HR GUIDE

Your guide to unlocking employee productivity in 2024

Expert advice and strategies to empower your people and augment your organization

Insights based on the 2024 Employee Experience Trends

Why employee productivity matters in 2024

Amidst economic uncertainty, volatile markets, new ways of working, disruptive technologies and precarious geopolitical conditions, organizations are having to rethink how they operate to ensure long-term success and sustainability.

And what's increasingly clear is this: with no clear way forward, growth is beginning to slow.

The rapid shifts towards digital and hybrid workplaces have brought about a boundaryless world, with many workplaces no longer tethered to a physical location, and teams no longer operating as siloed functions, driving up productivity at scale.

Any productivity gains over the past few years have since dissipated. Employees are burnt out, and poorly supported by organizational systems that cannot adapt quickly enough. What's more, with leaders across the globe struggling to provide stability, employee trust is in freefall — especially for those on the frontline.

As employees' confidence in a positive future for their organization and the security of their own employment continues to fade, it's become incredibly difficult to achieve any real kind of sustainable productivity. But the reality is that employees' experiences are inextricably linked to the overall success and growth of every organization on the planet.

For you — as a strategic leader in your organization, or perhaps a manager responsible for a growing team — the most important thing is this: despite all these external factors that you cannot control, focusing on enabling people and teams to do their best work, and ensuring they are engaged, healthy and productive, is the most effective pathway forward.

In this workbook, we assess the current state of employee experience to provide several strategic areas that HR leaders and people managers can act on and unlock employee productivity. From optimizing onboarding to enhance employee impact, through to using emerging technologies to augment your workforce and rebuild trust.

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Optimize onboarding to enhance employee impact and engagement

The onboarding journey is crucial for employee productivity because it provides new hires with the necessary tools, resources, and knowledge to perform their job effectively from the start, and aligns them with the organization's culture, goals, and expectations, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement that boosts motivation and performance long after the opening months of employment.

HOW CAN YOU ACT ON IT TO DELIVER RESULTS?

01_

Identify the highest impact experiences in the onboarding journey

Onboarding isn't a moment in time but a journey that sets the trajectory of success for the individual, team, and organization. Adopting a human-centric approach that better reflects the new starter experience enables you to focus investments on the moments that matter most.

+ Identify your most critical talent segments.

+ Map their onboarding journey to better understand their experiences.

+ Use the journey insights to design better experiences and adapt your EX listening program.

02_ Connect onboarding experience data with other metrics across the employee lifecycle

Capturing insights into the onboarding journey through a well-designed onboarding listening program and connecting onboarding experiences with individual and organizational outcomes is key. For example, organizations that study the relationship between the onboarding experience and early attrition may find that positive training perception reduces attrition. Additionally, moving towards continuous listening can help fill in the gap between solicited feedback cycles (e.g. quarterly or annual surveys) to identify insights in real time, enabling the organization to adapt.

> **+**   If you do not have an onboarding listening program in place, start now.

> **+**   Use onboarding experience data to demonstrate the impact on employee and organizational outcomes. Using Employee Journey Analytics, you can create more actionable insights.

> **+**   Explore different data types available to you, such as unsolicited and unstructured data that goes beyond surveys, to enhance listening capabilities.

03_ Develop an organization-wide onboarding strategy

In 2023, CHROs told us that onboarding was a lower strategic priority than talent attraction and hiring. With this gap, it's no surprise that new starters are having a poor experience.

> **+**   To break down silos and create a smoother onboarding experience, connect with the teams in your organization that play a role in helping employees succeed early on (this stakeholder mapping guide might be helpful).

> **+**   Align these teams on the metrics that represent your overall organizational goal (i.e. employee productivity). This could be ramp time, performance outcomes, engagement scores, retention or more. While each team may have their own individual KPIs, it's important to determine how these influence the overall goal (or maybe unintentionally work against it - for example, high training attendance rates on day one might be a poor experience).

