

# The Employee Experience— The New Catch Phrase



Office Design Specialists

# Introduction

Have you ever stopped to think about how the world of work is constantly changing? The new office environment offers employees choice and control of where to work depending on the task that they are completing. With increased interest in the employee experience, it has become essential for employers to create an office environment that motivates employees to come to work and provides the tools they need to perform their tasks efficiently. The office space can now be used as a tool to attract and retain the right employees. The question is: what is your company doing to cater for the employee experience?



# 1. The shift in the world of work

According to Schawbel (2014) technology is advancing at a rapid rate allowing us to do things that were never possible before. As a result, we are no longer confined to office spaces to complete our work tasks, but are able to connect 24 hours a day, from anywhere and everywhere.



## Ease of communication

Through the introduction of social media platforms, emails, instant messaging, video conferencing and much more, people are able to connect with one another from anywhere. This enables companies to compete on a global scale.



## 2. How the shift is impacting employees

### Work life integration

Gone are the days when you could come home from the office and unplug, we are now living in a 24/7 always connected business environment (Schawbel, 2014). Work life balance has changed to work life integration indicating that people can no longer separate their work from their home lives.

### Remote working

Advanced technology has made it easier for employees to work from out-of-office locations. Numerous research studies have shown that this new trend lowers company costs and boosts productivity. A study in Australia by TNS Global found that 52% of people believe that employees working from home are just as, if not more, productive than office workers.

### The employer-employee relationship

We've also seen a big shift in the employer employee relationship which has changed to one of partnership as opposed to a command and control type relationship. It is no longer about being the king of a castle, so to speak, but the centre of a circle. Old traditional loyalty is dead and there is a new enlightened form of loyalty based on shared values, goals, mutual caring and respect (Chaturvedi, 2010). Employers want their teams to rotate around them and be empowered to make decisions themselves.



## Productivity

Research shows that office design has a 20-58% impact on productivity, this can be either positive or negative (Leaman & Bordass 2005; Brennan, Chugh & Kline, 2002; Hameed & Amjad, 2009). This indicates that the design of the office space has become a key contributor to employee productivity. Companies need to create spaces that allow personalisation, instead of tightly enforced workplace standards, allowing choice and control of where and how people work.

## Engagement

According to a recent study by Gallup in 142 countries only 13% of employees were found to be engaged at work. Disengaged workers lack motivation and are less likely to make positive contributions to the organisations bottom line. They are unhappy and unproductive at work and liable to spread negativity to co-workers (Crabtree, 2015) . This then has an impact on absenteeism as much as R33 800-R46 000 per employee per year (Riley, 2014). To combat this you need to create a healthier, happier workforce which in turn leads to an increase in productivity.



## So what does mean for your business?

Today's workplaces are fast paced and competitive. As companies operate full steam ahead employees are asked to do more work with less resources. This often results in burnout and disengagement which is a real threat to organisations.

## The emergence of the employee experience

As any successful CEO will tell you, your employees are your competitive edge. Highly productive employees improve your bottom line by contributing excellent service, effective solutions and world class ideas (Morgan, 2015). A top notch workforce is the key to organisational success and most organisational leaders will tell you this. Your employees are therefore, your greatest asset.

According to Morgan (2015) in the past, employers needed to give people a place to do their jobs. There was little focus on engagement, productivity, inspiration, empowerment, beautiful office spaces and modern technology. Companies are now starting to create memorable employee experiences to keep their own employees happy and engaged. The power has now shifted to the hands of employees.



## How to cater for the employee experience

Companies need to create office environments where employees want to come to work. How do companies do this. They turn their focus to the employee experience by offering benefits:

- Catered meals and lunch facilities close by
- Beautiful offices
- Modern technology
- Flexible work spaces, allowing choice
- Coffee machines & a choice of beverages
- Ergonomic chairs
- Access to fitness facilities



## How to design offices for the shift

### Flexibility

Allowing for growth or contraction (streamlining) the business by implementing multifunctional spaces. Fixed partitions take up a lot of space and are expensive. You need to be able to pool resources together when necessary and change the layout of the office to accommodate for changing business requirements.

