



CONSTRUCTION'S LEADING INDICATOR: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

By Christi Pilutik

Growing up in the 80s meant Saturday mornings were fueled by sugary cereals that pretended to be healthy, and several hours spent in front of the TV watching your favorite cartoons.

At least that is how it was for my friends.

I spent Saturday mornings climbing into the cab of a truck, before the sun had come up, and unloading at my dad's jobsite. After a few hours of coloring and eating as many Peanut M&Ms as I could

get my hands on, my dad would take me into the field to talk with the craft and check on the work.

I take this experience with me every time I step foot on a jobsite.

Every person on every jobsite brings their own experience, interactions, and perceptions with them to work. This collection of everything that they see, feel, and do with their organization combines to form their employee experience.

Employee experience is the collective perception of everything that an employee sees, feels, and does with their organization.

COMPANIES INVESTING IN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE OUTPERFORM



64%

decrease
in safety incidents



81%

decrease
in absenteeism



10%

increase
in customer loyalty/
engagement



23%

increase
in profitability

Employee experience (EX) can be confusing, overwhelming, and complex. While there are commonalities across an organization, each employee's experience is unique to them. It begins before they start with a company (the candidate experience), and continues throughout the employment lifecycle from onboarding, during career growth and development, to offboarding.

Many organizations were just beginning to get their arms wrapped around employee engagement, but by doing so, they never seemed to solve their problems related to recruiting and turnover.

They were focusing on the wrong things.

Recruiting and turnover are lagging indicators; they confirm what has already happened, but they do not predict what could. Similar to shifts in safety metrics (to focusing on observations), the construction industry needs to shift the focus from turnover to the leading indicator of employee experience. Investing in a magnetic EX – one that brings great people in and keeps them with the organization – enables companies to win the war on talent.

The companies that are investing in employee experience outperform those that do not; not only are they able to attract and retain great talent, they experience fewer safety incidents, decreased absenteeism, an increase in customer loyalty, and profit.¹

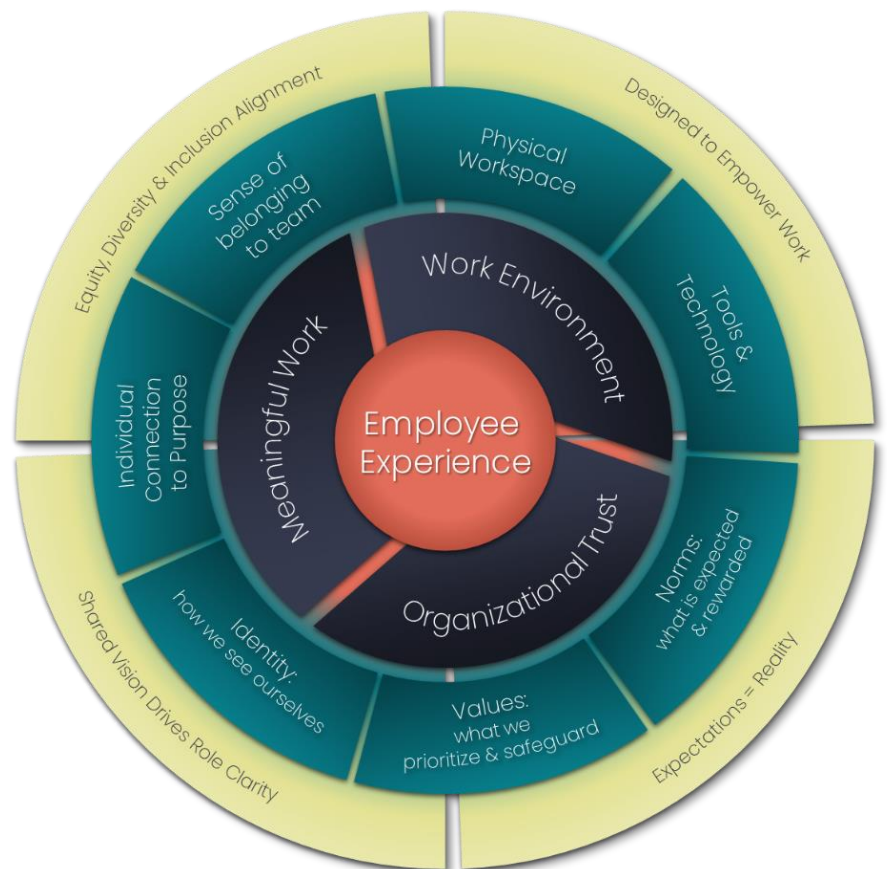
Investing in employee experience means that organizations are bringing their employees into the center of their decision-making process. To harness all the benefits of a magnetic employee experience, three things are needed:

