

What's the difference
between Employee Experience
and Employee Engagement?



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Employee experience, or EX was an HR buzzword throughout 2017, but isn't this just another name for employee engagement? In this article we discuss the differences between the terms and the approaches to working with our people.

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References and more on this topic:

[The Employee Experience Advantage by Jacob Morgan](#)

[Improving EX](#)

[2018 will be the year of EX](#)

[EX and CX](#)

[EX and CX](#)

^[1] www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/improving-the-employee-experience-culture-engagement.html#figure-4

^[2] Tracy Maylett & Matthew Wride (2017) The Employee Experience: How to Attract Talent, Retain Top Performers, and Drive Results

^[3] www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/improving-the-employee-experience-culture-engagement.html#figure-4



Employee Experience is a way of thinking and acting

Whilst the benefits of employee engagement have long been established, employee engagement measures tend to look at a particular moment in time (whether you measure annually, monthly, or during another time period).

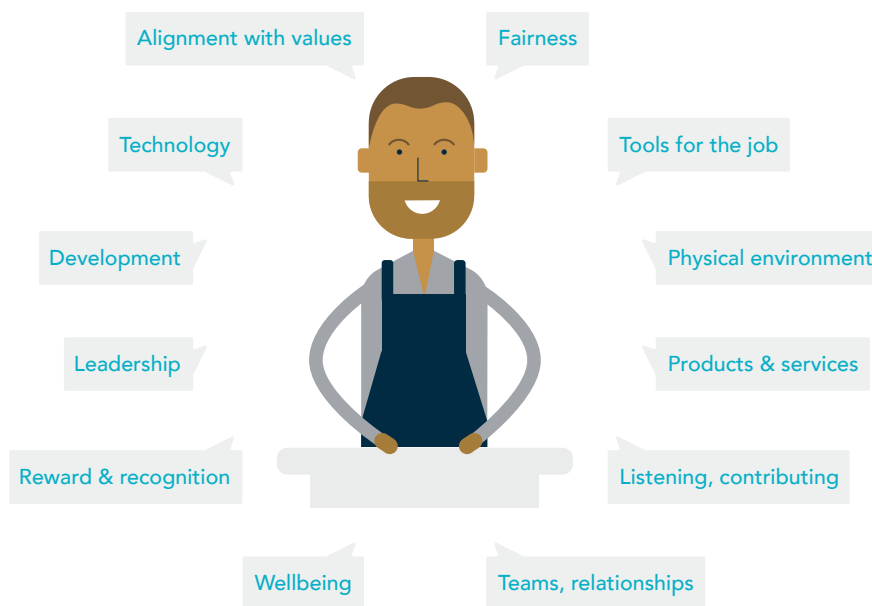
EX extends the approach to consider engagement at all touchpoints throughout the employee lifecycle, importantly, from the employee's perspective.

Josh Bersin⁽¹⁾ says,

"Starting as potential hires and recruits, employees look at everything that happens at work as an integrated experience that impacts daily life in and outside the workplace, including overall physical, emotional, professional, and financial well-being. Candidates assess future employers from the very start of the talent acquisition experience and make quick judgments about what life will be like for them in the organisation, based on how they interact with the enterprise during the recruiting cycle."

(continued)

EX is an employee-centric way of thinking about the organisation where decisions made internally consider 'how will our people perceive this?' 'What impression are we giving our people if we act this way?' It takes into consideration how employees see, hear, believe and feel about all aspects of their employment:



It requires a culture where leaders and managers alike put themselves in the employees' shoes. A definition we like is:

"Employee Experience is the sum of the various perceptions employees have about their interactions with the organisation in which they work"

Tracy Maylett & Matthew Wride ^[2]

Now, an organisation just focussing inward on employees wouldn't survive, so the employee experience and customer experience should be considered together. There shouldn't be intended differences between how the customer and the employee perceive an organisation's actions. (More on the relationship between CX and EX [here](#) and [here](#).)

Employee Engagement is the output you are aiming for

By improving the employees' experience of your organisation, you are going to achieve more engaged employees. Employee engagement can be seen as the end goal, while improving EX is the means to that end.

