WORKSTEP

eBOOK:

6 Considerations to Create the Best Employee Experience

PRIORITIZE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE - NOW AND ALWAYS

It's undeniable, Covid has impacted every aspect of our lives, and this certainly holds true for the frontline labor market. It seems like every day there's a new article or study highlighting increased turnover, employee dissatisfaction, or relentless burnout — The Great Resignation is real.

Lockdowns, job losses, fear of getting sick, and juggling the stress of child and family care have prompted workers to reevaluate their work environment. With 11 million open jobs in the U.S. right now, roughly 80% more than there are job seekers,

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perhaps more than ever, employees are in a position of strength. So much so that in the next three months, 77% of frontline workers are considering a job change. If you're not providing your employees with the best experience possible, you're at risk.

Though Covid has played a pivotal role in recent market upheaval, turnover and employee satisfaction are evergreen concerns. Generational shifts, wellness and mental health considerations, DE&I factors, and advancing technology that offers greater job flexibility all contribute to an openness amongst frontline workers to shift jobs in search of better pastures.

So even as the pandemic starts to become our new normal, turnover is predicted to continue as a major concern over the next decade. And now is the time to start doing something about it.

Retention Begins with Employee Engagement & Satisfaction

Keeping employees happy is critical for any business, any time, and frontline hourly workers are no different. They want meaningful experiences and a sense of empowerment that encourages growth.

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Just as you maintain healthy financial capital, so too must you invest and tend to your human capital to succeed and outpace competitors. The six key considerations presented here will help you improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and increase retention.

#1 MIND YOUR PS

A nod to psychologist Dr. Abraham Maslow's famed Hierarchy of Needs, Kathleen Hogan, the Chief People Officer at Microsoft, conceptualizes a pyramid of five Ps of employee fulfillment—pay, perks, people, pride, and purpose. Rooted in first meeting a worker's basic needs and then building toward overall satisfaction and growth potential, these five workplace "needs" provide a framework to gauge your efforts and help identify potential shortcomings.

- Pay - even though our research indicates pay is not the most important criteria, it remains an unavoidable factor in employee satisfaction. Everyone needs money to survive, and employees want (and need) fair pay as a baseline. Are you recognizing their contributions and the effort they put into their jobs with competitive compensation and raises?

- Perks — Are you providing market-leading benefits and perks including medical, dental, and retirement as a baseline? What about PTO, sick, and vacation time? Pay is only one component of total compensation, and increasingly employees evaluate the full package of income, benefits, and perks when assessing employers.

- People — There's a saying, "Employees don't quit their job, they quit their manager." While there's more to it than that, the sentiment holds true and extends to all people within an organization rather than just the bosses. The interactions between your workforce and how they collaborate, respect, and treat each other is critical. Are you creating an inclusive environment where people feel inspired, driven, and appreciated? Do you provide an open line of communication to your frontline employees? Are you checking in regularly with them to make sure?

- Pride — Are your employees proud of the work they do and the overall work of the organization? If they look forward to going to work each day because they know they help create a respected product or service, they will naturally be happier and will want to demonstrate sustained effort towards maintaining your company's positive reputation.

- Purpose — Part and parcel with Pride, do your frontline employees feel there is Purpose to the work they do? It is incumbent upon you to make sure they believe that what they do matters. Be that to their team or company overall, but also externally to the world and planet at large.

#2　EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS DOESN'T BEGIN AND END AT WORK

Increasingly, the lines between work and life can seem fuzzy. Even for frontline workers who ostensibly leave their work behind when they come home, the reality is that workplace stresses do continue to wear on them after they've left their shift, and vice versa, personal problems accompany them to work.

The aforementioned five Ps help frame the goals and questions that frontline employers are wise to ask, and, in many ways, the answers come in the form of establishing a balance between work and personal life, and providing the resources employees need to meet their personal obligations and aspirations.

Provide defined career paths. Career growth not only helps employees avoid a sense of stagnation but, in very direct terms, contributes to their own bottom line and helps them achieve financial security. It's as important to them as growth is to any business.