1. *Organizational Trust*: it is critical to ensure that employees' expectations and reality are aligned
2. *Work Environment*: an inclusive environment that empowers each individual to thrive and enables a sense of belonging
3. *Meaningful Work*: now more than ever, employees need an individual connection to shared purpose

ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST IS CRITICAL

Leaders define what takes priority (i.e. values), communicate what is expected (behavioral norms), and recognize what they are most proud of (through shared identity). They also embody what it takes to be successful, so employees will imitate the leaders' behavior in hopes of being successful themselves. While senior leaders are critical in setting the direction of the culture, the employee experience is ultimately filtered through their direct managers.

When a managers' words and/or actions are at odds with the values, behavior, and identity that have been communicated by senior



EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE ENHANCEMENTS

leadership, without consequences, organizational trust is eroded. By contrast, when they are in alignment that magnetic employee culture is fostered: one that brings people in and keeps them with the organization.

WORK ENVIRONMENT GOES BEYOND THE WALLS

The environment within which each employee works has a profound impact on their experience and performance. The physical workspace, whether that is in an office, on a jobsite, or working from home, has the ability to create a connection, or a divide, between the organization and employees. But the environment extends beyond the physical workspace to the tools and technology used to get the job done, access to information and decision makers, and a sense of belonging to the team.

Many organizations actively measure and pursue a diverse, representative workforce, but increasing numbers does not mean there is alignment with employees feeling included, that they belong. When a true sense of belonging exists, that they are safe to take risks, the benefits of a diverse organization can truly be harnessed.

MEANINGFUL WORK IS EXPECTED

More than anything else and more than ever before, employees are looking for meaningful work – a shared purpose.

There are many ways to invest in your employee experience in construction, here are a few:

- Build trust in your safety program by inviting craft feedback on your processes.
- Bolster your impact by implementing a charitable match program.
- Improve your gender diversity by providing PPE designed for women.

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Meaningful work is about connecting the day-to-day tasks to a greater company vision that is aligned with one's personal values. When this alignment is achieved, employees are three times more likely to refer friends and colleaguesⁱ: evidence of a magnetic employee experience.

CREATING A MAGNETIC EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

To position people at the center of your organization and invest in employee experience you must first *make a commitment* to enhance the experience for your employees. You do not have to change everything all at once, but the first thing you need to do is commit to improve.

Second, you need to *understand where you are now*. ALTA Consulting specializes in helping leaders of mid to large-size construction companies win the war for

talent by shifting their focus from the lagging indicator of turnover to investing in a magnetic employee experience. They offer an honest evaluation of how you are currently operating, a design of what could be, and actionable recommendations for enhancements.

There are many ways that you can invest in employee experience. Whether you choose to implement one thing, or a wholesale change, there is *never a better time for your organization to act than now*.

ⁱ *Employee Engagement and Performance: Latest Insights From the World's Largest Study* (Gallup, 2020). And *The Employee Experience Advantage*, by Jacob Morgan (Wiley, 2017)

ⁱⁱ Workhuman. (2019). *The Future of Work is Human*.

About the Author

Christi Pilutik is a third-generation construction professional. Having grown up in this industry, she has an intimate knowledge of the unique challenges construction has faced over the years and what it needs to thrive. With 16+ years implementing employee experience programs for two of the largest global contractors, she understands the complexities of unifying the operations perspective and support functions' needs to make organizations succeed.

As the President of ALTA Consulting, she intertwines honesty and humor as she helps leaders in mid to large-size construction companies win the war on talent by shifting their focus from the lagging indicators of retention and turnover to investing in a magnetic employee experience.



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