Future focus: Employee experience of tomorrow

Five keys to a human-centric approach to impactful transformation

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Dot to Dot
By KPMG

In a world that has become increasingly digital, with hybrid work arrangements and a globally connected workforce, the importance of "employee experience" and employee well-being has quickly risen to become a key C-suite agenda item (see chart below).

This has led to changes in how human resources (HR) and mobility departments manage and relate to their employees and how they measure program, project, and employment success. And as workforce trends continue to change across all markets and industries, work and workplace relationships have become more personal, more complex, and touch more stakeholders in an organization that ever before. This situation cuts across all markets and industries.

Remote workers, complex reward structures, duty of care, and other challenges impact multiple departments in an organization, including tax, talent, total rewards, legal and compliance, travel, security, immigration, and more.

Addressing these issues requires connectivity across the organization to get the right information and data to the right people at the right time. To do this, organizations are prioritizing workforce sentiment and connectedness in much the same way as they measure operational effectiveness and efficiency. Based on this feedback, companies are taking steps to understand the employee experience, transform how people work, and change the way they interact with their employees.

CEOs growing concern about workforce issues

Concerns about the workforce is a growing issue among chief executive officers (CEOS), outpacing concerns about growth and tech-related issues.

CEOs' Top Strategic Business Priority Areas for 2022–2023

Priority	Percentage	Change from 2021
Growth	51%	▼ 8%
Tech-related	34%	▼ 5%
Workforce	31% (Up from 5th in 2020)	▲ 32%
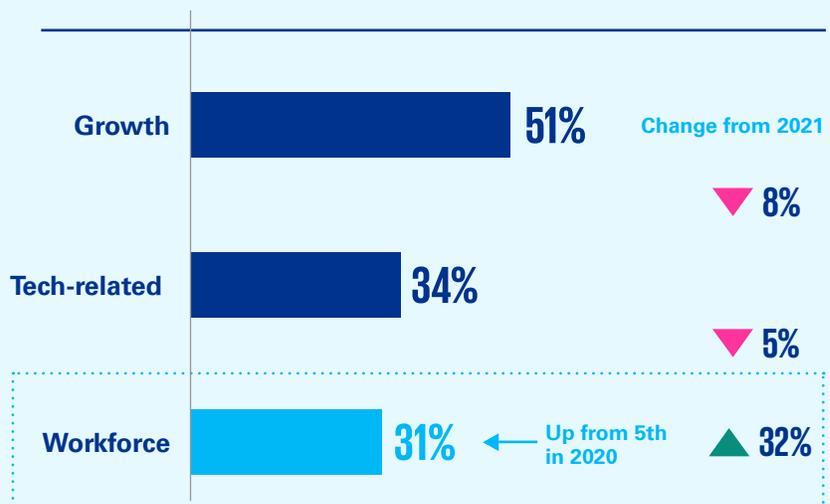
Source: Gartner, "CEOs Turn a Sharp Eye to Workforce Issues and Sustainability in 2022–2023," Jackie Wiles (April 27, 2022)

Building "employee engagement"

While these challenges bring added pressure, they also present great opportunities for HR and global mobility leaders. Incorporating employee experience and sentiment analysis[1] into transformation initiatives will impact both efficiency and effectiveness and can enhance employee satisfaction, retention, and well-being.

Collecting, collating, and gaining insight into employee sentiment in an centralized, structured approach continues to elude many organizations. In fact, most employee sentiment today is provided through a mix of organizational and vendor surveys. But these surveys typically limit visibility into how information is collected and may provide insufficient context to understand the true underlying needs of employees.

This lack of transparency around sentiment can lead to organizations misreading or incorrectly defining challenges with respect to the employee experience—or not truly understanding the full impact of these challenges. This, in turn, can result in organizations making changes in both front- and back-office operations that are not as impactful as they need to be and, therefore, ineffective in accomplishing what they were designed to do. Employees' postpandemic expectations, these changes can hinder, more than help, employee engagement and satisfaction.

The number of surveys and data collection points can also play greatly into employee engagement both during and after the survey process. When collecting data, employees can be inundated with multiple logins, multiple surveys, and duplicative questions across multiple platforms. This may lead to survey fatigue and, thus, low response rates or inaccurate responses.

For this reason, people leaders today need to take a more thoughtful and practical approach to designing and distributing surveys. Here are some tips to consider when plotting out your survey strategy:

- Limit the number of surveys you send out. Anything more than **once every two months** can be burdensome and counterproductive.

