that connect employees and help share relevant and clear information on various issues relevant to the organization.

In addition, the authors state that there is a battle for conquering the hearts and minds of employees through the experiences they live within the organization. For this reason, they argue that experiences should not only be personalized, more transparent and simpler, but also authentic and memorable, so that they enjoy the employee experience in relation to commitment, potential development, and individual and collective productivity.

The fifth proposal to consider is that of Maylett and Wride (2017), who claim that companies such as Airbnb—one of the first to create the position of Global Head of Employee Experience—validate the importance of this issue in the business context, because they believe that the employee experience can inspire people to do great things. This is similar to what *Liley et al.* (2017) mention: employees will provide clients with an experience that matches their own experience in the organization, so these should be congruent. According to the authors, there are three contracts inherent to the employee experience, which determine its quality:

- **Brand Contract.** This is how the organization is viewed publicly, and consists of the promises that the brand identity makes to other people about what it represents and its Employee Value Proposition (EVP). This contract plays a key role because it determines the capacity to attract talent to the organization by influencing the expectations of individuals even before they join. It can also strengthen commitment, loyalty, and corporate reputation.

- **Transactional Contract.** It defines the basic terms of a mutually accepted, reciprocal and clear agreement between two or more parties. In other words, this contract provides a structure that regulates the expectations of employees and aligns them to what was previously defined between the organization and the employee as being part of their work.

- **Psychological Contract.** It is the set of implicit and unwritten expectations that greatly determine the terms of exchange in a work relationship, and define the level of employee commitment depending on whether they comply with and respect it.

In addition, the authors stress that these contracts are put to the test in the moments of truth (MOT)—whether predictable or not—because, if they support and reinforce what is established in these contracts, it means that there is alignment between employee expectations and the image projected by the organization. Otherwise, there is a violation of trust, and it is advisable to admit the mistake, offer apologies, and seek an immediate solution. For the authors, employee experience not only favors

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employee retention and satisfaction, but also influences the profitability and growth of the organization, and a factor that they consider vital for the success and sustainability of the company: commitment.

Finally, the sixth proposal examined is that of Morgan (2017), one of the main reference authors on the topic, states that employee experience focuses on culture, technology, and space because employees believe that their own experience is what working in the organization actually involves. If the employee's experience matches their expectations, employee experience comes to happen. To define the employee experience model, the author interviewed over 150 leaders from organizations around the world, and reviewed more than 150 research articles on the topic, apart from reports, publications, rankings, and other relevant documents which helped consolidate one of the most commonly studied models of employee experience. This model, like that of *Lesser et al.* (2016), comprises three environments:

- **Physical Environment.** It includes the space where employees work, and the tools and furniture they have at their disposal. According to the author, the physical environment should offer flexibility, reflect the organization's values, leverage multiple workspace options, and provide the opportunity to bring in friends or visitors to work. These characteristics are known as COOL, and are aligned to the idea that, if the workspace meets those requirements, employees will feel proud, excited, and connected with their workplace. For this reason, they will want to share it and show it to others.

- **Technological Environment.** It involves regarding technology not as threat, but as a tool that makes it possible to communicate, collaborate, and perform work-related activities more easily, quickly, and efficiently. This environment should ensure that technology is available to everyone, is able to shift from enterprise grade technology to consumer grade technology, and align the needs of employees with those of the organization—this is to say, to reach a consensus between what is requested by the talent management department and the proposals

of the IT department. These characteristics are what the author refers to as ACE.

- **Cultural Environment.** It involves something different from the two previous environments because culture cannot be touched or seen, but it can be felt. Culture determines how employees are treated, the creation of products and services, and even how the work is done. According to the author, ten attributes make up a CELEBRATED culture, which means the following: the organization is viewed positively; employees feel valued; there is a purpose and a sense of being part of a team; diversity, inclusion and fair treatment are encouraged; there is constant learning; training and growth are encouraged; and health and well-being are prioritized.

This model is one of the most widely studied ones because of the importance of its components and attributes to constitute what the author calls experiential organizations: those which have undergone redesign to provide experiences through the three environments. In his book, the author does not aim to provide all the answers, but he does believe that he gathered valuable ideas on what employee experience is, why it is crucial to implement it, and how to design experiences to build an organization where individuals want to be.

Based on the proposals presented above, one can note that experience design involves efforts to align, motivate, and accompany employees during the work cycle. Indeed, to achieve employee engagement and real participation, it is necessary to know their expectations, design moments that truly matter, and test these experiences to finally achieve their implementation across the organization.

CONCLUSIONS

This review article described and analyzed six models and/or schemes devised by various authors in regard to employee experience, leading to the realization that the experience should not only focus on the external client but also on the internal client: employees. Therefore, it is vital to learn their expectations, needs and desires before implementing an experiential approach that considers the option of co-creating

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and co-designing these experiences to improve employee engagement and participation.

Firstly, we can conclude that, on the basis of the results and according to research by the MIT Sloan School of Management on the design of a coherent and meaningful employee experience, there have been positive results in the organizations which have already opted for this approach, regardless of the model adopted: improvements in job satisfaction, innovation, and commitment. There are also improvements in customer satisfaction, service quality, market positioning, and profitability—aspects which are strongly linked to the achievement of organizational objectives (Mason and Sardone 2020).

Secondly, it can be inferred that digital transformation should be oriented not only to digitalizing processes and reducing times and costs, but also to helping build more human, transparent, and real connections where the company mission, vision, and values are noticeable in the behavior of leaders and their teams; to providing support to employees when they need it; to clearly communicating the importance of each employee role; and other actions that help see employees as human beings who have a purpose, learn, and experiment on a daily basis.

Finally, it can be inferred that talent management professionals need to understand the importance of employee experience at organizational level, and consider employee viewpoints so that, in collaboration with the leaders, they design experiences aligned with the organizational strategy and the construction of an experiential organization; these experiences should be enriching, welcoming and empathic with employees by means of practices aimed at promoting professional development, recognition, life-work balance, the sense of belonging, among others.

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Competing interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' Contribution

Joyce Marivi Cueva Talledo (lead author): Conceptualization, research, supervision, writing (original draft, review and editing).