

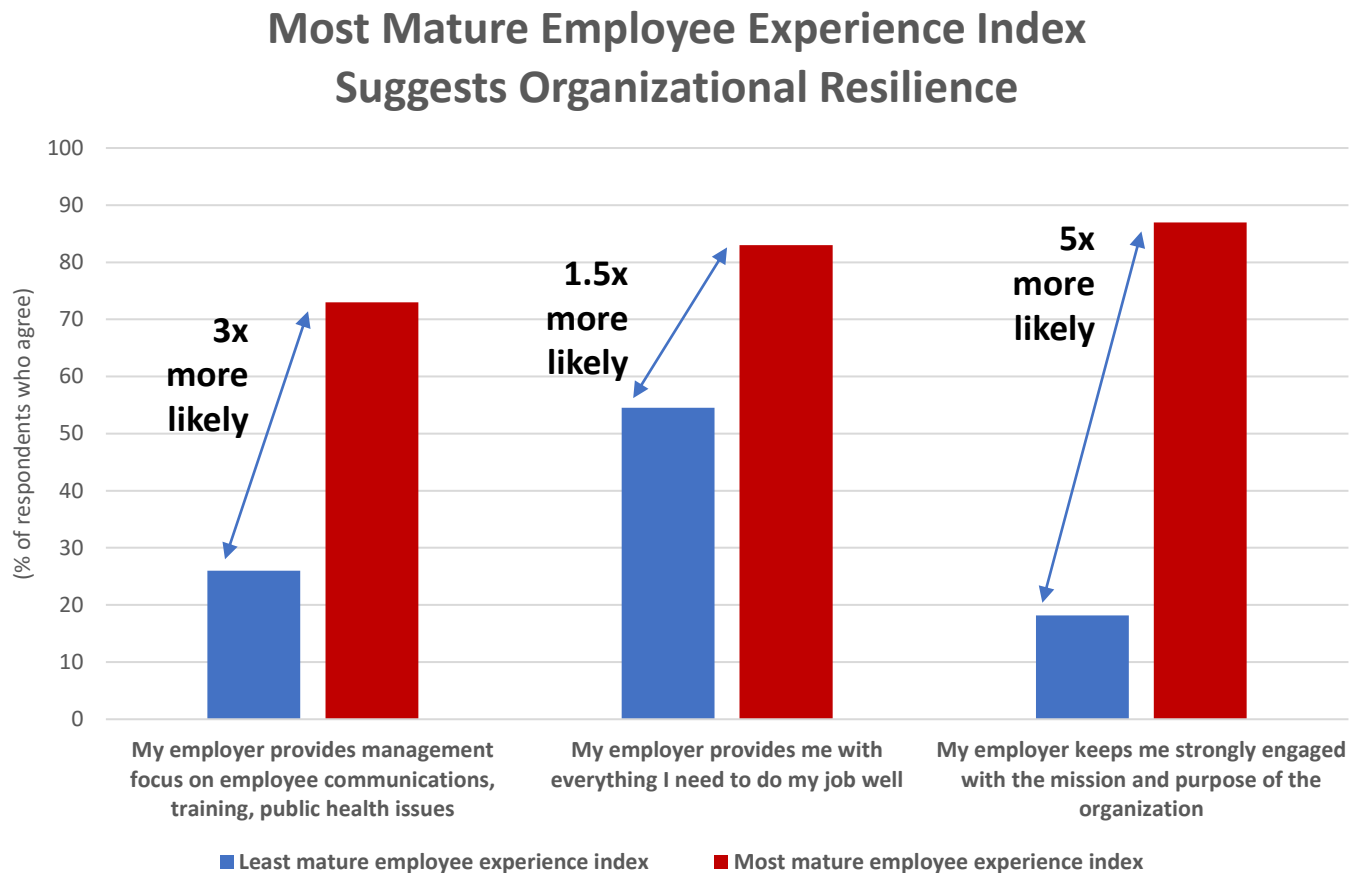
Major disruptions impact employees' ability to be engaged and productive at work. This capacity is connected to organizational resilience, now emerging as a high priority for companies worldwide. This IDC Analyst Brief explores how employees at organizations with a "most mature employee experience index" are more likely to be resilient.

