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Customer and employee experience are two halves of the same coin

LETTER FROM THE GUEST EDITOR
DAVE WRIGHT

During the pandemic, digital experiences became the primary way knowledge workers got things done.

This big shift won’t reverse itself when the virus is behind us. We’ve entered a new world of work defined by virtual experiences delivered on digital platforms.

To understand how successful organizations provide great experiences to all their stakeholders, ServiceNow and ThoughtLab conducted a survey of 1,000 global C-level executives working in five industry sectors across 13 countries. Annual revenues of their companies ranged from $350 million to more than $5 billion.

We identified best practices by categorizing respondents as beginners, intermediates, or leaders, based on the progress they have made in key areas of customer and employee experience, and correlated this with the benefits they are generating. This enabled us to show what leaders do differently than others, and the benefits to be gained by moving to the next stage of maturity.

More than half the respondents, across all industries, reported that digitizing and aligning customer and employee experiences yielded greater revenue—the top benefit reported. Investments in new workplace practices and digital tools created a virtuous cycle, contributing to employee well-being and to a better understanding of customer needs. In turn, this yielded better experiences for customers.

The survey identified challenges as well. An explosion of digital channels has given unhappy customers more paths to publicize their grievances. And for all the benefits of remote work (more time with family, fewer soul-crushing commutes), it has also increased worker isolation and blurred the boundary between work and personal life.

The survey identified employee resistance to change as the most pressing issue for companies that seek to deliver better experiences. Amazing tech won’t matter much if employees don’t use it.

(Other results from the survey are highlighted throughout the magazine.)

We packed this issue of Workflow Quarterly with stories designed to help your organization prosper in the age of experience. On page 8, we present an exclusive interview with customer experience guru Seth Earley, who explains how AI can help companies create bespoke experiences at moments that matter for customers. On page 10, Evan Ramzipoor reports on how business leaders can persuade employees to support digital transformation projects. And on page 16, I argue that well-crafted, measurable experiences are the future of business.

That’s just a taste of what’s in this issue. What we’ve learned—and experienced—we share with you.
In concert

Experience delivery is best approached holistically

Digital experiences increasingly drive business performance. According to a global survey by ServiceNow and ThoughtLab, digitizing and aligning customer experience (CX) with employee experience (EX) pays off for the bottom line. In fact, greater revenue and sales is the No. 1 benefit cited across all industries. Experience leaders captured the most benefits.

**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

Customers want more

Leaders reported significant progress in customer data privacy and security, digital payment methods, and problem resolution.

67% of leaders made significant progress in customer data privacy and security vs. 52% overall

62% of leaders made significant progress in digital payment methods vs. 55% overall

57% of leaders made significant progress in faster resolution to problems vs. 32% overall

**EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE**

Work in progress

At the same time, leaders saw more challenges as they aligned customer and employee experiences, including employee resistance and a lack of digital tools, skills, and talent.

62% of leaders say their employees are resistant to change vs. 50% overall

47% of leaders cite insufficient technology investment vs. 38% overall

48% of leaders cited lack of total experience skills and talent vs. 27% overall

**TOTAL EXPERIENCE**

Leaders grow faster

Experience leaders outpaced laggards in terms of revenue growth, teamwork, and employee health and safety.

72% of leaders report higher revenue or sales vs. 60% overall

53% of leaders report improved health and safety for employees vs. 34% overall

50% of leaders report improved products and services vs. 38% overall

Source: ThoughtLab/Servicenow 2022 CX Survey polled 1,000 executives across 13 countries in financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, public sector, and telecoms.

Photography by Philip Gould
Total experience comes of age
A conversation with ThoughtLab founder Lou Celi

Customer and employee experiences used to be delivered by different departments that didn't talk to each other much. No longer, argues leading tech and management researcher Lou Celi. In his latest global survey of C-level leaders, commissioned by ServiceNow, Celi examined the rise of “total experience” and found that companies are creating real value by integrating both sides of the experience house. The following interview has been edited for clarity and length.

