



# EY Improves Client Services – and the Bottom Line – by Upgrading the Employee Experience

by Cheryl D. Krivda, Contributing Writer

EY, a multinational professional services firm, is dedicated to building a better working world. The company helps organizations across industries identify and capitalize on new opportunities, especially as they embrace digital disruption and transform their organizations into innovative, purpose-driven businesses. With nearly 300,000 employees and contingent workers around the world, the company offers four integrated service lines that help clients solve their most pressing challenges.

More than 80% of the EY workforce is millennials or Gen Z. That's a significant plurality of digital natives — people who expect technology and tools to help them work efficiently without introducing impediments.

“Our people are everywhere — at client sites, in airports, on trains, and working from home,” explains Penny S. Stoker, Global Leader of HR Services for EY. “They bring knowledge and experience to clients, so we need to make their experience friendly and straightforward. Anything else is just taking time away from what they can do for our clients.”



“In an organization our size, every percentage point of increased retention drives \$100 million to the bottom line.”

— **Penny S. Stoker**, Global Leader of HR Services, EY

Yet EY HR tools needed to keep pace with the speed and transformation of their business. Non-integrated, best-of-breed HR software had become unable to keep up with the pace of change. Workers accustomed to intuitive consumer technologies found internal employee systems difficult to access, hard to navigate and time-consuming to use. And the solutions were not consistent across organizations or geographies.

### Collaborating on Change

HR leaders realized it was time to transform the employee experience. In 2016, the EY talent team developed an initiative called “Symphony” to deliver:

- A comprehensive, integrated, cloud-based HR platform that would lower the EY cost of ownership
- Consistent processes with a common look and feel, no matter where a task is executed
- Enhanced technologies that would help HR better understand and gain insight into the real employee experience

The team anticipated that significant savings would be achieved from moving from on-premise to cloud solutions. It also estimated soft savings that could accrue by focusing on the employee experience. “In an organization our size, every percentage point of increased retention drives \$100 million to the bottom line,” Stoker says. “That makes a big difference.”

EY considered the RFP responses of three major vendors, conducted user experience testing of the technologies, and worked on a pilot phase with offices in China. The company then selected solutions from the SAP SuccessFactors Human

Experience Management (HXM) suite.<sup>1</sup> HXM, a new category that SAP SuccessFactors announced last year, builds on the best of human capital management practices to provide next-generation technologies for core HR and payroll, talent management, learning management, and employee experience.

The SAP offerings allowed greater deployment flexibility. “Our learning technology was about 25 years old and our performance management solution was 15 or 20 years old,” Stoker adds. “We needed to get those in place first and deploy the core HR solution later. With SAP SuccessFactors solutions, we could do that.”

EY deployed the employee onboarding solution in 2016 and then implemented the performance management tool. The learning solution went live in EMEA and Asia-Pacific in 2019 and will launch in the Americas in early 2020. Next, will be the core HR solution, SAP SuccessFactors Employee Central, and integration efforts to connect all of the offerings.

Another EY priority was to choose a vendor that would fit its culture and working style. Professionals from the EY People Advisory Services group assisted with the transition — supporting the business integration effort through process design and change management efforts — while ensuring strong connections between the group, the business, and HR.

SAP was willing to collaborate with the People Advisory Services group. “Several groups said they couldn’t tell whether they were partnered with internal EY HR personnel, client-facing EY professionals, or SAP employees, because everyone

<sup>1</sup> <https://news.sap.com/2019/10/hxm-age-welcome-human-experience-management/>

worked together to get the best outcomes,” says Stoker. “That’s a huge compliment.”

The EY focus on relationships helped streamline the solutions’ deployment, go live, and early use. “Our collaborative dynamic helped us navigate through the challenges that every implementation faces,” says Maya Smallwood, Americas Change Experience Leader in the People Advisory Services group at EY. “We rolled up our sleeves and worked together, leaving our badges at the door.”

### Driving Better Business Outcomes

To better understand and shape the experience of employees and contingent workers, and to support its philosophy of a purpose-driven digitized organization, EY also deployed Employee Experience Management solutions from SAP. “Now we have one platform that allows us to hear about the experience of our employees. It helps us understand where we are doing well, and what we need to change in order to improve,” says Stoker. “We can test which changes make a difference and which don’t.”

The solutions also allow EY to merge the experience data (X-data) reported by employees with the company’s operational data (O-data) — yielding a more complete, accurate picture of how the employee experience impacts the delivery of client services. EY has already begun testing hypotheses in various parts of the business — some where they are also using SAP Qualtrics solutions to better understand the customer experience, too.

“In our audit practice, for example, we know that projects with a more highly engaged team result in better client satisfaction, higher quality results, and better profitability,” Stoker says.

Overall, the most engaged teams at EY boast higher personnel retention and higher revenue growth per person.

With more data and continued experience, the People Advisory Services team hopes to discover additional connections. “By strengthening the correlation between X-data and O-data, we can gain data-driven insights that help us learn more about the everyday experiences of people and create long-term value for the business,” says Smallwood.

### Creating Instant Insight for HR Executives

In 2018, EY selected experience management solutions from Qualtrics International. When Qualtrics was acquired by SAP in November 2018, the EY adoption accelerated with the launch of EY People Experience 360 (PX360), the company’s employee experience platform.