### Mobility

The increase in employee mobility is affecting the design and allocation of space in buildings. More employees are starting to work remotely. Some companies may have desks in the office that are unoccupied at certain times in the day.

To use both space and their facilities budgets more efficiently, more organisations expect employees to share desks or work stations. There's no need to provide a workstation with full panels and storage for an employee who may be in the office infrequently. This will save your company space.



## Simpler systems

Going wireless requires less cabling which is one of the most expensive infrastructure components (Lindsay, Magnolfi & Waber, 2014). We advise you to consider the latest technology that will free up space and ensure that your employees can take maximum advantage of the various workspaces in your office. This also ensures that you stay relevant with regards to technology.

## Different generations in one space

We understand that your office design needs to cater for different generations and in most cases attract a young, skilled and talented workforce. We understand how to design with the needs of each generation in mind.



## Variety of spaces

Employees want a variety of spaces that offer them choice and control.

- **Collaboration spaces-** creating workspaces that promote informal interactions. Innovation depends on exchanging ideas
- **Dedicated workspaces-** open plan desks and hot desks (people work for a few hours)
- **Quiet rooms-** choice is key. Allowing knowledge workers to work away from the noisy open plan environment when required, gives them valuable focus time
- **Work cafes-** employees can have an informal meeting or enjoy their lunch as a team
- **Meeting rooms-** boardrooms and breakaway spaces for formal and informal discussions
- **Huddle rooms-** used for project meetings or information sessions
- **Phone booths-** creating workspaces that allow workers to take private calls



## Conclusion

Years ago there was little focus on the engagement, productivity, empowerment and inspiration of employees through office design. Every touch point, from the coffee that employees drink, the food they eat, the technology they use to complete their work tasks, the chairs they sit in, all form a part of the employee experience. There is no-one-size fits all approach that each company can take and apply, as each company's culture is unique to them.

**Contact Paragon Interiors today to find out how we can design your offices to improve your current employee experience!**

**+27 11 7065123**

or fill in the form and we'll get back to you.

**contact us**



# Resources

- Amjad, S., & Hamid, A. (2009). Impact of office design on employee’s productivity: Public Affairs, Administration and Management, 3(1), 1-13.
- Brennan, A. Chugh, S. & Kline, T. (2002). Traditional vs Open Plan office design: A longitudinal field study. Environment and Behaviour , 34 (3), 279-299. doi: 10.1177/001391650203400300
- Chaturvedi, V. (2010). A study of organisation loyalty among employees in service industry-a study with selected service industries in Faridabad: i-managers Journal on Management, 5 (3), 30-36.
- Crabtree, S. (2015). Worldwide, 13% of Employees Are Engaged at Work. Gallup. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/165269/worldwide-employees-engaged-work.aspx>
- Leaman, A. & Bordass, B. (1999). Productivity in buildings: the killer variables. Building, Research and Information, 27(1), 4-19. doi: 10.1080/096132199369615
- Lindsay, G., Magnolfi, J., Waber, B. (2014, October). Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2014/10/workspaces-that-move-people>



## Resources

- Morgan, J. (2015, 27 May). Why the future of work is all about the employee experience. Forbes. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2015/05/27/why-the-future-of-work-is-all-about-the-employee-experience/>
- Reilly, R. (2014). Five Ways to Improve Employee Engagement now. Gallup. Retrieved from [http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/166667/five-way-improve-employee-engagement.aspx?g\\_source=five%20ways%20improve%20employee%20engagement&g\\_medium=search&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/166667/five-way-improve-employee-engagement.aspx?g_source=five%20ways%20improve%20employee%20engagement&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles)
- Schwabel, D. (2014, January 21). Work Life Integration: The New Norm. Forbes Insight. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2014/01/21/work-life-integration-the-new-norm/>
- TNS Global (2014). State of workplace mental health in Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/bl1270-report---tns-the-state-of-mental-health-in-australian-workplaces-hr.pdf?sfvrsn=8>