> **+**   Build a compelling business case to secure ongoing investment in onboarding and other employee experience programs.

Empower frontline teams to do their best work

When frontline workers feel safe to voice their opinions, are recognized, and their needs are met, they are more likely to enthusiastically and efficiently serve customers, patients, and other members of the public. And as those who typically engage with customers first, it's in your best interests to support them.

HOW CAN YOU ACT ON IT TO DELIVER RESULTS?

01_

Build EX and CX alignment

Great customer outcomes are delivered by frontline employees, so working with your cross-functional colleagues to display the connections between Customer and Employee experiences is a powerful way to demonstrate the value of investing in the frontline employee experience.

+   Partner with your Customer Experience colleagues to build the connection with Employee Experience. Come together on shared goals that center employee experience as the driver of customer outcomes.

+   Build the business case to invest in improving the experience of frontline employees by connecting CX and EX data together using tools such as CrossXM.

+   Identify the key drivers of employee experience outcomes for your frontline employees. While our data shows specific patterns across the globe, it may be different in your organization (hint: we used the EX25 model in this research). If you have a large enough sample, look at different employee groups, segmenting the data based on role, location, and other metrics that could influence a differentiated experience.

02_

Work with frontline employees on solutions to improve operational effectiveness

Your frontline employees work with customers every day - they know your products and services inside out and they want to help make improvements. Working together is a win-win.

+ Collaborate with teams who are leading change management and process improvement efforts to help elevate the voice of employees who interact with these systems. Leverage the perspectives of frontline employees in design and improvement of processes and technology to ensure success.

+ Use frontline feedback tools to collaborate with staff and share ideas for customer experience improvements.

+ Switch your perspective of EX from being about listening to employees to having a conversation. Involve your employees in helping solve the biggest challenges your company is facing.

03_

Make psychological safety a top priority

In EX trends, frontline employees expressed higher levels of psychological threat and feel less able to challenge the way things are done compared to their non-frontline peers. This means that even with the best listening programs in place, some great ideas will remain unvoiced. Ensuring frontline staff feel safe to share ideas and feedback is the foundation for improving employee productivity.

+ Embed psychological safety into core systems and processes by starting with a clear definition of what psychological safety is and a way to measure it, such as the survey items in the Qualtrics EX25 methodology. With a shared understanding, integrate psychological safety into performance reviews and competency frameworks so these behaviors can be recognised and rewarded. Include psychological safety skills into 360 feedback and development plans.

+ Invest in development programs that equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to create psychologically safe environments. This includes vulnerability to admit mistakes, be open to dissent and ask for feedback. They must make a conscious effort to build trust and an environment where learning from mistakes is encouraged.

+ Create transparent and trusted communication channels. These organizational systems need to reflect the cultural change you want to see. From open Q&A in meetings, to confidential continuous listening and amending performance management processes to include the right behaviors, codifying change is what makes it stick.

Rebuild employee trust and augment the workforce with AI

Our research shows that people who believe in their organizations are more likely to adopt AI tools to help them work. Over the course of history, organizations that are able to quickly and effectively adopt new technologies win in their markets over time, but getting employees on board is key.

HOW CAN YOU ACT ON IT TO DELIVER RESULTS?

01_

Lean into the leadership enthusiasm around AI

+ Senior leaders are more excited about AI than anyone else in the organization. Leaders' willingness to embrace AI should be used as an example, reinforcing the opportunity to enhance people's capabilities, not replace them. It's important that employees hear this from leaders (not HR) and see these intentions reflected in the actions of leadership.

+ Build trust intentionally. Our research shows a significant drop-off between leaders' willingness to embrace AI and managers'. For mid- and first-level managers to get behind the AI technology and deliver the productivity benefits that leaders are excited about, there must be trust between these groups.