Employee Experience isn't	Employee Experience is
Just HR. Recruiting, on-boarding, performance reviews and other such activities may be led by HR but this only covers part of EX.	EX involves, for example, facilities (the physical workspace), corporate communications (how employees perceive what's going on, transparency), and IT (the tools to facilitate the job).
Interchangeable with the term employee engagement. Employee engagement is what you get as a result of achieving a great experience for our employees.	The input to achieving employee engagement. For example, if an employee has a great experience of leaders showing integrity, good line manager support, consideration for their wellbeing, a facilitative environment, they are more likely to be engaged.
How engaged employees are at a fixed point in time.	The sum of an employees' perceptions throughout the employee lifecycle
Employer Brand – the external image of the organisation.	The employees' day to day, real life experiences.
Just perks – short term 'feel good' initiatives.	A long term strategic approach that aligns culture, behaviour and processes.

What is the employee experience journey?

The employee experience journey looks at the lifecycle of the employee and thinks about the EX at each stage.

The aim of considering the EX journey, is to ensure employees are engaged all along the way from candidacy through onboarding, performance, growth, and eventually exit. Disengagement at any stage evidently leads to a worsening employee experience.



For example, during candidacy, we might consider:

- Does the candidate feel they are being treated fairly and equally?
- Have their contacts from the organisation 'lived' the values?
- Have they had a positive experience of the meeting places, technology and tools used through the process?

Later in the cycle, during 'performance and growth' we might think about some of the same aspects of EX in a different way:

- Does the colleague feel they have fair and equal access to development opportunities?
- During periods of stretch and learning, is their physical and mental wellbeing supported?
- Do they have access to the technology and tools they need to develop?

Why we should optimise the employee experience

Our people will have impressions of the things that their organisations do, and these won't be kept to themselves. Blistering employer reviews are all out there on Glassdoor and a quick Google of 'worst places to work' delivers plenty of horror stories.

The damage caused by publicised poor employee experience shouldn't be underestimated. [Amazon](#), [Sports Direct](#) and even 'best place to work' [Google](#) have seen damage to their employer brand from widely reported stories.

Internally, a poor employee experience at any point in the lifecycle can lead to disengagement, and the ensuing, proven problems such as increased absence, lower productivity, increased accidents and employee turnover.



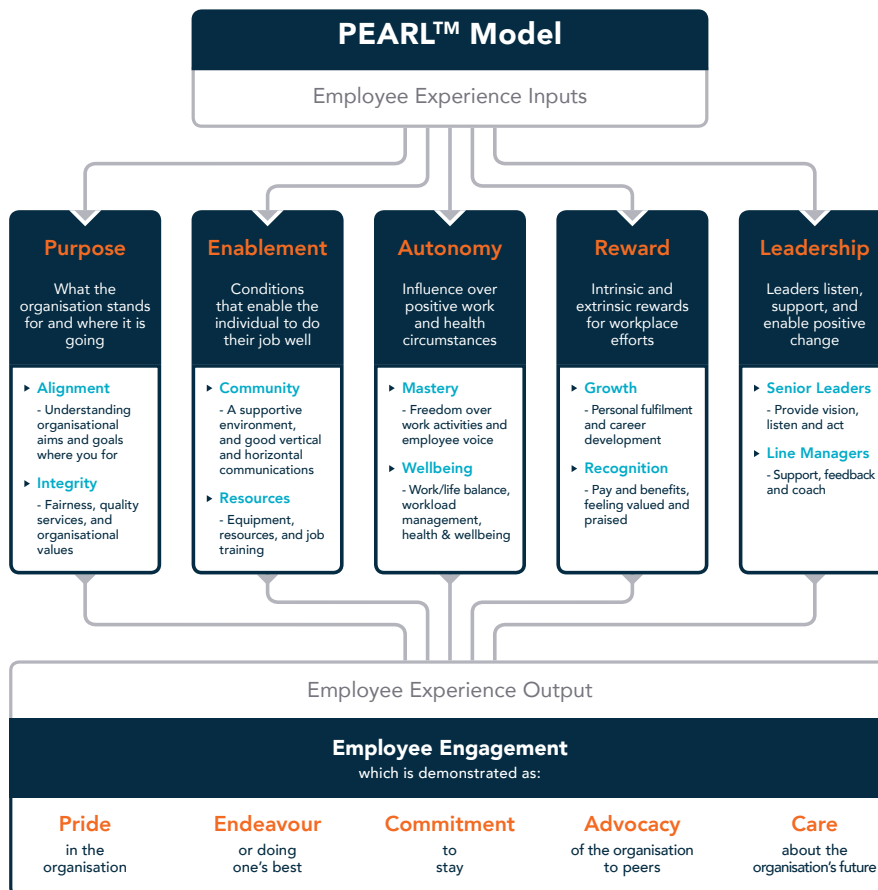
For more data and other resources please visit www.engageforsuccess.org

How can you assess the employee experience?