So what’s new in the world of customer and employee experience?
What I think is truly new is the maturity of total experience. We talked about this in our last experience study, but it has developed to where folks are really knitting customer and employee experiences together. This has a multiplier effect for employees and customers. It also drives real benefits for shareholders and the management team, including reduced cost, higher revenue, benefits for shareholders and the management team, including reduced cost, higher revenue, and better customer retention. We are in a new business world where experience is a true value driver, if you get it right.

What does it mean to get experience “right”? Every industry, from finance to healthcare to manufacturing, has to rethink itself. Management teams need to reimagine their companies as digital and rethink what they do for customers. They need to decide where digital can do the heavy lifting and where you need a human touch. Forward-thinking companies are forgetting how most companies operated 10 or 20 years ago.

What are the biggest opportunities for businesses when it comes to experience and digital transformation as a whole? Managers need to realize that digital transformation is not just about technology. It’s really about reinventing your business, your products, your services, your business model, your customer and employee experiences—the whole thing. It means taking a fresh look at everything that previously made you successful. The pandemic threw everything on its head, and I can’t think of something that’s changed more than experience, how you think about employees and work, how you think about your customers. Many companies are saying that they’re going to go back to how it was before when the pandemic ends. No. People aren’t going back, because they don’t have to go back. You can’t fight digital change.

What are the biggest opportunities for businesses when it comes to experience and digital transformation as a whole? Managers need to realize that digital transformation is not just about technology. It’s really about reinventing your business, your products, your services, your business model, your customer and employee experiences—the whole thing. It means taking a fresh look at everything that previously made you successful.

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The healthcare industry is in the middle of a tech-driven transformation, according to new research from ServiceNow and ThoughtLab. More than half of healthcare providers surveyed are investing in wearable technologies to deliver faster treatments to patients wherever they are—whether they're third-party or patients themselves. The long-term contribution an employee makes to a company over their employment.

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AI meets the moment

Customer-experience guru Seth Earley explains how artificial intelligence can assist customers at crucial points in their journeys.

In the journey customers take from awareness to purchase and beyond, certain interactions can forever damage their relationship with a brand. Examples include waiting hours for an update during a cable outage, struggling to navigate a poorly designed website, and getting the wrong answer to a simple question from a chatbot.

These moments are “information leverage points,” says Seth Earley, author of The AI-Powered Enterprise and founder of a consultancy that helps companies design and implement customer-experience solutions using digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and advanced analytics. “If I can’t get a particular answer, can’t find a solution, can’t get through to a live human, I’m going to go elsewhere.”

In a recent survey by ServiceNow and Qualtrics, four out of five customers reported switching brands due to a bad experience. Two out of five said they would abandon a brand after just one bad experience. Poor customer service was reported as the number one reason that customers switched-brand. Two out of five said they would abandon a brand after just one bad experience. Poor customer service was reported as the number one reason that customers switched-brand.

Earley faced a similar data integration challenge with a large insurance firm. The company worked with a network of local agents who sold all types of insurance, from home and auto to liability policies for small and medium-sized businesses. The agents were unable to access detailed plan information online and as a result jammed the firm’s call centers with constant questions.

The solution that Earley conceived was to deploy an AI-powered chatbot that could answer questions from both customers and a network of sales agents. Earley’s team broke down the data types in the company’s policies and plan documents, built a classification taxonomy for it, and then helped implement the chatbot software. Individual agents were able to access the information they needed directly from the chatbot, in plain English, at any hour of the day or night, without having to spend precious time on the phone with a call center agent.

To be sure, AI is no panacea for every pain point along the customer journey, nor will it solve every employee issue. Customer experience leaders audit processes and workflows to break down problems, Earley says, and use whatever digital tool or strategy suits the job. “You have to optimize that experience, be it through search, a chatbot, or something else. You’re trying to take more of those signals to inform the conversation.”

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Change is hard

Tech transformation requires employee buy-in. Here's how to get it. 

BY EVAN RAMZIPOOR
Humans have habits, and changing those habits is hard.

