How Human Resources Can Add Value to Customer Experience Excellence
by Lynn Hunsaker

Customer experience (CX) is all about people getting what they need in their lives. People in your company are central to designing and delivering great customer experiences. So Human Resources (HR) departments can make a big difference is helping companies achieve CX goals, as we discussed in Part 1 of this article:

- Seeing HR’s work within the bigger picture of external customers’ needs.
- Helping executives establish a customer-focused big picture in strategy and culture.
- Injecting a CX backdrop in the way HR facilitates hiring.
- Developing and recognizing employees.

Part 2 of this article revisits a #CXO chat on twitter where ideas were discussed on how HR can expand value to the company’s CX goals by facilitating knowledge management, employee engagement, and cross-functional collaboration. Data insights can help maximize ROI of the work done by HR and employees collectively.

Knowledge management is important to CX because (1) customers don’t want to repeat themselves and they expect consistency in their dealings with the company over time and across locations and among departments: customers see a company as a single unit; and (2) efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge across the company can significantly save time, energy, and costs, and improve morale, productivity, and return on assets. Here are ways HR can help:

Knowledge Management
• HR can be a catalyst to knowledge sharing, but it requires a cross-organizational culture and alignment to succeed. —@tcrawford
• Use group sharing engines to share documents with strategies and knowledge across departments. —@EngageGXD
• Propagate thought leadership: blog/wikis/social media are a great way to tap into peers’ expertise. —@sharmasights
• An enterprise social platform can integrate collaborative networking & knowledge management. —@RickClements01
• Highlight CX “employees of the month” and record video podcasts where they share their guidance with peers. —@jameskobiels

Employee engagement is vital to CX because (1) technology, surveys, and intelligence are only as valuable as the actions that they inspire and enable, and (2) customer experience is shaped by the ripple effect of each department across the company. Many companies are striving to maximize employee engagement for financial reasons, or to be viewed as a great place to work, making it easier to attract and retain top talent. If you agree that your company would not exist without customers, then exponential value may be achieved when CX is the context for every type of employee engagement — not just among customer-facing employees for specific CX endeavors. Here are ways HR can help:

Engagement

• The more successful engaged companies understand that the CX starts with EVERY employee trained and engaged. —@iamLivingston
• High employee engagement = ownership and pride. Create CX playbooks & best practice to guide interactions with customers. —@Lynn_Teo
• CX is often a reflection of employee experience. HR should help promote a happy, healthy, and prosperous work environment. —@Lynn_Teo
• HR must integrate with the Ops teams. Communicate the challenges, talk to the floor, know the pulse. Listen, observe, and advise. —@iamLivingston
• Focus employee metrics more on CX enabling behaviors, less on survey ratings. —@clearaction
• If employees are empowered and engaged, just get the organization out of their way. —@thecxguy
• Employee engagement is improved when they get regular personalized customer feedback on their ability to satisfy (or otherwise). —@jameskobiels
• Good idea to empower all employees to participate in social media with customers: EMC, Intel, Adobe, IBM do. —@clearaction

Cross-functional collaboration is essential to CX because (1) customers see a company as “one”, (2) aligning the company to customers is more likely to succeed than insisting the customers align to the company, (3) customer pain is often the result of weak handoffs and communication gaps between functional areas, and (4) silos are a source of wasted costs, time,
energy, and goodwill — usually for the company and customers alike. Here are ways HR can help:

**Collaboration**

- We assume teams know how to collaborate across departments. Frameworks and guidelines for interaction help. —@Lynn_Teo
- Anyone can work together if they understand how intricately interdependent they are. —@mhsutton
- Collaboration can only happen if supported by a strong open culture & tools that can be integrated into the workflow of all. —@iSocial_Fanz
- By identifying partnerships between key department leads & formalizing key interactions, HR has a unique vantage point across the organization. —@Lynn_Teo
- Combine cross-functional teams into broader scheme of things and set CX objective. —@sharmasights
- Omit the notion of “customer-facing.” Service standards are needed for *all* employees, regardless of title or level. —@stephaniethum
- CX and HR can collaborate better if they have meetings together first of all, and if their department heads talk regularly. —@EngageGXD

**Data** can be insightful to all of the roles HR takes on in facilitating the company's CX goals. 60% of companies are now investing in big data and analytics to make HR more data driven. As CX differentiation opportunities, your company can be among the first to benefit from smarter decisions through workforce analytics, which are currently in use by: (1) 9% of firms for employee engagement and commitment, and (2) 3% of firms for decision-making in the areas of collaboration and knowledge sharing.

- **Hiring:** Data can help determine common characteristics that define the “right fit”. —@AlexConde
- **Development:** HR can use big data to identify training/development needs and content for CX-focused business and behaviors. —@clearaction
- **Development:** Customer experience negatively impacted by disgruntled employees. CX & HR must identify link, mitigate risk. Look for trends showing sour-channel-employee impacts on CX. Remove from channel before too late. On positive side, do analytics to identify trend impact of loyal/happy channel employees on CX. —@jameskobielsus
- **Recognition:** Big data might be used by HR to better design/understand impact of CX bonus criteria. —@clearaction

Customer experience is broadly affected by the entire company: its culture, internal handoffs, attitudes, decisions, processes, policies, and actions. Knowledge management, employee engagement, and cross-functional collaboration can be facilitated by HR to achieve greater connectedness, consistency and synergy both internally and externally. CX excellence is about
people (suppliers) giving their best to people (customers) who are willing to reward that with their wallets and enthusiasm.

In Part 1 of this article, *Why Customer Experience Excellence Requires HR Engagement*, see how HR can modify their core stewardship to promote greater customer-focus.

*Let’s discuss how to customize this to your situation; contact us at OptimizeCX@ClearActionCX.com*