- Limit the length of surveys; the ideal survey length is about **7–10 questions**.

- Be cognizant of how much time it will take to complete the survey; the recommended amount of time it should take an employee to complete a survey is between **10 and 14 minutes**.[2]

- Give employees an adequate amount of time to complete and return the survey; approximately **three weeks** is considered the "right" timeframe. If the completion date extends too far into the future, employees will tend to forget about it.

- Send a follow-up reminder to employee to complete the survey after approximately one week after the initial distribution has passed.[3]

All of this can assist in better managing digital survey fatigue by employees and help in discovering and understanding important aspects of employee sentiment while streamlining, who owns the data, how data is created, and how it can be used.

> **"**
>
> In a world that continues to become increasingly digital and hybrid, it's critical to measure employee and workforce sentiment and connectiveness in much the same way you measure operational effectiveness and efficiency."
>
> **— Katherine Avery, Principal**
> **KPMG Global Mobility Services**

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[1] Sentiment analysis uses machine learning techniques, like natural language processing and artificial intelligence, and other calculations, such as biometrics, to determine if specific data is positive, negative, or neutral. The goal of sentiment analysis is to attach metrics and measurable "sentiment" statistics to the data. Source: Forbes, How You Can Get The Most Out Of Sentiment Analysis Daniel Fallman (November 17, 2022),

[2] Source: hubspot.com, How Long Should a Survey Be? The Ideal Survey Length [New Data], Alana Chinn (March 30, 2023)

[3] Source: Workpositive, Guide to running a survey (2022).

Adopting a listening strategy

It's also important to build the business case for "employee experience" to key stakeholders and senior leaders in various departments throughout the organization. This typically involves collaboration across business units and helping them adjust their mindset so they view employee experience as an investment in creating a more productive workforce.

A critical element to this is **adopting a continuous listening strategy** that can help leaders identify areas of concern across the organization. This will help establish baseline goals for assessing employee sentiment. It also can assist in building the business case for why such assessments are needed; it enables the business to better understand the data you have or want to gather and how it directly impacts employee "pain points."

Equally important, the strategy should provide that this data gets raised up the "food chain" so it's seen and acted upon by the right people in the right departments (e.g., heads of HR, compensation and benefits, IT, customer service, etc.) at the right time.

Here are some tips for designing and implementing a, effective continuous listening strategy:

Gain leadership support: Present your strategy and various employee communications/listening options (see below). This step will also help ensure that your people-listening efforts and the feedback and data you gather are relevant, actionable and aligned with the business's broader goals and objectives.

Involve stakeholders in structuring information gathering approaches: There are a number of proven, effective listening tools and approaches, including:

- Employee surveys: These can be quick "pulse" survey on a particular topic (e.g., what's your emotional status today?) or more in depth, annual or bi-annual surveys that delve deeply into specific aspects of a company's culture. Caution: Be careful of not overdoing it and giving employees a case of "survey fatigue."

- Get out and listen: Nothing is more direct than talking to employees in person. Supervisors, managers and executives should regularly step outside the office, walk the floors, take an employee for coffee, hold office hours, and strike up conversations.

- One-on-one meetings: Managers should meet and speak with employees regularly – both formally and otherwise – to discuss job performance and concerns. This can demonstrate to employees that the organization hears and values their voices.

- "Skip level" meetings: This is when a manager's supervisor or a higher-level manager directly engages with employees without the presence of their immediate supervisor. This helps increase the likelihood that senior leadership is getting the unvarnished truth regarding employee sentiment.

- Company-wide meetings: Encourage employees to ask questions, express their opinions, and provide them with updates on important matters.

- Employee suggestion boxes: Items like suggestion boxes may seem old fashioned but these or other forms of anonymous feedback can provide useful information from employees who may be skeptical of submitting feedback online or attaching their identity to comments.

Train leaders on how to listen: Managers need to be trained on how to listen effectively. This generally means doing more listening and less talking; trying to dominate a conversation is definitely counter-productive. Instead, show genuine interest in what they're saying, offer your undivided attention and don't interrupt them until they're finished speaking. Ask open-ended and follow-up questions to clarify what employees are saying. Suspend making snap judgments, take time to reflect on what they're saying and understand their perspective before providing feedback or guidance.

Utilize modern tools and technologies to gather employee feedback. This includes feedback and survey platforms we've discussed as well as social media networks (e.g., Indeed, Glass Door) that give can provide you with insight into employee sentiment about your company.