When Manisha Arora was working in IT service management at Microsoft, her team faced a choice. The team badly needed a new ticketing system, says Arora, who is now a senior director on ServiceNow’s innovation team. Some wanted to build a new system in-house, even though this approach would be slow, costly, and not aligned with industry best practices. Arora and others advocated for the quicker, more cost-effective option of working with an outside vendor.

“There were a lot of people who were really, really entrenched in our existing processes,” she recalls. “We had to change hearts and minds.”

Arora’s manager had a solution: Bring in consultants to run process-design workshops with the team. After the workshops, everyone agreed they should change—but so did the dynamic between employees. Workers were vehemently opposed to this new way of working. For example, when the managers introduced new digital tools or platforms for organizing and reporting on work, people often resisted. “Why would you change if you know you’re going to get a good performance review doing what you’ve always done?” says Arora. “Switching things up takes mental energy.”

Overcoming resistance

Employee resistance to change is still a major headache for executives who lead digital transformation initiatives, according to a recent survey of 1,000 C-level executives worldwide conducted by ThoughtLab and ServiceNow. They uniformly identified this resistance as the main challenge to changing the status quo in their businesses. Yet when companies are able to deliver an improved employee experience, executives across industries report tangible benefits such as increased productivity and revenue.

In 1969, sociologist Paul R. Lawrence published a groundbreaking Harvard Business Review article that articulated a new approach to change management. Rather than see employee resistance to change as an obstacle to overcome, Lawrence encouraged business leaders to view it as “a useful red flag.” Much like a human body sending out pain signals, the resistance doesn’t tell you exactly what’s wrong, but it does tell you there is a problem.

More than half a century later, Lawrence’s argument resonates with Cen “April” Yue, a professor of marketing, advertising, and communications at the University of Connecticut. Yue, whose research is designed to help executives orchestrate positive organizational change, describes employee resistance as a cognitive or emotional distress signal. On a cognitive level, employees might resist because they don’t have the bandwidth to change. On an emotional level, they might feel too overwhelmed, stressed, or uncertain.

“To sell employees on a new technology or direction, leaders should embrace transparent communication and empathy. “Leaders can influence outcomes by communicating frequently and effectively to employees,” Yue says. “Employees need to see that the leader knows what they’re going through.”

In his 1969 article, Lawrence argues that organizational change always has both a technical and a social aspect. A change will not only impact the physical routine of the job, but also alter established relationships within an organization. Executives often overlook the social element when they try to help their employees adjust to a new way of working. For example, when Martensen rolled out mobile devices to replace clipboards in more than 20 warehouses across six countries, the method for logging new inventory changed—but so did the dynamic between employees. Workers were vehemently opposed to the new technology and insisted they could do their jobs better the old way.

“When it comes to changing people’s minds, you have to find a carrot or a stick,” says Arora. “At Microsoft, it was a carrot. The experts said that if we made this change, our industry peers would be more likely to hold us in high esteem.”

Why employees resist change

The practice of overseeing and enabling organizational change is known as change management. The challenge at the heart of change management is that people don’t like to change. When a company introduces a new technical or organizational approach, employees will default to resistance. “Humans have habits, and changing those habits is hard,” says Julia Martensen, an innovation evangelist at ServiceNow.

Prior to working at ServiceNow, Martensen helped manage global supply chains for a German logistics company. About 10 years ago, she traveled to a large warehouse in Miami to help implement a new inventory management system that required workers to switch from clipboards to mobile devices. While the workers understood the value of the new tech, they refused to adopt it. They had been working the old way for years and weren’t convinced the change was worth the effort of learning something new. “They would even agree with me that it was quicker for them to complete their work on the mobile device,” says Martensen. Yet the workers still weren’t willing to embrace a change that benefited them.

Arora has seen this phenomenon play out many times during her decades-long IT career. When her managers introduced new digital tools or platforms for organizing and reporting on work, people often resisted. “Why would you change if you know you’re going to get a good performance review doing what you’ve always done?” says Arora. “Switching things up takes mental energy.”

