

# The **CAREER EXPERIENCE** Continuum

How can you attract,  
motivate and retain  
talent from pre-hire  
to retirement?







**The average person changes jobs 10 to 15 times during his or her career.<sup>1</sup>**

**Every year, companies lose 25% of all new employees. 77% of that turnover could be prevented by employers.<sup>2</sup>**

**87% of employers say improving retention is a critical priority.<sup>3</sup>**

**This report presents a framework for improving motivation and loyalty through a better understanding of what employees really want.**

# INTRODUCTION

Recently, much has been written about the need to improve employee experiences (EX). Many of the solutions offered under this umbrella include technologies that enable self-service, greater convenience and more personalized experiences at work. Programmatically, EX initiatives typically focus on making improvements in technical, cultural and physical environments within the workplace.

This report explores EX from a different vantage point—the perspective of individuals and what they really want from the work environment over the course of their journey with an employer. When these needs are not sufficiently met, motivation and productivity decline and employees seek career opportunities elsewhere.

The Career Experience Continuum presents a framework for improving motivation, commitment and retention throughout the talent lifecycle. Based on data from our national surveys and more than three decades of global research, this report offers a proven methodology for understanding and measuring what employees really want, along with practical ideas for focusing limited resources on influential points in the employee lifecycle to better attract, motivate and retain employees, from pre-hire to retirement.

## The Career Experience is important to employees of all age groups:

The results below show the percentage of respondents, by age group, who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “In life, I care about having a career:”

18-24	85%
25-34	91%
35-44	84%
45-54	82%
55+	70%

SOURCE: Trendicators 2019 Job Seeker Survey Report  
by Engage2Excel

Trendicators is the research division of Engage2Excel, a leading provider of employee recognition, engagement surveys and talent acquisition solutions. Trendicators provides original research, along with reports on insights and best practices from industry leaders and experts.

# The employee experience is influenced by three environmental factors

In the war for talent, many employers have stepped up initiatives to improve employee experiences (EX). Reflecting a shift from treating employees as assets to treating them more like customers, this trend is driven, in no small part, by the fact that employees have more choices today.

Jacob Morgan, the author of *The Employee Experience Advantage*, believes that EX is primarily influenced by the technology, cultural and physical environments in the workplace.

The management consulting firm, McKinsey and Company, defines EX as “companies and their people working together to create personalized, authentic experiences that ignite passion and tap into purpose to strengthen individual, team and company performance.”

This holistic view of the workplace environment is focused on designing experiences from the perspective of the employee rather than forcing employees to fit into the organization.





# The Career Experience Continuum is influenced by individual needs and motivations over time

While programming to improve EX is vital in order to enhance the environmental factors that foster engagement, it is also critical to consider the individual needs and motivations of employees over the course of their journey with an employer.

In a 1943 paper called “A Theory of Human Motivation,” Abraham Maslow posited that motivation is the result of attempting to fulfill five basic needs: Physical, Safety, Social, Esteem

and Self-Actualization. This laid the foundation for some of the work that has been done on the study of employee engagement over the past several decades.

The Career Experience Continuum considers the individual needs and motivations of employees—what employees really want—over the course of their tenure with an employer.

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has served as an important construct for the study of employee engagement over the past several decades.*



# Career experiences influence motivation, commitment, engagement and—ultimately—whether an employee will seek employment elsewhere

Jack Wiley, Engage2Excel's Chief Scientific Officer and internationally recognized author, has spent over three decades researching what employees most want, and which organizational factors best promote employee engagement, performance confidence and business success. Wiley defines employee engagement as the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to achieving organizational goals.

In his book, *RESPECT: Delivering Results by Giving Employees What They Really Want*, Wiley defines seven dimensions for understanding what employees really want, which are represented in the questions below.

The answers to these questions, provided through engagement survey research, offer a rigorous, scientifically valid foundation for understanding and improving employee engagement and career experiences.



# Using the RESPECT Framework to measure, influence and improve career experiences

HR organizations are challenged to demonstrate the impact of HR-related investments in programs for improving engagement and retention. Much of the current activity in EX investment focuses on making employee interactions more positive through pulse surveys, wellness programs, perks and self-service tools, to name a few. Although these tools provide useful inputs for improving employee experiences, they lack the rigor, scientific validity and benchmarking data of a formal employee engagement survey.

