



Jeff Gelinas

VP of Product and People,
Engage2Excel

Keys to Crafting the Career Experience

With Jeff Gelinas, VP of Product and People, Engage2Excel

Retaining top performing employees is critical to an organization's success. 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. Here Jeff Gelinas, VP of product and people at Engage2Excel, shares recent research that uncovers the top factors that drive engagement and how organizations can leverage them as the building blocks of a great career experience.

Q: Why is it important for HR to focus on the candidate and employee experience? How can it benefit the organization?

A: It's important for HR to focus on both the candidate and employee experience because today many organizations are fundamentally challenged to find and keep talent. With such a tight labor market and the "war for talent," it makes sense for organizations to provide an amazing experience from the moment a candidate enters the hiring process through onboarding and their entire career at your organization. At Engage2Excel, we coin this the "Career Experience."

Through our research, we know that expectations have changed: candidates want to feel what it's like to work in an organization before they even accept an offer, and employees desire to be treated more like customers than assets. In fact, our recent *Job Seeker Trendicators™* report reveals that "openness and honesty" are the most important factors in keeping candidates engaged through the process. The same goes for when they show up on day one. A notable 41 percent of respondents said that a poor onboarding experience would cause them to immediately start looking for another job.

There are many benefits to the career experience approach, but the two that stand out are cost savings and retention. Organizations spend time and money to fill an open position and if candidates go through a less than desirable hiring process, they will walk away—even if

they have accepted the job offer. That's a significant loss for an organization. If an organization were to provide an amazing career experience, employees would be hard pressed to leave, and retention rates would increase.

Q: What are some examples of ways to provide a good candidate and employee experience?

A: For candidates, it's about creating a relationship with the hiring and recruiting managers at first contact. Through our research, openness and honesty are the number one things candidate seek, so building touch points into the process and communicating at each step not only keeps candidates engaged, but makes them feel like they are valued and included. Welcome gifts—sent immediately after the candidate accepts the job offer—reinforce the connection and continue the engagement. Once an employee starts, it's all about taking that connection and building on it. Assigning a mentor to new employees will help them assimilate into the culture and connect them to the "ins and outs" of the organization. Utilizing recognition programs to celebrate performance achievements, growth, and milestones will keep employees engaged and motivated to succeed. An engagement and experience survey can also help organizations better understand where strengths and opportunities lie, providing a roadmap that will create the right set of experiences to increase competitive advantage.

Q: How can organizations leverage the Career Experience to become an employer of choice?

A: The Work Institute 2018 *Retention Report* found that every year companies lose 25 percent of all new employees, and what's more, 77 percent of that turnover could be prevented by employers. While many organizations set out to be an employer of choice by offering a fantastic work culture and environment, organizations miss the mark by focusing only on making improvements in technical, cultural, and physical environments within the workplace. By taking a broader approach that looks at the entire talent lifecycle, organizations will boost retention rates and impact the influential points in the lifecycle to better attract, motivate and retain employees, from pre-hire to retirement.

Q: With a tight talent market, what are some strategies that help ensure retention of top performers?

A: It's well known that fair pay and a competitive benefits package are common drivers of retention, but research shows that a well-planned total recognition strategy plays a vital role in influencing the attitudes and actions of employees. Our research shows that employees at organizations without performance recognition programs are 55 percent less likely to feel there is a promising future with their employer. Effective strategies include training for managers on the art of giving personalized recognition; considering the individual needs and motivations of employees over the course of their journey within the organization; and leveraging employee engagement surveys.