

Customer Equation in the new normal: Reinforcing employees with the right enablers



Defining the Customer Equation

Companies across the world treat employee and customer experience in silos without appreciating the fact that there are common human drivers to ensure success around both i.e. Trust, Empowerment, Personalization and Relatability.



Stephen Covey had once said “Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers,” and these words have never been truer.

According to a survey by Adweek, 87% of customers’ affinity towards Starbucks is driven by the way the company treats its employees. And this is also reflected in the leadership’s commitment to their employees. Corey DuBrowa, SVP, Global Communications at Starbucks had said “When we do the right thing for our employees, it’s also the right thing for our business”

The benefits of superior EX are not just qualitative rather it has been seen historically that companies which treat their employees well deliver superior financial performance. According to a study, earnings per share of, Gallup Great Workplace Award" winners grew about 4.3 times faster than their equivalents

This makes it imperative for companies to understand that customer experience is directly driven by employee experience, making them the biggest brand ambassadors and in turn the most important assets to ensure market differentiation.

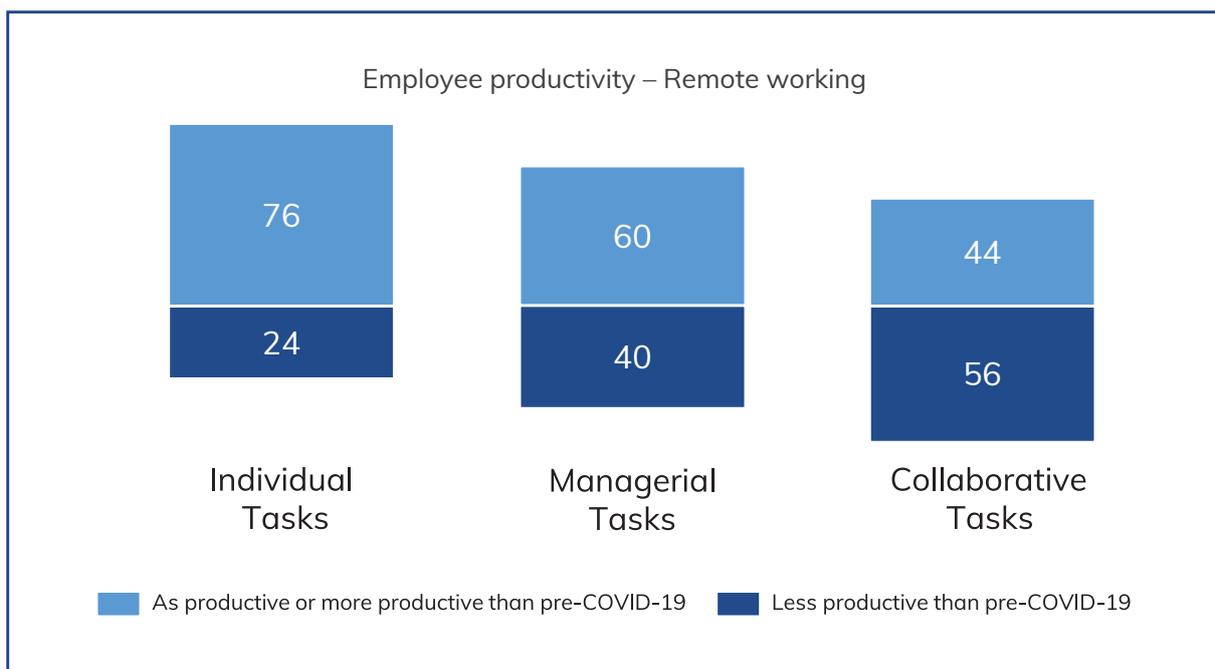


Impact of pandemic on the workforce

Before understanding the key enablers for superior employee experience it is crucial to understand that the current pandemic has changed the definition of business as usual for employees forever, with WFH or the remote working model being the new normal. There was a 6x growth in % of US professionals working from home during COVID.

For players across industries, remote working model was usually associated with low productivity. So, at the height of the pandemic when companies were forced to transition to this model - the productivity expectations were low.

However, what happened on ground was different. According to a recent study by BCG – Productivity on individual tasks was affected minimally, with 76% respondents saying that during the first few months of the pandemic they have been able to maintain or improve productivity on their individual tasks. But the employees faced certain constraints in achieving similar levels of productivity in collaborative and managerial tasks.



Hence, it is essential for organizations to set up an effective remote working model to remove some of these bottlenecks and realize real benefits from the remote working model. The benefits in some instances can be as high as ~20% reduction in cost and 15-40% increase in productivity.

Benefits of remote working model



The future of work is looking to be highly hybrid in nature - according to BCG's recent Workplace of the Future employer survey, companies expect about 40% of their employees to follow a remote-working model in the future. Making it crucial for companies to understand the key enablers of productivity for employees in this new environment.

How to ensure superior EX in the 'New Normal'

As organizations around the globe reflect on key lessons learnt during the pandemic, there are 3 key pillars which will be crucial to ensure superior employee experience in the hybrid/ remote way of working:



Process & Practices

To deliver success in remote working model, standard process and practices need to be rethought with a lens to overcome specific challenges that come with this new model. Three key tenets to ensure long term success are:

- **Ensure sustainable pace:** Employees tend to work more & risk burnout in remote settings when lacking boundaries between on and off time. Managers need to ensure guardrails are developed for self-organization.
- **Responsibility allocation:** Essential to prioritize work including clear definition of scope & deadlines to reduce risk of slowed-down activities & delays.
- **Ascertain effective communication:** Due to the current volatility in the environment it is of utmost importance that teams 'stay together while staying apart' by setting-up regular cadence of meetings/ catch-ups internally. This not only ensures setting up of correct expectations but also helps in clear prioritization, enhancing team productivity.



Tools & Technologies

Once organizations have the right processes in place, the next step is to enable employees with the right tools and technologies to follow the defined processes and ensure superior customer experience. This must be a three-pronged approach around:

- **Smart Collaboration:** New generation of collaboration and communication tools for progress tracking, video conferencing, chats file sharing etc. will be crucial to improve productivity
- **Smart Analytics:** Latest toolbox supported by computer vision and NLP will be the key to unlock superior customer experience in WFH setup with focus on:
 - **Smart Agents:** Empathy of employees enhanced with efficiency of AI tools like predictive analytics, social listening & monitoring
 - **Smart Supervision:** Ensure superior governance through intelligent video analytics driven by live employee monitoring in the WFH setup
- **Smart Automation:** Automation of common tasks, partial or entire contact and work allotment across multiple channels helps increase efficiency



Leadership & Culture

This transition to remote working model has probably been the biggest and the fastest change that the corporate world has seen in the past few decades. And as it has been seen historically, any change management cannot be successful without strong leadership and culture. The following set of building blocks will be fundamental for 'remote leaders':

- **Open communication channel:** Employees should have access to an open channel of communication to help build trust as well as motivation and resilience in these troubled times
- **Shared decision and vision:** As employees face new constraints goal setting and tracking should be a collaborative process to ensure expectations are met from both sides
- **Maintaining sense of community:** Remote working may lead to physical distancing where people feel isolated, loose bonds and lack interaction – social intimacy will become key in this scenario

Employees are the most important part in ensuring seamless customer experiences and whilst the workforce is undergoing major changes because of the pandemic, businesses must keep employee experiences at the top of their agenda – ensuring best-in-class processes, tools and culture to enable a successful partnership with the employees and in turn the customers.



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