Types of employee listening channels

Below are several commonly used, effective types of employee-listening options:

Census Surveys	Continuous Surveys	Pulse Surveys	Manager-Led Polls	180/360 Feedback	Exit interviews	Internal/external social networks
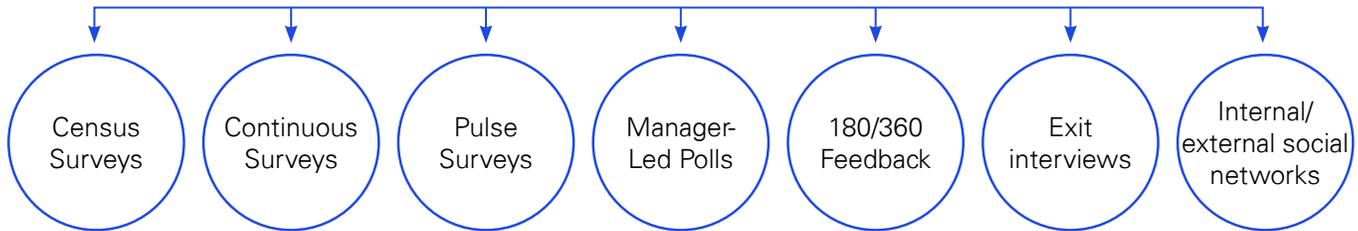
Follow through and promote successes: When possible, you should try to act on the insights you've gained from employee feedback; it can pay off in multiple ways (see illustration below). Let employees know about your plan to make changes, communicate when the changes are taking effect, and promote any successes. When employees trust that you take their feedback seriously, they'll be more inclined to give it in the future. But the opposite also holds true: if you don't take their feedback seriously or fail to take real action, they'll be much less likely to participate next time you ask for feedback.

When employees feel their voice is heard...

74%	Feel more engaged at work
74%	Feel more effective at their job
71%	Feel more confident to share ideas and feedback in the future
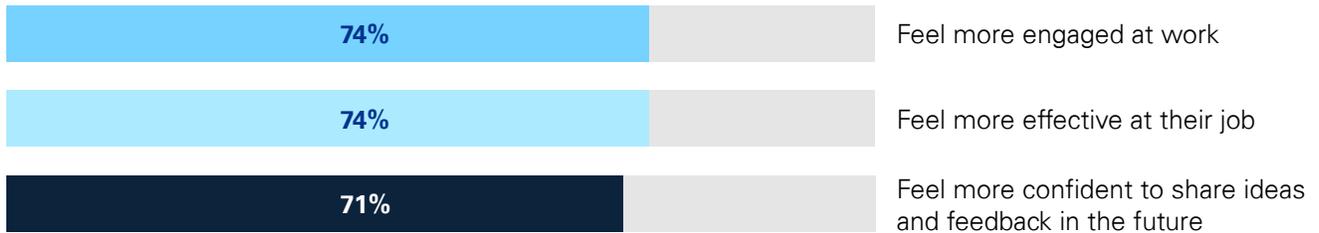
Source: Forbes.com, New survey shows the business benefit of feeling heard (June 23, 2021)

Measuring the employee experience

Focusing on, measuring, and improving the employee experience has become more valuable and necessary than ever due to the advancements in technology, increasing competition for talent, and the evolving expectations of the workforce. While doing so is undoubtedly a challenge, especially with respect to global mobility, it is critical in order to promote long-term business health and employee retention.

To accurately measure experience, companies need to focus on providing a unified, wide-ranging employee experience and improving employee satisfaction. They also need to view sentiment gathering in a similar fashion, concentrating on the broader employee experience, not just points in time.

A critical component of this is measuring sentiment within a single platform, doing so at multiple points in the process, and using a mix of repetitive and time-specific questions to gauge employee well-being, happiness, and overall sentiment. The Dot to Dot by KPMG platform (see sidebar) is designed to do that using a single sentiment analysis engine and approach.

Gathering employee sentiment should take a human-centric approach and seek feedback to help ensure that employees feel heard. Physical and emotional well-being—both at home and work—play a large part in the overall employee experience. Thus, organizations need to consider an employee's family and social life, financial situation, and career development goals so they can build a resilient workforce while also understanding how changes to the aforementioned items impact point-in-time responses.

Actionable feedback and insights derived from pulse surveys on where employees are emotionally and psychologically can help organizations gauge employee well-being get ahead of potential trouble spots, and offer guidance on actions they can take to improve the situation.