+ AI is set to transform every business function in the organization. A report by the International Monetary Fund on AI and the future of work found that up to 60% of all roles will be impacted by AI. HR teams are perfectly positioned to provide the strategic leadership to navigate these changes. Without this partnership, these transformations inevitably falter.

02_

Position AI as a tool to enhance human connection (not replace it)

+ [Factor in human emotions](#) to change plans. Many people are naturally nervous about how AI will change the nature of their jobs, and that affects their perceptions. Rather than boldly pushing the changes through, remember that building trust in AI takes time and effort - clear communication, education, and support should be part of your organization's change plans.

+ Actively involve employees in the [work redesign process](#). This will not only alleviate stress caused by uncertainty but also lead to better outcomes. For different roles, determine which tasks that can be fully automated, supported by AI, or require full human intervention. Co-creating a vision for the future of work, and providing development pathways, will lead to more successful integration and realization of AI's potential benefits.

+ Demonstrate the value of AI-enhanced People Operations. Employees provide organizations with a never-ending source of challenges, suggestions and thoughts on their experience through both solicited and unsolicited channels. Emerging technologies in People Operations provide an opportunity to understand this information and quickly surface actionable insights that enable managers and leaders to make better decisions, rapidly adapt to change, and create better employee experiences.

+ There are [some great examples](#) of how AI technologies are being applied in HR tasks today, as well as effectively [connecting otherwise siloed data to distribute insights](#) that fuel effective business decisions while protecting employee privacy. Now is the time to explore AI tools that can boost the impact and productivity of your teams.

03_

Get ahead of principles and governance to build trust

Every conversation about AI should begin with principles and ethics, not technology. While the business context and use case is super important, alignment with the organization's principles and values is far more so.

+ Build norms and standard practices that ensure privacy, transparency, bias, and impact on employees are considered in every technology decision. At a minimum, [establish a set of principles](#) that guide the use and governance of ethical data use & governance.

+ Establish an ethics committee that has a specific understanding and governance of employee data and can [embed AI ethics into HR & People Analytics projects](#).

+ We're all navigating employee data privacy in uncharted territory. Look at what other organizations are doing, but don't blindly copy. Instead, dig into the why: their principles, values, and goals. That's where the gold lies.

Productivity Action Areas

Whether it's enabling frontline workers, onboarding new hires, or encouraging AI adoption, People Teams have a significant role to play in enabling people to be as productive as possible. The following activity will help you prioritize areas to improve when it comes to embracing productivity practices. This PDF is editable so feel free to add your answers directly into the tables below and save the file for you to reference later.

PROFICIENCY ———— PRIORITY ———— NEXT STEPS

PROFICIENCY

On pages 9-14, use the 'Proficiency' column, rate how well your organization currently performs in these Action Areas using the 'Proficiency Rating' scale below.

PRIORITY

In the 'Priority' column, given your organization's people and business strategy, rate how important it is to begin or improve proficiency in the Action Area using the 'Priority Rating' scale below.

NEXT STEPS

Based on your focus areas, strategic goals and proficiencies in each, come up with some proposed actions and/or next steps to elevate your effectiveness. Note them in the 'Next Steps' column.

PROFICIENCY RATING

Based on your observations, rate how well the organization currently performs these actions.

1 = None
To my knowledge, this task has never been considered or attempted.

2 = Weak
The organization lacks the skills, resources, or processes needed to effectively complete this task. Attempts are rare, inconsistent, and often lead to negative outcomes or missed opportunities.

3 = Basic
The organization demonstrates basic capabilities for this task. Completion is inconsistent, with occasional successes. Performance meets minimum standards but offers no competitive advantage.

4 = Competent
The organization competently completes this task. It has processes and resources in place, but there are opportunities for improvement. Performance achieves its goals but with moderate impact.

5 = Strong
The organization demonstrates strong capabilities in this task. It utilizes innovative approaches and efficient execution, leading to positive outcomes, competitive advantage, and alignment with organizational goals. This activity sets the organization apart.