The RESPECT Framework, which stands for Recognition, Exciting Work, Security, Pay, Education & Career Growth, Conditions, and Truth

helps employers understand what employees really want. Wiley's RESPECT Framework includes scientifically valid survey tools that provide your leadership team with the statistically relevant insights they need to drive action plans and enact organization-wide change.

Based on more than three decades of research and surveys of millions of employees for leading global brands, the RESPECT survey system helps you understand survey results and put in place programs to improve the engagement levels and career experiences of employees.

<b>R</b>	<b>RECOGNITION</b> <b>A pat on the back — acknowledgment for a job well done — from managers and the organization at large</b>	Employees want to be recognized and respected for their contributions, even if those contributions are small. By recognizing employees' value to the organization and connecting that to business objectives, employees are more engaged and have a better experience throughout the employee lifecycle.
<b>E</b>	<b>EXCITING WORK</b> <b>A job that's challenging, interesting and fun</b>	Employees always want to be challenged, especially younger employees. They want a career that's rewarding not only for them but for broader society as well. By creating exciting work for the employee at an individual level, they feel more motivated to put in the discretionary effort, driving more productivity and more interest in their day-to-day responsibilities.
<b>S</b>	<b>SECURITY</b> <b>Confidence that solid work and a well-managed organization lead to job security</b>	Knowing that the organization employees work for is financially sound and led by capable, intelligent leaders who look out for them shapes the experience of the employees for the better. They feel safe to take more risks, fuel innovation and push more creativity within their teams.
<b>P</b>	<b>PAY</b> <b>Fair compensation for a day's work</b>	Fair pay is often overlooked in much of the engagement literature. Many writers say that purpose or meaning are good substitutes for salary. However, there is a limit to that thinking. There is a base level for which employees need to be fairly compensated in order to feel safe and secure in their work. Without this kind of psychological safety net, engagement and experience suffer.
<b>E</b>	<b>EDUCATION AND CAREER GROWTH</b> <b>Opportunities to develop skills over the course of a productive career</b>	Many younger workers are desperate for mentorship and coaching that will lead to a long, fulfilling career. The modern organization must push to include this in their performance and engagement initiatives for employees to continually produce and enjoy the fruits of their labor.
<b>C</b>	<b>CONDITIONS</b> <b>A well-equipped workplace that is physically comfortable and socially inviting</b>	Comfortable working conditions are more than just open-office-versus-cubicle conversations. You've heard those debates time and time again, but there's something deeper. Employees want flexible schedules, meaningful relationships and support for when they fail or want to try new things. This means more than just headphones or free lunches.
<b>T</b>	<b>TRUTH</b> <b>Frank, honest and transparent communication from managers and senior leaders</b>	Transparency and "radical candor" are hot topics today, but truth doesn't mean brutal honesty. It means being open about the right parts of the career: development and progression, performance missteps, as well as expectations and goals.



# Understanding retention and separation influences across the employee lifecycle

Insights from the ongoing global research conducted to maintain the normative databases that support the RESPECT Framework provide employers with practical guidance for improving career experiences at influential points across the employee lifecycle.

The table below shows results from our surveys of employees across industry sectors and demographic groups. Organized according to three phases of the employee lifecycle, the survey results spotlight important retention and separation influences, as seen through the eyes of employees.

**Recruitment:** In today's hyper-competitive market for talent, it is crucial for recruiters to keep candidates engaged. Our nationwide survey of job seekers shows that candidate engagement is most influenced by recruiters who are open and honest about the opportunity, who follow up as promised in a timely manner and who demonstrate a full understanding of

the role. Training your recruiters to consistently demonstrate these behaviors will improve recruiting effectiveness and help get career experiences off to the right start.

**Onboarding:** Employees say that the quality of their onboarding experience has a significant influence on their intent to remain with an employer. In fact, 41% report that a poor onboarding experience would cause them to immediately start looking for another job. To improve onboarding experiences, make sure that you provide opportunities to interact with other employees and train managers to recognize the positive achievements of employees throughout the onboarding process.

**Development:** Nearly 90% of employees report that, in addition to career development opportunities, performance recognition programs increase their engagement, making them feel more valued.

