

BUILDING LEADERS

PRIORITIZING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE



Let's start with a workforce trend. A trend that has been accelerated in so many ways by the global pandemic we are all sick and tired of and is further supported by the inescapable evidence (and ongoing aftershocks) of The Great Resignation. That trend is: the employee experience.

We would suggest this trend has taken the form of a search that has its roots in the psychological teachings of Martin Seligman, author of "Authentic Happiness" and "Flourish." That trend could be articulated as follows:

"I fully understand that wherever I work, productivity matters! It's insulting to suggest that I wouldn't get that or somehow think otherwise."

"But you know what I've really come to grips with? My personal well-being matters just as much. To be completely honest, it matters a whole lot more! I want to work at a place that I enjoy, where I am truly connected to the people I work with and to the value our positive contributions bring to others!"

It seems the notion of organizations truly prioritizing those sorts of things has been given ever-increasing amounts of lip service and promotional support. When it came down to it, though, most continued to operate on the premise that productivity ultimately drove engagement, instead of the other way around. We are of the opinion that now — more than ever before — that premise is being aggressively challenged!

A focus on the employee experience has emerged as one of the key trends

of the past year, in terms of both talent acquisition and retention. In large part, an attractive employee experience translates to evidence that an organization prioritizes a positive and inclusive workplace; focuses on enhancing personal well-being; and builds extended stakeholder trust through transparency, empathy and integrity-based leadership.

CULTURE EMANATES FROM THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE CEO.

Considered in terms of supply and demand, you could confidently state that cultures that truly prioritize the employee experience are in limited supply compared to the talent demand for the kind of sophisticated and meaningful relationships those cultures routinely cultivate. While creating and sustaining such a culture is a complicated and multifaceted endeavor, the roles fulfilled by the CEO and the learning and development (L&D) function are critical.

CEO

Culture emanates from the heart and soul of the CEO. A culture defined by the employee experience recognizes the power of an engaged workforce. If the most visible person in the organization not only articulates the mantra about trust, people and the benefits of working together but provides "24/7-365" modeling of that mantra, others will take notice! Beyond that accountability

(at all levels) for those who behave in a manner that challenges or threatens the spirit of that working environment must be in place.

THE L&D FUNCTION

The L&D function needs to support the culture visibly and responsively by providing explicit and ongoing learning that helps employees develop the skills to effectively:

- **Behave:** Collaborate effectively when emotions are high, and the stakes are even higher.
- **Include:** Make sure every voice and every perspective is heard.
- **Appreciate:** Show appreciation for customers, leadership and each other.

Traditionally, organizations have been judged by their ability to hit targets and deliver results. For the record, that isn't going anywhere! But the trends identified above force all of us to consider the question: If employees are truly engaged at work, and routinely exert discretionary effort because they truly care about those they work with, work for and serve, is there any way that organization is going to fall short of hitting their productivity targets?

We think not! 🙌

Marshall Goldsmith is the world authority in helping successful leaders get even better. Sam Shriver is the executive vice president at The Center for Leadership Studies. Email Marshall and Sam.