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That’s why managers need to check in regularly with their employees and ask them how they’re feeling during and after a change. At the logistics company, Martensen had to find a balance between gathering feedback and advocating for change. On the one hand, she recorded how much time it took her workers to fill out a form on paper versus digitally. On the other hand, she was receptive when someone insisted that they had a better way of doing things. “Be firm but flexible,” says Martensen.

Arora agrees that gathering feedback is important, but cautions leaders to construct their questions so they get useful and productive answers. “I wouldn’t necessarily ask, ‘Do you like this change?’” says Arora. “I would ask, ‘Do the new incentives make sense? Do the new tools and processes help you achieve your goals?’”

A ServiceNow manager once asked Arora’s team to report on its daily objectives using a task board application rather than informal water cooler chats and in-person meetings. But nobody would do it. So the manager stopped holding live meetings and started using the task board app exclusively when conducting performance reviews. A new carrot (the chance to get a good performance review) and a new stick (being shut out of the team’s conversations) brought everybody into the fold.

In short, successful change management requires proper incentives. “Whenever there’s a change, managers and executives have to come in with new carrots and sticks because the old ones typically won’t work,” Arora says.

On a cognitive level, employees might resist change because they don’t have the bandwidth to change; on an emotional level, they might feel too overwhelmed, stressed, or uncertain.
The happy enterprise

Well-crafted, measurable experiences are the future of business

BY DAVE WRIGHT
Picture this: London, 1988. I land a job as a mainframe operator in a newfangled industry called information technology. I spend my first few months pulling and mounting tapes. At some point, the seasoned pros decide I’m ready for the next step. That’s printer operation, which involves changing paper and loading toner and fuser cartridges—very high tech.

A few more months pass by before I get to do the actual work of a mainframe operator: scheduling terminals and inputting the unintuitive commands of JES, RACF, and TSO while staring into a monochrome screen during my 12-hour shifts.

If I’d suggested the employee experience was not optimal and that the company didn’t properly celebrate moments that matter on my employee journey, my manager would have looked very puzzled…before bursting into laughter.

Fast forward 30-plus years and everything’s changed. What used to be sci-fi film props—touchscreens, personal communicators, and autonomous vehicles—have become reality. Employees today demand easy, personal, and thoughtful experiences.

Sound familiar? It’s exactly what companies try to provide their customers.

The era of total experience

When was the last time you had an experience you really enjoyed—as a customer, an employee, or just a human being? Hopefully, this is a fairly easy question to answer. But here’s a different one: How would you rate your satisfaction with that experience on a scale from one to ten?

Quantifying experience isn’t easy. Despite this level of difficulty—or perhaps because of it—entire industries have sprung up to help companies measure the experiences they deliver to employees and customers. Capturing and measuring experience is as vital as it is elusive.

If we can quantify experiences, we can improve them. So far, surveys have represented our best efforts in this arena. Many of us are familiar with net promoter score surveys, which help us put a finger on the customer’s pulse, or voice of employee surveys, which do something similar for employees (see sidebar "Valuing satisfaction").

Corporate organizations aren’t the only ones trying to put a number on experience. Gallup’s Global Emotions Report measures people’s positive and negative experiences worldwide. Every year, Gallup surveys about a thousand respondents in each country, asking questions about how often they’ve laughed, felt pain, gotten angry, or cried recently. These individual moments—having a laugh, lashing out at a loved one—are sorted into “positive” and “negative” experiences.

When we talk about moments that matter in the business world, we’re basically trying to do the same thing as Gallup. Maybe we’re not asking our customers and employees about the last time they wept, but the principle is the same. Breaking down a human experience into discrete moments helps us understand what makes people tick.

Lately, it’s become clear to me that we’re going about this the wrong way. Currently, customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) are on two different tracks. Different departments and teams are in charge of measuring and improving experiences for customers and employees. When I talk to business leaders, they think they have to make a choice. They can either allocate money toward better experiences for their customers, or they can make life better for their employees.

