

Managing the experience of the desked and the deskless

The needs of employees are more diverse than ever before. With eyes fixed firmly on employee experience, SaaS developer WorkForce Software is stepping in to connect employers with an increasingly varied workforce

Despite the adversity and pressures endured by deskless workers during the pandemic, the majority of this vast employee group have kept our societies running, and they now have a clearer view of what they want and deserve from employers beyond Covid-19. Those employers, in turn, must now give the deskless a louder voice, harness the data resulting from these communications, and create a more meaningful employee experience as a result.

Traditional, transactional and analogue employer-employee relationships, and top-down communications, are becoming methods of the past. In their place, more digitised and data-driven forms of employee engagement are needed to elevate the micro-moments that workers experience.

Issues around time capture and scheduling, role development and training, holidays and leave, the workplace environment, and any other parameter of job satisfaction now need to be drivers of employee engagement, of job satisfaction, and – critically – of ultimate business value.

This needs to be done as part of a digital, reciprocal feedback loop – as part of a yin and yang balance.

The balance between corporate and employee needs

Marc Gingras is senior vice-president of employee experience strategy at WorkForce Software – a global SaaS organisation that develops, sells and deploys modern workforce management solutions for a host of renowned brands including Converse, Pandora and Kurt Geiger.

He reflected on this new employee engagement paradigm: “We use the term ‘yin and yang’ to demonstrate that before, only corporate needs were served – in the form of driving profits, operational efficiencies and scheduling resources. Now this needs to be balanced with employee needs – having a voice, feeling heard, giving feedback, having flexibility.

“The companies that manage to find this balance between corporate and employee needs (the yin and yang) are now outperforming more traditional companies that remain only top-down.”

Having been active in the market for 22 years, WorkForce Software is unique in its ability – and mission – to help organisations modernise their approach to workforce management in a way that elevates both employee experience and business outcomes.

This is achieved by connecting all strands of employee experience – from scheduling hourly workers to capturing employee sentiment in real time – in a quantifiable, data-driven way.

The right information for the right group Inevitably, communication is paramount to this vision.

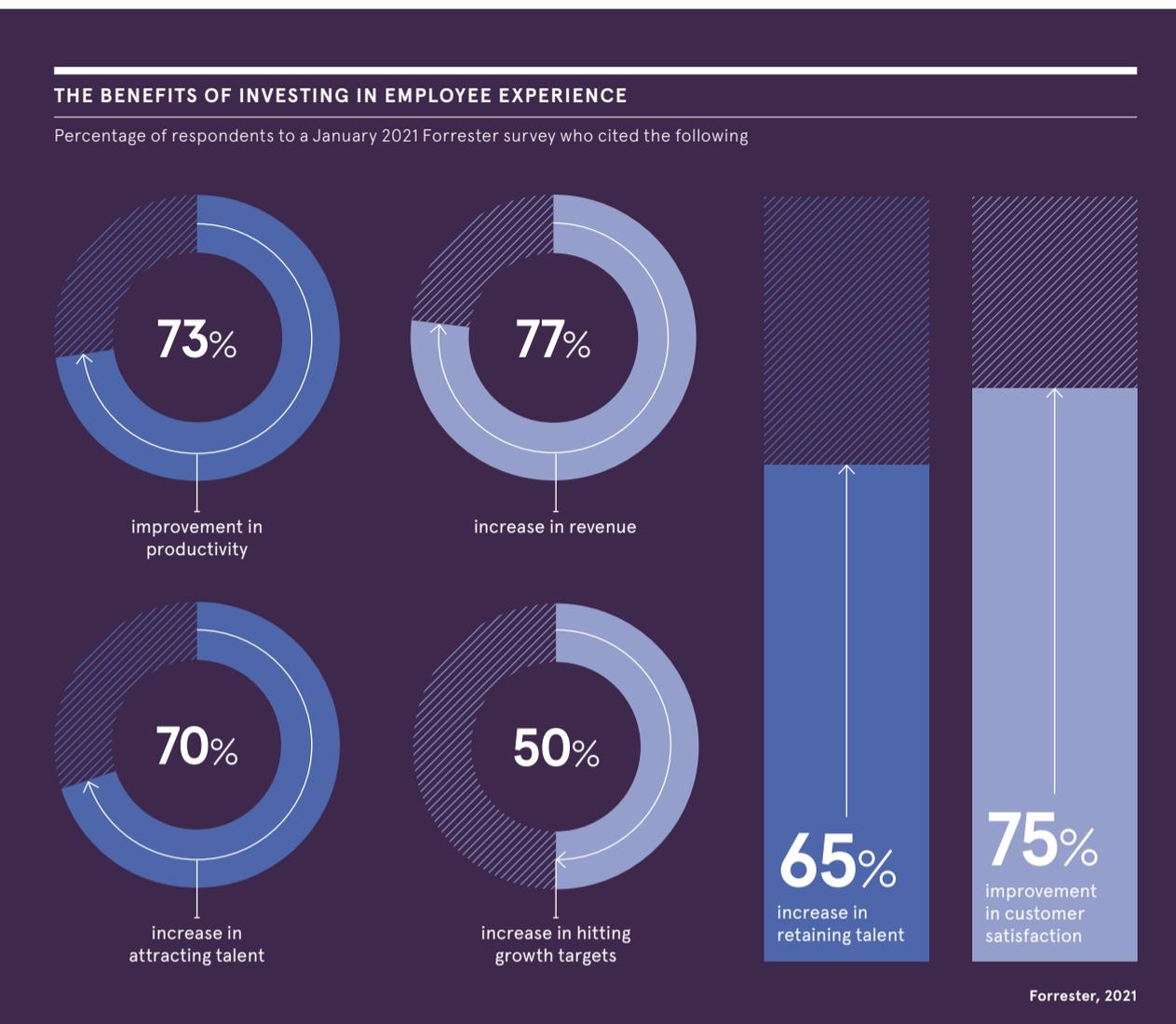
Gingras continued: “Employees have different needs, different roles, different scheduling requirements, different cultural or regional considerations. You have to understand different employee groups – the desked, the deskless, the gig, the hybrid – so you can then cater your message and your strategy around ‘what is the right information for the right group’.”