In fact, up to 72% of frontline workers rank career growth as the top potential reason to switch jobs. Your organization should have clearly articulated career ladders and your frontline employees should be educated on exactly what they need to accomplish to earn a promotion. Managers should be welcoming conversations around growth plans in their

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one-on-one meetings. Your employees need the tools to not only succeed in their present job, but also to learn and advance to the next. Are managers providing them with adequate training? Are there open lines of communication between the frontline and management, and between management and leadership?

Physical demands of a job need to be taken into consideration as well. WorkStep recently released data on top reasons that drive hourly workers to quit their jobs, and physicality ranked #6. For many frontline worker positions, jobs require strenuous labor that can take its toll over time. The facility also may not offer heating, cooling or the best ventilation, sometimes creating unpleasant working conditions.

Employers should acknowledge these strains on their workers and provide them with opportunities to take breaks from these demands throughout the day. Guiding them through stretches or proper lifting techniques can help alleviate the strain on their bodies.

Include mental health/wellness benefits. Increasingly, there is a recognition that employee health includes mental wellness. Beyond the baseline medical, dental, and vision benefits that should be primary components of your benefits packages, consider offering mental health benefits such as days off to recharge, access to counselors and therapists, gym memberships, meditation apps, or yoga and exercise classes. Assess and address the mental health risks specific to your industry and how they might differ across each role. Train frontline managers on how to identify mental health issues and effectively communicate with frontline workers who are dealing with issues. Your employees should understand that it's okay to approach managers when they need help.

Workers at management levels are more likely to know about and utilize mental health services, so be sure that employees on the frontline are also aware of services available to them.

Burnout results in workers who are 63% more likely to take sick leave, 23% more likely to visit the ER, 13% less confident in their performance, and 2.6x as likely to be looking for a new job. Clearly, burnout is a problem, and as with everything we're discussing here, it not only impacts employee well-being but also, in turn, your organizational performance.

Burnout is a systemic problem, not an individual one. That's a good thing because individual solutions do not scale, whereas systemic problems can be fixed. By and large, people don't suddenly decide they can't work anymore or they don't want to work anymore — there is a cause that can be identified and addressed. A Gallup survey of 7,500 full-time employees revealed five major causes of burnout: unfair treatment at work, unmanageable workload, lack of role clarity, lack of communication and support from their manager, and unreasonable time pressure.

Look to Frontline Management First

Gallup also found that 70% of the variance in team engagement is determined by managers, particularly those on the frontline. That's right, 70%. When your frontline managers are engaged, so too is the rest of their team, but when they're feeling burned out, that trickles down and impacts everyone who reports to them. Frontline managers should be able to trust senior leadership, feel empowered to offer suggestions and collaborate freely, and they should know exactly what is expected of them. In short, the same strategies recommended here to improve frontline worker satisfaction should be brought to bear to ensure your managers and supervisors aren't left behind either.

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#4 PAY ATTENTION TO GENERATIONAL SHIFTS & INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

It's important to be mindful of generational shifts so you're catering to the entire potential labor pool, particularly those likely to seek out new frontline positions. Fortunately, the younger generations largely prioritize many of the same things as their elders and so if you address the issues we've been discussing here, you will largely meet their needs as well. But where Gen Z and Millennials differ is how much more these factors matter to them over pay and other more traditional considerations.

They cherish creativity, authenticity, and workplace pride, and they're willing to switch jobs to get what they want.

Deloitte reports that nearly two in five have rejected a job or task that did not align with their values and 90% of those surveyed make at least some effort to reduce their own environmental footprint. These generations want a good work-life balance, opportunities to learn and develop their skills, a positive workplace culture, the ability to grow, a sense of meaning, and, yes, financial benefit too.

Inclusion Matters

If you're not being inclusionary, you're being exclusionary and those employees who feel left out will be less likely to engage fully and reach their potential, or worse, will seek employment elsewhere.