To me, that’s the wrong way to think about it.

I’m not the only one who feels this way. ServiceNow recently surveyed 1,000 C-level executives around the world about how they

Top CX steps that have a positive impact on EX:

- Build intuitive experiences via AI
- Create journeys around moments that matter
- Enable self-service across devices

SOURCE: THOUGHTLAB/SERVICENOW RESEARCH
Valuing satisfaction

Businesses thrive when they deliver great experiences

Loyalty is fleeting in the digital world. Companies earn loyalty by providing great experiences throughout the customer and employee journey. Measurement is a vital step to creating those happy experiences.

Here are some common experience measurement frameworks:

- **Net promoter score (NPS):** Measures customer loyalty by asking customers how likely they are to recommend a brand to a friend or colleague.

- **Customer satisfaction (CSAT):** Measures how satisfied a customer is with a product or service.

- **Customer effort score (CES):** Measures a customer's perception of how easy or difficult it is to purchase products, resolve issues, and get answers to their questions.

- **Employee net promoter score (eNPS):** Measures the likelihood of an employee recommending their company as a good place to work.

- **Employee satisfaction index (ESI):** Typically comprises three questions to be answered on a scale of 1 to 10: How much does management support you in your job? How well does your workplace meet your expectations? Do you have the tools you need to do your job effectively?

- **Voice of employee (VoE):** Gathers employee feedback, pain points, and suggestions for leadership.

BY JUSTIN HALL

deliver CX and EX. I found their answers illuminating. Put simply, companies that excel at experience delivery don't think of the two as separate. Instead, they align EX and CX to multiply the effects of each. Rather than tracking and improving one or the other, they're looking for ways to do both at once.

More than two-thirds of organizations that took this tack ended up increasing their revenue, while more than half improved the quality of their products and services and the health and safety of employees. Those are stunning figures. And it's not just about the money. Executives at leading experience organizations reported their employees were happier, safer, and more loyal. Teamwork came easier for them. Collaboration was smoother and more enjoyable.

These results tell me we're in a new era of total experience (TX). That's a good thing. It also means that managers must learn how to improve experiences across the board.

### Multiplying experience

Many of the most successful companies of our era aren’t providing novel services, but rather new and better experiences. Think Uber, DoorDash, Amazon, and Netflix. Clearly, the zeitgeist is telling us that experience is important. But how do we make it even better?

The most critical step is de-siloing EX and CX. That's something many of us started to think about in the early days of the pandemic. With the sudden focus on hybrid and remote work, EX started to look a lot like CX. Suddenly everyone had to order equipment for their home office using the same systems and processes customers used to buy their products.

According to our survey, many organizations took steps to integrate EX and CX during the pandemic. A little under a third used AI and other emerging technologies to build more intuitive experiences for customers. Here's the cool part: The data shows that better digital customer experiences also improve employee experiences. About three-quarters of respondents said that AI-enabled intuitive experiences originally intended for customers had a positive impact on employee experience. In short, a feedback loop: Better CX yields better EX.

A global retailer recently created a TX team that combines customer and employee call centers. The same agents tackle both customer and employee concerns. AI gives every agent a toolkit so they can handle nearly any question that crosses their desk. It's a win-win. Employees enjoy customer-level service, and customers benefit from internal accountability.

In the future, tracking and boosting TX might look something like a SimCity dashboard. Logging on to such a platform, we would see exactly how much revenue the business is bringing in alongside metrics on employee success and customer satisfaction. AI will be a huge help here. By mining survey data and performing sentiment analysis, the technology could tell us exactly how “happy” our business is.

As we emerge from the pandemic, we should continue to look for ways to keep the TX feedback loop going. People now expect it, and it’s just good business. The numbers don’t lie: Organizations that choose total experience today are setting themselves up for success tomorrow.
Results on the go

Companies need to meet employees and customers where they are

BY SHAFATH SYED
Mobile solutions are becoming increasingly mission-critical for organizations. Businesses looking to acquire and retain top talent are under pressure to offer flexible, frictionless ways of working. That’s because employees in many sectors now have — or are demanding — the flexibility to decide where and when they’re going to work.