PRIORITY RATING

In the context of your organization, rate how important it is to begin or improve.

1 = None
Improvement or completion of these tasks will have minimal impact on organizational goals. Delaying action on this task has no significant consequences.

2 = Weak
Taking action to improve can be done in the future, when resources become available. Delaying this work might cause minor inconveniences or missed opportunities.

3 = Basic
Improvement efforts should be considered alongside other priorities. Delayed action could lead to moderate setbacks or require additional effort later.

4 = Competent
Improvement in this area is required to avoid potential issues, or accelerate opportunities. Resources should be shifted to address this task if necessary.

5 = Strong
Immediate action is required to prevent major setbacks or capitalize on crucial opportunities. Delaying this work could have severe repercussions.

Optimize onboarding to enhance employee impact and engagement

STRATEGIC GOAL			
Identify the highest impact experiences in the onboarding journey			
ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Critical talent segments are defined			
Onboarding journey is clearly mapped out			
Onboarding experience insights are used to make improvements			

STRATEGIC GOAL			
Connect onboarding experience data with other metrics across the employee lifecycle			
ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Employee experience is measured at multiple points in the onboarding journey			
Onboarding experience metrics are linked to employee outcomes at later stages			
Onboarding experience insights include data from sources beyond traditional surveys			

STRATEGIC GOAL
Develop an organization-wide onboarding strategy

ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Teams that impact the employee experience from application through to fully ramped, are aligned on key metrics			
Our hiring and onboarding processes deliver high value to the organization			
The business case for improving the onboarding experience is clear			

Empower frontline teams to do their best work

STRATEGIC GOAL			
Build EX and CX alignment			
ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Customer and Employee Experience teams regularly communicate with each other			
Connections between CX and frontline EX data are made			
Employee experiences that impact frontline employees are understood and acted on			

STRATEGIC GOAL			
Work with frontline employees on solutions to improve operational effectiveness			
ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Change management and process improvement projects use EX data			
Frontline feedback tools are in place to collect product, service or operational improvement ideas			
EX insights inform everyday business decisions			

Make psychological safety a top priority

ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Psychological Safety an EX metric that is measured and reported			
Behaviors that build psychological safety are recognised and rewarded			
There are multiple communications channels open for employees to share their feedback			

Rebuild employee trust and augment the workforce with AI

STRATEGIC GOAL
Lean into the leadership enthusiasm around AI

ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
The vision for AI and the impact on the way we work is communicated			
Leaders are taking steps to actively build trust with employees			
Planning for the workforce of the future has begun			

STRATEGIC GOAL
Position AI as a tool to enhance human connection (not replace it)

ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
Change management or workforce transformation projects are centered on human experience			
Employees are involved in work redesign processes			
Emerging technologies are being adopted to enhance the efficiency of People Teams			

STRATEGIC GOAL
Get ahead of principles and governance to build trust

ACTION AREAS	PROFICIENCY	PRIORITY	NEXT STEPS
There is a clear set of principles in place to ensure privacy, transparency, bias and impact on employees are considered in technology decisions			
An ethics committee oversees ethical employee data use & governance			
Emerging trends, practices and principles are monitored and integrated			

Transform employee experiences with XM for People Teams

As organizations continue to evolve their business models and plan for the future of work, it is ultimately human-centric thinking that will help them to reach the next level. And it all starts with listening, understanding, and acting on employee experiences.

With Qualtrics XM for People Teams, you have a single, holistic solution to build high-performance teams, improve manager effectiveness, measure beyond engagement, and understand what truly matters to your people.

Confidently set goals for your organization and empower managers to take the right actions at scale, see the full picture with a 360-degree view of every employee touchpoint — going from candidate to onboarding, to development, to exit — bring together every signal, across every channel, and use powerful people analytics to identify where you should focus your investments for maximum impact.

READY TO GET STARTED?

XM FOR
People Teams