EBOOK

How to map the employee journey

What is the employee journey?

While the concept of mapping the employee journey may be relatively new, companies have been mapping *customer* journeys for a long time. There are lessons you can learn from that.

Digital analyst Brian Solis describes the customer experience as "emotional reactions to moments." These moments can be described in terms of touchpoints (e.g. when customers first hear of the brand or when they first touch the product). All the touchpoints in their totality reflect the customer's experience with a product, brand, or company.

Employees experience a similar journey. Collectively, **the employee journey is everything a worker experiences, sees, and feels during their tenure at a company.**

Why is the employee journey important?

The idea of mapping an employee's journey in a company is becoming more and more important. That's because the exercise can improve the employee experience—and an improved employee experience, in aggregate across a whole company, has real business value.

If employees have a healthy and vibrant experience at the company, they will likely be engaged. Engaged employees expend discretionary effort; in other words, they do more than just the bare minimum required to keep their jobs. When all (or at least most) employees are giving discretionary effort, companies typically benefit from greater profitability and less turnover.

Speaking of turnover, according to the 2020 Talent Optimization Report, it's a common problem. In fact, the average turnover rate of high-performers is 47%! Employee journey mapping opens the senior team's eyes to exactly what levers they can pull—and at what moments—to provide the best possible employee experience … one that boosts engagement and retention.

5 mindsets needed for employee journey mapping

1. Facilitative:

When leaders embark on employee journey mapping, they must take on the mindset of a facilitator. No matter how knowledgeable a leader is about the company, the employees, or best practices, they must *not* act as a subject matter expert. For employee journey mapping they must be a process expert. They will use the employee journey map as a framework they will facilitate but not dictate.

2. Collaborative:

Employee journey mapping is not meant to be a solitary activity informed by just a single perspective. It requires multiple perspectives. Leaders need to invite other people at different layers and functions within a company.

3. Human-centered:

In the world of product design, the design must begin with the user's needs and desires in mind. This is what has led to the discipline of user experience. In the same way, employee journey mapping needs to be informed by the needs, desires, and perspectives of the employee to deliver the optimum employee experience.

4. Emergent:

As leadership coach and author Marshall Goldsmith wrote, "what got you here won't here won't get you there." The best practices of the past won't carry us well into a present and future that are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Therefore, employee journey mapping outcomes cannot be dictated based on past best practices. The words 'trust the process' need to be embraced. The answers will *emerge* from the process.

5. Persona-based:

Developing employee personas can be really helpful, if not necessary, exercise in mapping the employee journey. When developing employee personas, here some things to consider:

1. **Name:** Use a realistic name for your personas *E.g. Marcy the Marketing Manager*.

2. **Description:** Descriptions should be based on interviews and conversations with employees, not your own idea of what they want or need. *E.g., Marcy is an ambitious achiever who's looking for opportunities to ascend the corporate ladder*.

3. **Quote:** Quotes should capture a sense of who they are. *E.g. "I want to eventually become a CMO, but I don't know who I can turn to for guidance."*

4. **Picture:** Add a visual depiction of your employee persona. A stock photo works well.

5. **Details:** Include details like age, location, and job profile. *E.g., Marcy is a 29-year-old marketing manager in the Raleigh, NC office. She has a marketing degree from the UNC. She worked at another firm for four years prior to joining us. She's been with us for the last two years, first as a marketing coordinator and now as a marketing manager.*

6. **Motivations:** What motivates the persona? What are their latent needs and desires? What is their point of view? *E.g., Marcy is self-driven and motivated to accomplish goals. She prefers public recognition in addition to monetary rewards for a job well done.*

7. **Goals:** What is the persona trying to accomplish? *E.g., Marcy wants to become CMO. She sees every project as a stepping stone to her next promotion.*

8. **Behaviors:** How do they communicate? What frustrates them? *E.g. Marcy is focused on getting results. She has a hard time delegating tasks because she feels that no one can do it as well as she can.*

Once you have completed several employee personas, you can take each persona through the journey mapping exercise.

Mapping the employee journey

Using the two templates

Use the two templates included in this toolkit, along with the following instructions, to lead your team through the exercise of mapping employee journeys for each of your employee personas. You'll be mapping the **present state of each persona**—not the aspirational state. This exercise requires courage and vulnerability to embrace the current realities of your workplace.

The **Employee Persona Template** is self-explanatory. The **Employee Journey Map Template** is a bit more complex. Below are instructions to help you. Print the Employee Journey Map Template on legal paper so it's one horizontal document.

Emotional status

The first part of the Employer Journey Map Template is where you'll chart the emotional status of your persona. The chart maps on the vertical access from -10 (this is the most negative emotion), to zero (this is a neutral emotional state) to +10 (this is the most positive emotion). Here you can either draw a dot or place a sticker dot to chart the emotion of your persona.

For example, at the employer brand journey step, Marcy's emotion may be charted as a +7 because she's really excited to work for your company. She has long admired your brand. However, at the recruiting stage journey step, she may chart at a -5 because it took three months before anyone responded to her job application. She was very anxious throughout the process due to a lack of communication and follow-up.

Sometimes it's visually helpful to color code the dots on the chart. A red dot (negative emotions) might be used for numbers between -10 and -4, a yellow dot (neutral emotions) between -3 and +3, and a green dot (positive emotions) between +4 and +10. Additionally, when you have all the dots charted, connect then with lines so that you can chart the whole journey visually.

Journey steps

Think of journey steps as the different states of an employee's journey with the company. The first step goes at the far left of the employee journey map and the last step goes at the far right side. If you jot these down first, you've bookended the journey and can fill in the in-between.

You may say that the employer brand—what the company says it's like to work at the company—is the first journey step and that retirement is the last journey step. In between you could write recruiting, hiring, onboarding, training, learning and development, benefits, performance management, etc. Each company will have different journey steps.

Touchpoints

A touchpoint along the employee journey map coincides with each journey step and charted emotion. Each describes a person, place, or thing with which an employee interacts.

A touchpoint at the employer brand step might be the website, a social media post, or a speech the CEO gives. At the recruiting step, it might be the job posting on LinkedIn, talking with a recruiter on the phone, or interviewing with the hiring manager at company headquarters. There might be multiple touchpoints at each step, each inciting its own emotional status.

Organizational actions

Companies take actions to enhance a certain journey step or touchpoint—or to remove a barrier. There may be a big push to enhance the employer brand through marketing efforts or a large effort to provide a bigger platform for the company's diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Barriers

For each journey step and touchpoint, determine the barriers that might prevent the employee from a) progressing to the next step or b) experiencing a positive emotion.

For example, at the performance management step, Marcy is experiencing frustration because her manager doesn't let her know how she's doing. She wants to get her next promotion, but doesn't receive clear feedback. At this same step, the online performance management system is always crashing.

Even the company culture may act as another step. The culture may be toxic, but the C-Suite doesn't realize it because they don't talk to or survey their employees.

Insights & opportunities

After all the other components are explored and reflected upon, the employee journey mapping team can reflect on the information to gain insights. What are some commonalities between the different personas? Are there any common areas? These may represent success stories that can be celebrated or maybe common barriers that need to be fixed at a holistic level.

This part of the employee journey map is what leads to action—action that can help you improve the employee journey for each of your personas to boost engagement and retention.

Conclusion

Employee journey mapping is a critical exercise to understand how your employees are experiencing their journey within your company. It's an exercise that requires a courageous approach that can lead to some hard truths, but also some well-deserved celebrations.

Use this guide and templates at your next team meeting and see what new insights and opportunities open up for you.

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