

## **THE POWER OF PEOPLE: WHEN PEOPLE AND CULTURE ARE THE KEY TO ORGANISATIONS SUCCESS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study intends to analyse the impact of people and culture's management through engagement and employee experience towards the organisation's success. In fact, after some research the data demonstrate that organisations understand the importance of retain and create happiness at work. The same organisations are starting to create a journey for their workforce: since the first day people have contact with the brand until the last day when they decide to leave or they go on the retirement and they take with them all the memories and experience, heritage with them. Organisations want and understand the need of having employees engaged, attract new talent, and retain team members, especially high performers and key people. This study reveals that when employees are more committed to be happier at work, they tend to take part of the ownership of their organisations. Today organisations are more focused on people and the value that they can add to every single product and/or service they design, create and deliver. Organisations want to feed a better and healthier culture founded on an inside-out mission and real values. All this investment on internal management is taking the consumer experience to a higher level. Happy and committed employees will create happier and more loyal clients.

### **THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The main goal is to verify how the people and culture management is attaining more importance on both sides: employee and employer. Employee experience and engagement is gaining more space and impact on the organisations' strategies. From the transactional economy, organisations are walking to an emotional, experience economy. In the customer-centric dynamics, organisations are putting employees first because these, once deep involved with the mission and goals of the organisation, will be more devoted to customers. People "who love going to work are more productive and more creative. They go home happier and have happier families. They treat their colleagues and customers better. Inspired employees make stronger economies." (Sinek, 2009, p.14). Every single company "can (should) focus on its value creators – the frontline employees. (...) in his or her knowledge, creativity

commitment to tasks, and capacity to collaborate. In fact, (...) “the true value is created in the interface between the customer and the employee. (...) When a company puts its employees first, the customer actually does ultimately come first and gains the greatest benefit.” (Nayar, 2010, p.7). The way people are engaged, internally, will impact the way people see the organisation externally. This will influence companies’ reputation, brand/service perception and ultimately the business survival and its future: “Employees who are dispositionally self-efficacious and proactive are likely to use their initiative, engage in proactive service performance, take charge to bring about change, proactively solve problems and implement ideas.” (Patterson *et al.*, 2009). When people and culture are the spine, the nuclear atom of an organisation, the service, the product and their customers are the most advantaged elements.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

On our research we have decided to apply the model from Kumar and Pansari. According to the authors “we define engagement as the attitude, behaviour, the level of connectedness among customers, between customers and employees and of customers and employees with the firm.” (Kumar and Pansari, 2016, p. 498). This was the trigger for our study. With this in mind we have started our interviews. To complete this exploratory study, we’ve decided to follow a qualitative research by creating a script and interviewed 4 people in 10 organisations based in Lisbon. “Qualitative research starts from and returns to words, talk, and texts as meaningful representations of concepts.” (Pratt, 2009, p.856). The original script was written in English, then translated to Portuguese to be applied on the organisations. Each interview was fully transcript in Portuguese and the main findings and relevant content were enlightened in English to produce this paper. On each organisation, four employees were chosen: two women and two men from different departments and positions - board management, executive leadership, line managers and individual contributors. All interviewed people have Portuguese nationality and have a labour contract with their employer organisation. None outsourced employees have been selected to this study. All employees have between 25 and 50 years old. Interviews were done individually on the headquarters of each organisation. Interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes each. All conversations have been recorded with the individual’s authorisation. The note of confidentiality was explained and applied to all of them. The interviews followed the same script: three main blocks on a semi-structure script. Participants were asked to think about engagement and experience and share their thoughts and examples. Different organisations were chosen, multinational companies, agencies, national companies, private funds. The diversity of the organisations was accepted and taken as an added value to our work. To convert all audio into text, we’ve applied the google audio tool and a Huawei

phone app that can transform audio into text. A final check was done in order to verify all sentences and avoid mishaps. After all transcription, a content analysis has been done and the most relevant facts, insights and details have been listed. The content analysis was done using the MAXQDA software.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this exploratory study was to understand how engagement and experience, people and culture, are taking such a crucial role on organisations' success. Today employees are more committed and accountable as they want to be more recognised, happy and part of something bigger than themselves as individuals. In the same equation, and to attract and retain more talent, organisations are more focused on employees, on their people and culture, and how to design and deliver a better internal experience - since the beginning until the end of team-member's journey. According to our content analysis, the principal finding confirm that happier and recognised employees work better, work more and have the ownership of the organisations they work for. Once people are happy and have good work conditions – financial, physic and technological – they will go further and beyond to complete their tasks, deliver their inputs, data, information and when needed they will internally collaborate with their teammates or with other departments. To raise this good environment and to keep workforce aligned with them, employers are changing and investing on the future of work. Nevertheless a few organisations are not applying this or taking these questions as a priority. Below the list of the most important and highlighted findings extracted from the content analysis done:

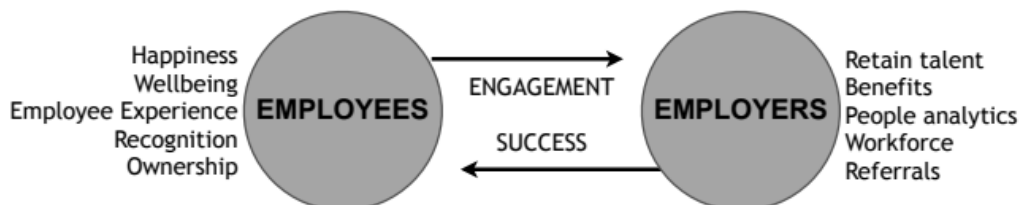
- 1) Most of the interviewees say they like their jobs and they are happy at work. They feel that they are part of something: family, team, organisation, culture.
- 2) The feeling of belonging was mentioned multiple times – the emotional link and the human aspect of being accepted and valuable inside the organisation.
- 3) All interviewed people, despite the job and the position they have, spoke about the power of recognition and the importance of this aspect to retain talent.
- 4) All interviewed people raised the importance of happiness at work, the wellbeing variable and the crucial aspect of work/life balance.
- 5) All interviewed employees agreed that their organisations value more the individual, their soft skills, than the job position and the tasks that there are committed and designated to do.
- 6) From the point of view of organisations, as leaders and builders of a strategy, we could note that only a few are planning and designing a structured employee experience. Nevertheless, all companies have a list of benefits and create events to get together their employees and

promote a better life for them. Following a more structured or more informal way, all interviewed organisations implement a list of actions to create a good work environment: flexibility on the work hours, the possibility to work from home, the team/company dinners and parties; the physical structure with infrastructures to have lunch or to have a break; the empowerment of the employees by asking them to be part of the decisions.

- 7) Only a few of the interviewed claim that their organisations are promoting situations of work mobility and career progression. Most of the people explained that is difficult to grow or to move from departments.
- 8) Both, organisations and employees, understand that the salary is not an imperative condition to work or to retain people. Employees value more other work conditions and benefits.

More than ever organisations understand that taking care of their people and on the importance of retain their employees is key. People and culture are two of the hot topics on organisation's strategies, missions and visions. After more than 40 employees interviewed, aside their gender, ages, under all circumstances and positions, every single individual want the same: recognition, to be happy and to balance, the best way possible, their work and their life. People want to be treated as people, as a unique human being. These people will create and found the best of the cultures and the values they will read, feel, live and believe. This is the key for the success of employers and employees. People and Culture are the key for organisation's success. It's all about people (see figure 1).

**Figure 1:** People and Culture: employees and employees on organisations dynamic



*Keywords: engagement, employee, people, culture, organisation, happy*

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