RECRUIT	ONBOARD	DEVELOP/RETAIN
RETENTION INFLUENCES		
<b>Top 3 reasons candidates say will keep them engaged with a recruiter:</b>  <b>#1 Openness &amp; honesty</b> <b>#2 Following up as promised</b> <b>#3 Knowledge of job role</b>	<b>Important aspects of the onboarding experience:</b>  <b>72%</b> Interaction with employees <b>67%</b> Being recognized or praised	<b>Employees want performance recognition programs:</b>  <b>89%</b> Say it increases engagement <b>85%</b> Say it makes them feel more valued
SEPARATION INFLUENCES		
<b>Top 3 reasons candidates say will cause them to reject a job offer:</b>  <b>#1 Lack of Respect</b> <b>#2 Poor Job Fit</b> <b>#2 Unfair Compensation</b>	<b>41%</b> <b>Say a poor onboarding experience would cause them to start looking for another job</b>	<b>Employees at organizations WITHOUT performance recognition programs are</b> <b>55% less likely</b> <b>to feel there is a promising future with their employer.</b>



# Six programmatic ideas for improving your organization's Career Experience Continuum

In addition to the practical guidance provided on the previous page for addressing influential points, the table below offers programmatic ideas for creating more engaging and fulfilling career experiences.

An important takeaway from our research and the recommendations provided in this report is that career experience is more than career development. From the employee's perspective, it is an important indicator of their fulfillment over the course of their journey.

When employers don't provide the experiences employees want most, employees disengage, under-produce and seek employment elsewhere.

The Career Experience Continuum is important for employees of all ages; it represents a way to measure, influence and improve employee engagement over time, from pre-hire to retirement.

PREBOARDING & ONBOARDING PROGRAMS	RECOGNITION & CAREER GROWTH PROGRAMS	EVP DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS
<p><b>Create a preboarding program to make new hires feel welcome before day one.</b> The time between offer acceptance and the first day on the job is critical. Our research shows that 46% of employees would consider an offer from another employer if they do not hear from someone at the hiring company before day 1. Sending a personalized welcome gift with a letter from the hiring manager can make a significant impact on the emotional mindset of new hires.</p>	<p><b>Implement a total recognition and rewards system.</b> A holistic recognition and rewards strategy includes recognition for career milestones (onboarding, years of service and retirement) and performance-based recognition programs that promote desired behaviors and organizational values. An effective strategy also includes training for managers on the art of giving recognition that's personalized, meaningful and memorable.</p>	<p><b>Align your EVP with your corporate strategy.</b> Your organization's culture, values, vision and business goals are unique. Your EVP should be equally unique and define everything your company does to attract, engage, motivate and reward employees to create value for customers. Your EVP is a promise that explains in simple, easy-to-understand language why an employee would want to work for your company instead of anywhere else.</p>
<p><b>Build recognition and employee interaction into your organization's onboarding processes.</b> When viewed from the new employee's perspective, onboarding is an important career experience influence point. Our research shows that 56% of employees say that the total onboarding experience will affect their decision to stay more than one year. In addition to effective training, 67% say they want recognition for positive behaviors and 72% want interaction with employees during the onboarding process.</p>	<p><b>Utilize systems to track and manage education and career growth.</b> Create a plan for education and career growth for all employees. Monitor the programs progress and track achievements while continuously assessing its effectiveness. Learning management systems that allow the organization to create, administer, document, deliver and track educational courses or training programs contribute to organizational success.</p>	<p><b>Understand what your employees really want.</b> Employee engagement surveys provide objective, scientifically valid insights to use in formulating your EVP and evaluating its relevance over time. For example, the RESPECT Framework for measuring employee engagement from Engage2Excel enables you to benchmark employee engagement levels against those in your industry sector as well as against best practices organizations.</p>

Engage2Excel helps organizations create unique career experiences from pre-hire to retirement. We understand what employees really want, because we look at the entire career lifecycle through a scientific lens. We conduct original surveys, validate best practices from our client base of 2,700+ organizations and rely on over three decades of groundbreaking research by our chief scientific officer, Jack Wiley, Ph.D.

Engage2Excel's industry-leading solutions for recruitment, employee recognition and engagement surveys are tailored to each client's unique business objectives and are designed to help clients increase competitive advantage and improve bottom-line results.

**To learn more, visit [engage2excel.com](https://engage2excel.com).**

The logo for Engage2Excel, featuring the word "Engage" in orange, a large orange "2", and the word "Excel" in orange with a trademark symbol (TM) to its upper right.