Admittedly, we have yet to see broad daily use of mobile apps within large organizations. But that’s changing fast.

The rise of enterprise mobile

Mobile solutions are becoming increasingly mission-critical for organizations. Businesses looking to acquire and retain top talent are under pressure to offer flexible, frictionless ways of working. That’s because employees in many sectors now have — or are demanding — the flexibility to decide where and when they’re going to work.

A newly released ServiceNow and ThoughtLab survey of 1,000 global C-level executives shows how employees are demanding more flexibility and better experiences at work. Most respondents said their companies will emphasize employee well-being over the next couple years, including redesigning offices to promote employee health and social distancing. Furthermore, many companies reported they would continue to offer hybrid and flexible work schedules and invest in digital transformation to provide employees the tools they need to do their jobs from anywhere.

In light of such expectations, enterprise leaders should double down on the mobile employee experience. Businesses need to provide a hybrid working environment that supports employees working from home, coming into the office a few times per week, or working on the factory floor every day. Mobile can help create and support the flexible, hybrid environment employees are looking for.

Simply stated, employees expect flexibility, and smart organizations are turning to mobile to provide it.

Workplace navigation

Say I’m an office worker with a long commute. I don’t want to go into the office to sit on video calls all day; I can do that at home and save hours commuting. But I do want to go to the workplace if I need to collaborate with people face-to-face, or if there’s a meeting or event I want to attend in person. If I work some days at home and some days in the office, I can use enterprise mobile apps to help me navigate my day.

Using my workplace app, I can reserve a desk space or a conference room and see an indoor map with walking directions to it. I can access a QR code that clears me for entry into the physical building or allows me to order and pay for food at the cafeteria. I can sync my schedule with a colleague so we’re on-site at the same time and can get desks near one another for closer collaboration. If I drive an EV, I can find available charging stations. Mobile apps can provide a queue and let me know when it’s my turn to charge the car.

Workers want flexibility, sound governance, and a great employee experience.

Fun Fact: Research by Steelcase found that 40% of employees waste up to 50 minutes per day looking for a space to meet. And this was before the pandemic. With an office-mapping app, I can easily find my way to an open conference room or meeting space. Many office workers who were hired during the pandemic have never been to their physical offices.

Mobile bonding

Distell, a South African drinks manufacturer, immediately saw an opportunity to communicate more with its employees via mobile when the pandemic started. “We began leveraging our service portal to update employees with the latest information via any device,” said Wanda van der Bijl, HR business analyst at Distell. “Now, in a world where many of our staff continue to work remotely, mobile access ensures consistent and timely engagement for every employee.”

The right apps can help management connect and support employees wherever they may be. They can also help create a safer physical work environment as we return to the office. People can use a workplace services app to report a broken refrigerator, a liquid spill, or a workplace injury. Or the facilities team can use an app to contact employees who are in the workplace to inform them there will be a fire alarm test happening that day.

An additional use case for mobile is at-your-fingertips training. Imagine working on a manufacturing floor. You’re surrounded by equipment and need a refresher on how to use a certain machine. You scan the QR code on it for instant access to a five-minute video that tells you what the machine does and how to operate it. Or maybe your co-worker gets injured and you need to document what happened. You pull out your phone, take pictures, and submit them as an urgent issue for immediate care. Now your organization knows the details of what happened and where. The information can then be properly reported to workplace health and safety authorities.

There’s an app for everyone

Roughly 80% of the world’s workforce are deskless workers, according to research by the VC firm Emergence. The list includes nurses and first responders, along with food service, hospitality and factory workers. Service industry workers represent a huge number of people who don’t have a dedicated workspace and a company-issued laptop. Most people who work in retail don’t even have a corporate email account.

Mobile apps can enable easy communication with (and among) deskless workers. With a sound mobile strategy, you can ensure equal access to information. That beats posting memos in the break room and hoping everyone reads them.