Organisations are developing an integrated focus on the entire employee experience, bringing together all the workplace, HR, and management practices that impact people on the job.

Josh Bersin^[3] references a model as a starting point to address EX that includes meaningful work, the purpose of the organisation, talent development and growth, rewards and wellness, the work environment, fairness and inclusion, and authenticity among management and leadership.

The PEARLTM model used by People Insight as a basis for employee surveys comprehensively includes each aspect of EX. It can serve as an assessment tool through the employee experience lifecycle to help you understand, and adjust your employees' experience accordingly.



(continued)

There are several ways to tackle EX assessment, based on the model.

For example:

1. Surveying all staff simultaneously and splitting results by stage of the lifecycle. This way you can compare EX at different stages to plan specific improvements.
2. Use the model, survey simultaneously, but tailor your questions specifically for employees at each stage. You won't be able to compare stages as thoroughly, but you may get more in depth feedback about each individual stage.
2. Run completely separate on-boarding, engagement, wellbeing, culture, and exit surveys, to different schedules. This may fit better with separate activities e.g. induction programmes and individual exits but requires more admin and comparisons won't be as clear.

However you design the process, it will be critical that leaders from across the business buy in to the importance of a good employee experience, and critically, are willing to take action based on your survey findings. More on this to come.

The key takeaways

- Employee experience extends the approach to consider engagement at all touchpoints throughout the employee lifecycle.
- It is an employee-centric way of thinking about the organisation where decisions made internally consider how employees feel about all aspects of their employment
- Employee engagement is the end goal while employee experience is the means to that end.
- It requires a culture where leaders and managers alike put themselves in the employees' shoes.
- A structured model, such as PEARLTM provides a good basis for assessing EX.

EX will become more commonly discussed in 2018. Organisations are likely to become increasingly aware of the impact that employee experience has on their business, and instigate both short-term engagement initiatives and longer-term strategies as they design a more meaningful EX lifecycle. Indeed, without employee engagement at all stages of the lifecycle, the employee experience is likely to be both poor and short-lived.

Already we have seen larger organisations taking the employee experience seriously, like when Airbnb's CHRO became Chief Employee Experience Officer. We expect this trend to continue.

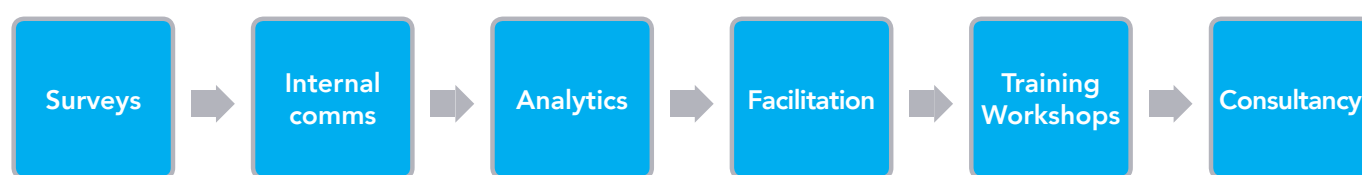
The image shows a screenshot of job listings from a platform like Indeed. Three job listings are visible, each with a white box highlighting its title and key details:

- Head of Employee Experience**
ASI - ★★★★★ 234 reviews - London
We are seeking a Head of Employee Experience to lead and enable our endeavour in providing an innovative employee experience, truly extending our customer...
- HR Advisor: Employee Experience**
Page Personnel · Coventry, GB
Posted 1 week ago · 5 views
🕒 Be one of the first 10 applicants
- Employee Experience Manager**
Guardian Jobs · London, GB
Posted 2 weeks ago · 30 views
🕒 Be one of the first 10 applicants

About People Insight

At People Insight we work with clients to measure engagement, wellbeing and culture using advanced survey software. What's more, our technology is backed up by cutting edge employee experience and organisation development research.

Our business psychologists help clients design best in class survey programmes, analyse data to reveal robust insight and understand exactly what to do to improve the employee experience.



We support clients with reliable project management, in depth knowledge and a focus on results. On average we find:

- **Clients improve their engagement scores by 7% after working with us**
- **Employees report they have seen action increase by 20% after working with us**

We'd love to talk

If you are interested in how our employee engagement programmes could help your organisation, contact us at:

W: peopleinsight.co.uk | T: 0203 142 6511 | E: enquiry@peopleinsight.co.uk

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