Gathering the data is one thing; it's equally if not more important to gain meaningful insight into that data through data analysis, measuring the findings against expected or anticipated outcomes. This is where a platform like Dot to Dot by KPMG can be helpful; it can measure and assess employee sentiment over time helping create useful trend analytics that showcase progress and where challenges continue to exist. (See Dot to Dot by KPMG sidebar on page 7).

Evaluating your vendors

Central to mobility is the formation of a broad vendor ecosystem that serves the needs of your program and your employees. You'll find that in many cases, vendors will reach out directly to your employees for feedback, including sending out surveys to assess vendor performance and fit.

While this helps produce a large amount of data, it can be challenging to truly assess vendor performance and employee sentiment when the data is owned and managed by the vendor it's designed to assess. After all, the vendor controls the data and can skew the results or conclusions, so it only tells the "story" it wants to portray.

So, it's important to establish guardrails around vendor data and understand at the outset of a vendor engagement how it will assess employee experience, vendor fit, and performance and what metrics will be used to derive the scores, analytics, or dashboards that it will send to you. Carefully review agreements with your vendors to understand and/or define service level agreements, data gaps, or areas where increased transparency is needed.

Experience insights technology

Dot to Dot
By KPMG

Our Dot to Dot platform provides an innovative new way of looking at employee experience for the mobile workforce. It's designed to provide you with a visual representation of employee experiences throughout the global mobility journey. The tool provides experience insights to help understand and measure employee sentiment and enables your organization to improve the employee experience.

Dot to Dot program enables you to drill down into specific phases of the journey, highlights areas where improvement is needed, and includes a dashboard that provides an overall experience score. Drilling down further, Dot to Dot can enable your mobility program to:

- Gain clarity around employee sentiment at every step, concentrating on work-related elements as well as general feelings and well-being.

- Establish base-levels for your organization and create easy-to-understand analytics that help define where your company is in relation to those levels. For example, use color coding to identify lower scoring areas or low performance trends versus high scores or trends.

- Predict the success of an employee's move by gauging team integration, perceived value to the team, and marrying that with family metrics.

- Address move-related challenges to enhance the employee experience and suggest change processes or policies related to your vendors and services.

- Achieve a thorough view of the entire supplier ecosystem and the experience employees have with them through an objective survey.

- Support your organization's talent strategy with timely insights and data sharing.

Bottom line: Dot to Dot by KPMG allows your company to adapt their HR and mobility programs so they deliver impactful and meaningful employee experiences and generate high levels of employee satisfaction.

Applying the data

Once you've gathered, measured, and analyzed the data, you need to present it in a way that company leadership and other key stakeholders can readily understand it. Further, you need to demonstrate that you are taking action based on the data to achieve higher levels of employee engagement.

This first means establishing metric-based reporting that enables key stakeholders to understand what was measured, what it means, and how it compares to prior results and to the findings of internal and external peers. The next step is applying the data findings to impact employees at the local level. **Actions based on survey findings demonstrate the depth of your organization's commitment to employee experience and sentiment, strengthen the relationship between the company and its employees, and encourage employees to continue to participate in future surveys and/or sentiment reviews.**

Final thoughts: Taking action pays off now— and in the future

As employees see their sentiment put into action, word gets around. Offering a great employee experience further enables you to attract and retain top talent. Accordingly, one of your goals should be to provide a great employee experience throughout the employee journey, from recruitment to exit.

This means aligning the mobility experience with the organization's culture and overall people services. To achieve this, your mobility policies and allowances need to align with the organization's compensation and rewards philosophy. In addition, your vendor relationships need to result in positive feedback and the right level of support at all points in the employee journey.

Ultimately, global mobility is a critical career experience for many employees and can be a point in the employee journey that impacts both immediate and long-term performance and retention. It's important that employees continue to view mobility as a positive, worthwhile experience that helps them build skills and contributes to their long-term career trajectory.

Establishing and reinforcing this perception is important to the long-term health of your mobility program and the organization. Getting employees to buy-in to this concept can mean the difference between them deleting a sentiment survey email or filling it out and hitting the submit button at the end of a 10-question survey.

> "
> The difference between a good organization and a good mobility program and a great organization and great mobility program is the great organization provides an employee experience that's embedded into each step of the employee journey, from recruitment to exit."
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> — **Robert Smith, Senior Manager, KPMG Global Mobility Services**

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