While 52% of Gen Z and Millennial employees surveyed by Deloitte report that they're not satisfied with how their organization is creating a diverse and inclusive environment and 76% of workers surveyed by ADP Research Institute said they would consider seeking out a new job if they knew of an unfair gender pay gap, the problem is especially evident on the frontline.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports that 41.2% of frontline workers are people of color and 64.4% are women. Nearly one-quarter of female frontline workers and one-third of Black/African Americans at the frontline report having faced discrimination by a customer or coworker. So it's no surprise then that frontline hourly employees are nearly 20% less likely than their corporate counterparts to believe that DEI policies are effective.

Make sure managers are equipping frontline workers with the skills they need to succeed and secure promotions, and that all employees are aware of and encouraged to seek higher positions. Management should make inclusion a part of their day-to-day mission, advocate for underrepresented groups, and understand the unique challenges and needs those employees might have.

#5 CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

While it's important to establish clear company values at the organizational level, a collaborative environment helps ensure a positive workplace culture that is informed from the bottom up and meets the needs and desires of the employees it's meant to serve.

On the other hand, a positive work experience is not possible if everyone in the organization does not feel respected, and that starts from the top down. Treat your direct reports with respect and make sure they understand you expect them to do the same all the way down the org chart.

Reward hard work with the consequential, meaningful benefits we've discussed, but also augment with ongoing gestures like employee recognition initiatives, staff parties and outings, gift cards, and so on. These should be seen as tokens of your appreciation and never as replacements for hard benefits and compensation.

Check in regularly with frontline workers and managers to find out exactly what they expect of their employee experience. Don't guess. Let them guide you and adjust your approach accordingly.

#6 PURPOSEFUL WORK

As we work our way up the five Ps pyramid, we approach the more intangible considerations that in many ways will help you differentiate yourselves the most from your competitors. When everyone is offering market pay and benefits, it's these intangibles that can help sway a potential employee or keep existing employees within your organization.

Meaningful work improves performance and retention, yet only half of employees report that they find meaning in their day-to-day work. That means there is opportunity for those companies that can capitalize on this desire and create an environment where employees feel their work is meaningful at both a personal level and a larger, more global context.

Personal Level:

Encourage employees to take pride in their work and your organization by rewarding those who take ownership with opportunities for promotion and advancement. Assess and make use of employees' existing skills, encourage and foster development of new skills with ongoing training, education, and modern learning opportunities such as eLearning, on-demand content, and video training libraries. Ensure consistent recognition and promotional opportunities among both hourly and salaried employees.

Community and Global Context:

All of us value work that we believe makes our community and the world at large a better place. Purpose is important — for many of us, work is not just a means to an end or solely a method for realizing personal objectives. Consider how your organization's mission and day-to-day practice aligns with the issues your employees prioritize. Not sure what matters to them? We're not either, that's why you have to check in with them and ask.

CHECK IN, CHECK IN, CHECK IN!

We cannot stress the importance of employee engagement enough. Our research shows that feedback is one of the most critical reasons driving frontline worker turnover, and 89% of frontline workers are more likely to stay at their job if they feel the company encourages and listens to feedback.

To offer the best employee experience, engage with your workers frequently and at key milestones, offer open-ended response options with opportunities to respond anonymously, and make sure you have real-time visibility so leadership can respond quickly and implement changes when needed.

Engagement is a two-way street. Check in to elicit feedback, but also to inform your employees of policies, benefits, and opportunities that they might not be aware of. It can be easy to forget all that your company has to offer if the only time that's mentioned is during a busy initial training and onboarding session.

IMPROVE YOUR EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH WORKSTEP RETAIN

RETAIN is the employee engagement tool that provides clear, real-time feedback so that your workers feel heard and appreciated, and you have the intel to create effective employee-focused decisions.

With minimal administrative overhead, RETAIN helps you collect consistent, actionable feedback with check-ins delivered in your employees' native language, no app download or work email required to participate, and feedback that's prompted via email, SMS, QR code, or kiosk.

RETAIN enables you to analyze underlying drivers of workforce turnover, address issues in real-time, measure the impact of initiatives, and retain your frontline for the long run, while providing easily digestible insights that inform worker-centric policy so you can provide the best employee experience and retain talent.

Ready to make RETAIN part of your employee experience?

Learn more at workstep.com

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Helping supply chain companies hire and retain their frontline workforce.

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workstep.com | marketing@workstep.com