You can also use mobile apps to build stronger connections with your deskless workers, driving engagement and loyalty. The Emergence survey found that 60% were dissatisfied with their work technology and 56% were sparring shadow IT by using their own technologies to fill the “app gap.”

At this point, industry leaders are acutely aware of the stresses their employees have endured during the last few years and the impact these challenges have had on their productivity. Providing workers with a high-functioning mobile experience makes it easier to get work done. It also helps the company engage with staff in more direct and meaningful ways.

We no longer live in a world where fancy offices and fat salaries are enough to attract — and keep — the best people. In this era of uncertainty and change, workers want flexibility, sound governance, and a great employee experience. By embracing mobile for enterprise, you can deliver all three.
Objectively happy
How do you quantify joy?

In 1881, British economist Francis Ysidro Edgeworth dreamed up the “hedonimeter,” a theoretical machine that would record pleasure moment by moment. The device would measure emotions “flickering with the flutter of the passions, now steadied by intellectual activity, low sunk whole hours in the neighborhood of zero, or momentarily springing up towards infinity.”

The device remained only a dream until 2008, when Peter Dodds and Chris Danforth created an algorithm they called the hedonometer, which scores online text from positive to negative. The goal is to help policymakers understand a population’s well-being.

They’re not alone in trying to quantify satisfaction at the national level. In 1988, Bhutan introduced the Gross National Happiness index to measure aggregate happiness across its population. Citizens are scored in nine domains, including psychological well-being, health, education, and community vitality.

For the last decade, the United Nations has released an annual World Happiness Report, which ranks countries using criteria like generosity, freedom to make life choices, and social support. This past year, Finland topped the list.

Obviously, this doesn’t mean all Finns are equally happy. John Monterosso, a professor of cognitive neuroscience at URC who studies the science of happiness, estimates about 40% of our happiness can be traced back to genes.

He cautions that it’s not yet possible to measure happiness by observing brain activity. There is no single area of the brain that always lights up on an fMRI to indicate that someone is happy. Nor is there a signature “neural event” that indicates a happy experience.

For now, the only way to determine whether someone is happy is to ask them.

BY EVAN RAMZIPOOR
Beyond the survey

Modern experience design requires instant response

BY STUART LUMAN

Brands ignore experience design at their peril. Nearly half of consumers would switch brands after a single negative interaction, according to a recent survey by Qualtrics and ServiceNow, the publisher of Workflow Quarterly. Four out of five say they’ve switched brands in the past due to a poor experience.

Employees are equally sensitive to bad experiences. During the pandemic, three out of five customer service agents reported customers were getting ruder and more aggressive. The result: One in five thought about quitting their job every single week, according to Qualtrics. That’s not sustainable for workers or companies.

“Those results are highly correlated,” says Bruce Temkin, head of the XM Institute at Qualtrics, an enterprise software company that specializes in experience management. “Engaged employees create great experiences for customers, while happier customers tend to produce prouder and more engaged employees.”

Going forward, companies need to get much better at observing and anticipating what customers and employees need and want, not simply waiting for survey results to come in. “It’s how quickly we learn and change what we’re doing that’s really going to be important in the future,” Temkin adds.

With recent advances in natural language understanding and related AI technologies, company call centers can automatically identify conversation topics and summarize key events during each call. These technologies can also help agents improve their performance by flagging specific behaviors such as empathy-building or cross-talk.

The future is one where technology allows customer service to be personalized at scale, producing happier customers and more productive, satisfied employees.

Customers

43% of customers said they would switch brands after a single negative customer service interaction

80% of customers said they had switched brands due to poor service

Employees

60% of customer service agents said customers became ruder and more aggressive during the pandemic

62% of customer service agents said their employers don’t listen to them and don’t treat them well

One in five customer service agents said they think about quitting every week
Let’s face it, it’s been a tough couple of years. The toughest. And yet, despite it all, amazing things are happening.


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Engaged employees create great experiences for customers. Happier customers tend to produce prouder and more engaged employees.”

—BRUCE TEMKIN, QUALTRICS