In this regard, Gingras added that progress has been made. Most decision makers, especially in the aftermath of Covid-19, recognise the need for better communication as a whole.

The next frontier is to better personalise that communication.

“That’s definitely where employers need to focus their efforts to unlock the next wave of value,” Gingras said. “Companies will look to digitise their communication strategies, but often from a perspective of ‘one-size-fits-all’. They’ll use tech to make it quicker and easier to create feedback loops. But they’re not using tech to create individualised insight into what each employee group wants or needs – as epitomised by the concerns of the deskless workforce at present.

“And if the ambition is to make every employee feel valued and heard, then that’s still a massive pitfall.”



You can really feel there’s a better atmosphere and more of a connection between stores and the head office than there ever was before. People working in the stores feel like they have a voice and a platform to share their thoughts and be heard

Alice Millchamp, retail operations manager, Kurt Geiger

Modern workforce management

This is where WorkForce Software as a company comes into its own.

As you’d expect, much of the onus when it comes to employee experience – especially among the deskless and hourly employee population – is with managers. But it is clearly too much to expect them to keep on top of every employee’s separate needs, demands, scheduling changes, grievances, ambitions, trajectories and proposed development junctures.

The ability to digitise this process with a modern workforce management solution that uses AI (and to set up automated reminders and cues for when action should be taken around each individual) shows how tech can be a champion of personalisation – and a champion of the yin and yang.

Ewan Speirs, vice president of market strategy at WorkForce Software,

explained: “There was a great study by Forrester earlier this year which showed that companies who embrace a new way of thinking, moving away from ‘command and control’ or the transactional and towards the yin-yang balance, would enjoy four times higher profits, per employee, than those companies who resist.

“There is just so much evidence that this way of communicating and operating is a positive thing, but there’s a gap between knowing it’s a positive step and putting a strategy into action.

“That’s where we come in, with a modern approach to workforce management that gives individuals a voice. And that ensures those voices lead to both a better employee experience and improved business value.”

Every employee can be a brand advocate

This refined method of engaging with, supporting and managing the workforce isn’t just about the big milestones in an employee’s journey. It’s also about instilling a confidence and positivity where workers feel their personal concerns and needs are being met in an ongoing way.

For example, within a one-size-fits-all approach, annual employee sentiment surveys issued by HR would include everything around the employee experience, which would often be irrelevant to many people. Why would someone who doesn’t get offered overtime be asked about their feelings on overtime, for example?

“These annual surveys lack clear action and follow-up about how to improve the employee experience. They don’t address or gain understanding around the micro-moments in each person’s work life. They therefore miss out on important feedback,

which could be aggregated as communication across the organisation,” Gingras said.

It’s all about scaling individuals’ micro-moments into company-wide culture.

“I like to call it ‘creating empathy at scale,’” Gingras affirmed. “Communications has often been a siloed effort – the intranet, email, etc. But it’s not been integrated into the small moments and feelings that make up every single day and that dictate a person’s ultimate satisfaction.”

By embedding communication into the everyday and gauging feelings on those micro-moments, companies can directly impact issues of talent attraction and retention that they cite as primary challenges in the modern climate.

“Beyond that though, organisations should be looking at the wider benefits,” Speirs concluded. “An employee that has a great experience, that is treated well, that is given a voice and purpose, and that has a degree of control and consistency in their work schedule will do more for the business and will ultimately become a brand advocate for that business. And there’s nothing more powerful than that.”

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