Recognizing the valuable opportunities enabled by correlating X-data with O-data, EY decided to become the first customer of its new PX360 platform, which offers persona-driven, curated content created for chief human resource officers (CHROs) and other HR executives.

It collects people data from various corporate systems, including recruiting, talent management, and customer relationship management solutions. Using machine learning and artificial intelligence, it delivers role-based data through a dashboard, offering actionable insights and drill-down capabilities. HR leaders can quickly identify and understand business risks, opportunities, and priorities.

“We can pull that information together and align it in a way that makes sense to the CHRO so it can be used in important C-suite conversations,”



“By strengthening the correlation between X-data and O-data, we can gain data-driven insights that help us learn more about the everyday experiences of people and create long-term value for the business.”

— **Maya Smallwood**, Americas Change Experience Leader in the People Advisory Services group, EY



“A scalable platform like PX360 [EY People Experience 360] can make data available to many levels of the organization, so that more people can discover and act on business insights.”

— **Vijay Nidumolu**, EY Americas SAP Qualtrics Leader — Advisory

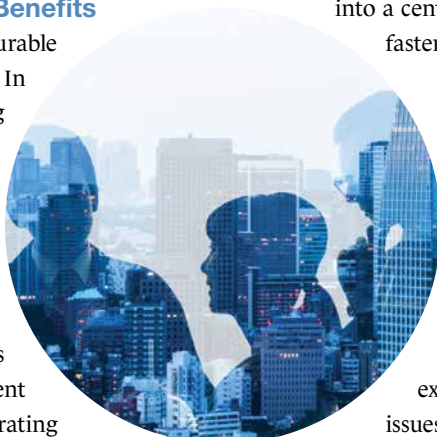
says Stoker. “We can show what happens when you have a fully engaged team and which outcomes are being driven, with a certainty that we’ve not had in the past.”

Client feedback has been positive. CHROs appreciate the ability to instantly answer ad-hoc questions from business leaders, rather than needing to take requests back to data analysts and respond days later. And leaders can redeploy their key analytics talent to more valuable tasks.

The dashboard is also democratizing data access, says Vijay Nidumolu, EY Americas SAP Qualtrics Leader — Advisory. “Often only certain executives have access to these types of insights,” he says. “A scalable platform like PX360 can make data available to many levels of the organization, so that more people can discover and act on business insights.”

### Delivering Quantifiable Benefits

EY is already realizing measurable value from the SAP solutions. In the first year after deploying the new learning system, the company experienced a 15% reduction in processing time and related costs. Because EY delivers up to two million hours of learning annually to employees, these savings are significant. The time spent providing feedback and calibrating employee performance also decreased. “Tasks that used to be difficult are much easier and faster as a result of this project,” says Smallwood.



Instead of an annual performance review, EY people now receive feedback from their managers multiple times per year — a 5X increase in performance-related communications. “This feedback is very important when you think about how quickly things change and how people need that feedback during the course of the year,” says Stoker.

Most important, correlating the O-data and X-data helps create long-term value for the business. Companies can use the data to better understand how people think, make decisions, and team with others, and whether they connect to purpose and strategy. It also helps them unleash human potential.

### Modernizing HR with Better Insight

EY will soon deploy its remaining SAP SuccessFactors solutions, including recruitment and compensation. Having all of its SAP solutions feeding data into a centralized repository will support faster, smarter decisions.

Bringing data together and making correlations will help leaders manage their teams more effectively and drive better business outcomes. Enhanced integration across applications and the use of advanced technologies such as machine learning will allow executives to quickly see at-risk issues, request additional information, and identify their best next steps.

EY also intends to use the solutions to create a best-in-class employee experience. With



**Headquarters:** London, England

**Industry:** Professional services

**Employees:** 260,000 plus 30,000 contingent workers

**Revenue:** \$36.4 billion USD (2019)

**Company details:**

- Developed through a succession of partnerships, originating with accounting firm Harding & Pullein in England in 1849
- 1989 merger between Ernst & Whinney and Arthur Young created Ernst & Young
- Rebranding in 2013 changed the name to EY, which now operates 700 offices in 150 countries
- Traditionally known as one of the Big Four accounting firms, refocused its offerings over the last decade to become a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services
- Operations divided into four regions: Americas, Asia-Pacific, EMEA, and Japan
- Privately owned organization led by EY Global Chairman and CEO Carmine Di Sibio, appointed July 2019

**SAP solutions:** SAP HXM solutions, including: SAP SuccessFactors Onboarding, SAP SuccessFactors Performance & Goals, SAP SuccessFactors Learning, SAP SuccessFactors Employee Central, as well as SAP Fieldglass, SAP S/4HANA Finance, and employee Experience Management solutions from SAP.

**Joint solutions:** EY PX360 Platform, which uses functionality from experience management solutions from SAP Qualtrics and SAP Cloud Platform to create real-time insights about the experience of employees and contingent workers

consumer-like interfaces, the tools will help employees pinpoint learning opportunities, share the right information about themselves, and manage their careers, as well as match their professional interests with open roles.

“There are real possibilities for working differently to be more effective in driving outcomes,” says Stoker. “That doesn’t mean that we lose jobs. It means that we change jobs and develop different skills and capabilities. Our role as leaders is to find ways to help people upskill and drive their development differently than we have in the past.” ■

