



THE SENTIENT WORKPLACE: EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE – A BUSINESS LEVER IN THE AI-FIRST WORKPLACE





The New Definition of Employee Experience

For years, employee experience (EX) has been framed as a cultural priority — important for engagement, retention and employer branding. That framing is no longer sufficient.

In an AI-first, always-on, and expectation-rich world, employee experience is not a “people initiative.” It is a business lever. One that directly shapes productivity, compliance and ultimately, performance.

At its simplest, employee experience is not about tools or policies. It is about perception — how employees feel about working for an organization. And that feeling is shaped not by intent, but by the everyday reality of getting work done. This is where the complexity begins.

Delivering that feeling well is less a science than an art. It requires striking the right balance across all internal support functions, such as IT, HR, Finance, Facilities, and Legal, each of which touches the employee at different points in the working day. And critically, EX must serve two masters simultaneously: the employee seeking productivity and care, and the organization that cannot compromise on security, privacy, or compliance. Any EX tool that does not honor both is not a solution; it is a liability.

The Generational Catalyst

To understand where EX is going, it is important to understand what has changed. A decade ago, the workforce largely accepted the constraints of enterprise systems, searching knowledge repositories, navigating multi-step approval workflows, and adapting to whatever the organization provided. That acceptance has disappeared.

Work today is shaped by consumer-grade expectations—instant access, seamless interaction and minimal friction. Employees no longer go looking for information; they expect it to surface where they are, when they need it, in the flow of work. The implications are significant.

The question organizations should be asking is not how to train people to use enterprise platforms and systems, but how to make the right information find the right person at the right moment. Organizations directing employees to multiple systems are fostering inefficiency and invisible attrition of engagement.

The consequences are real. At a large European bank, even senior executives navigate fragmented processes for business travel—booking in one system and submitting expenses in another, with no integration between the two. The result is not just a poor experience, but a compliance risk, with costs frequently recorded in the wrong financial cycle.

The Rise of the Sentient Enterprise

This shift in expectations is forcing a deeper rethink—not just of systems, but of how enterprises respond to employees in real time. Sentience, the emerging concept, is not about intelligence alone; it is about awareness and responsiveness. A sentient enterprise makes information available to employees where they are, when they need it, through the channels they already use. The system comes to the employee, not the other way around.

This shift from reactive to proactive engagement is the real breakthrough. Most enterprise systems wait to be summoned; the sentient model inverts that relationship. The system prompts employees to file expenses as soon as they return from a business trip, guiding them to do so before the deadline in the most seamless, AI-enabled way. The same logic applies to learning. Rather than tracking course completions on a compliance dashboard, sentient systems deliver AI capability directly into daily work: a field technician receives a smarter approach via a Teams agent; a designer is prompted to try a generative feature mid-project. The result is a workforce that does not just hold AI certifications — it actively practices AI, in context, every day.

AI as the New Experience Layer

With sentience as the goal, AI is rapidly becoming the mechanism and increasingly, the interface itself. An employee no longer needs to identify the right system, navigate multiple screens or understand underlying workflows. They express intent through a conversational interface, and the system orchestrates the outcome. This is why many are beginning to describe AI as the “new UI,” not because traditional interfaces will disappear, but because interaction is becoming more natural, contextual and immediate.

The evidence is already visible in production. Conversational Assistants like Infosys' Navi and ServiceNow's Now Assist enable organizations to deflect tickets entirely through self-service; when a ticket is genuinely needed, agentic AI analyses the issue and automatically routes it to the correct queue. Emerging protocols like AGUI (AI-Generated User Interface) go further still — agents that construct widgets, call-to-actions, and UI elements dynamically within a chat context. The interface is no longer purely conversational; it now generates interactive components in real time.

The implications for ERP platforms are significant. Any platform lacking a core agentic engine, one capable of automating workflows and delivering engaging end-user experiences, risks displacement by leaner, AI-native competitors. The agentic layer has moved from differentiator to entry ticket.

A recent program illustrates this well. A global conglomerate undergoing a spin-off built an Amazon-style device procurement experience that enabled employees to browse, select and order through a single consumer-grade interface. On the surface, an EX win. Underneath, a supply chain transformation: a shift to a depo-based model that delivered cost savings, stronger compliance and faster refresh cycles. Clearly, the employee experience and the organizational benefit were in sync. This is the essence of AI-enabled EX: improving how work feels while improving how work performs.



The Business Case for Experience - Beyond Goodwill

It is vital to clarify that the investment in EX is not an act of selfless philanthropy or mere goodwill. While there is genuine intent to care for employees, these initiatives must be tied to organizational objectives such as compliance, profitability, and top-line growth. It is a win-win model where the organization does the right thing because it yields better business outcomes.

This idea is not new. When industrialists adjusted working schedules to give employees more daylight hours at home, they observed that better-rested workers returned more productive the next day. Output improved, and the investment paid for itself.

The same logic governs modern EX investment. A proactive nudge prompting an employee to file travel expenses on return is both a better experience and stronger financial control. Costs land in the correct quarter, the bottom line view is more accurate, and the compliance risk is quietly eliminated. The EX intervention and the organizational benefit are the same action.

In summary, EX done well is a mechanism for achieving things the organization already needs: compliance, efficiency, engagement and growth.

About the Author



Jichin Thomas

Industry Principal, Digital Experience, Infosys

Jichin is a passionate Digital Employee Experience (DEX) Practitioner and Industry Principal, focused on designing and enabling human-centred digital workplaces at scale. With deep expertise in employee experience platforms, enterprise digital interactions, and modern work solutions, he partners with organizations to transform how employees engage with technology. Known for combining strategic thinking with hands-on execution, Jichin brings a practitioner's mindset to digital transformation—bridging business intent, employee needs, and technology innovation to deliver measurable value.

For more information, contact askus@infosys.com



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