Employee Experience Takes Center Stage, Elevating to Top Priority for Business Impact

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FIGURE 1: *The Impact of Powerful Employee Experience on Organizational Resilience*
 Q Does a higher employee experience (EX) index suggest organizational resilience?



n = 500

Source: IDC's *The Impact of Employer and Employee Engagement During an External Event Like the Coronavirus*, April 2020

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused complete disruption of the workforce. Employers have had to scramble quickly to support a newly remote workforce. The abrupt shift to managing, measuring, and engaging employees remotely creates a new set of obstacles for employers. Many workers are operating from home offices and balancing their work life with familial duties, and the situation has placed great strain on management and led to unforeseen challenges that must be met. Remote employees can feel isolated, lonely, and disengaged, leading to a decrease in productivity for both the worker and the business.

For companies to meet the complex needs of a disrupted workforce, it is more essential than ever that they view their employees as "internal customers." Employee listening and continuous feedback must be ingrained within the organization to create a people-first, team, and goal-oriented culture to meet business objectives. Employee listening requires the right management techniques and the right platforms; it takes both to be truly successful. Tools provide an opportunity to listen and to collect data insights, but management must use those insights to create action plans.

According to IDC's *COVID-19 Impact on IT Spending Survey* (conducted April 6–15, 2020), 45% of organizations worldwide projected an increased demand in employee engagement technology. Among technology buyers, that number increases to 56%. Decreased demand for such technology was projected by less than 20% of buyers worldwide.

Organizations that commit to investing in employee experience and well-being will be rewarded by increased organizational resilience through worker commitment, loyalty, and productivity, leading to better business outcomes.

Building a More Resilient Organization Through Employee Listening

The benefits of employee listening include increased customer loyalty, profitability, and productivity as well as lower turnover. Other advantages include an enhanced capacity for retaining high-potential talent through better career development and an increased ability to identify reskilling opportunities.

However, as Figure 1 indicates, increased organizational resilience is the most important benefit of employee listening. Employees at organizations with the most mature employee experience indexes are:

- » 5x more likely to be strongly engaged with the mission and purpose of the organization
- » 3x more likely to feel that their organization is providing a strong COVID-19 response
- » 1.5x more likely to feel that their organization provides them with everything they need to perform their job well

Organizations of all sizes should deploy some employee experience programs to best manage employee engagement and drive better business value. However, larger organizations with greater resources will be able to maximize the digital employee experience program and enable better business outcomes.

COVID-19 Accelerates Need for Employee Listening

Organizations are adapting to business changes in real time and making decisions at warp speed. For many leaders, this requires an unprecedented level of agility, and employee listening can help accelerate that agility by providing the necessary insights to make informed decisions quickly and tailor policies, protocols, and communications that establish new workplace norms.

Leaders are being asked to solve problems and address employee concerns in unprecedented ways, balancing the needs of very different groups of employees who are adjusting to completely new ways of working.

Employee listening is the most important tool in an organization's recovery toolkit because it can drive action that steers organizations to their new working models to drive business impact and come out with a stronger and more committed workforce.

How Can Organizations Adapt Their Employee Listening Strategies?

Recognizing the importance of managing and measuring for employee listening is fundamental to success and the first step. Organizations should invest in employee listening technologies and encourage and train management to use employee feedback to create actionable plans and dialogue to address issues. Following up with employees on their feedback is always important, but it is even more critical in a crisis. During these times, organizations should take greater care to ask about what they can act on, provide feedback to the people who can do something with it, and communicate extensively with employees.

Leadership and frontline managers need to:

- » Formally seek feedback from their employees
- » Measure employee expectations
- » Create action plans to address employee concerns
- » Unite their employees around the company's cultural values

Resilience Is the Single Greatest Lever Employers Have to Recover Quickly

During a major workforce disruption, employees' capacity to be engaged and productive at work is connected to organizational resilience, which is emerging as a high-priority focus for companies worldwide. IDC's *The Impact of Employer and Employee Engagement During an External Event Like the Coronavirus Survey* clearly demonstrates that there is a correlation between a mature employee experience model and a resilient organization.

Managers and leaders have significant influence on employee and organizational resilience. Equipped with the right insights from employee listening tools, they can help their workforce remain productive and engaged in the face of disruption.

Considerations

Driving business outcomes through employee listening to develop trust, loyalty, and commitment to the organization has taken on even greater import with the pandemic. As new working models take shape immediately, the implementation of technologies must be done with care to not leave the creation of the "employee experience" to platforms alone.

For employee listening to successfully drive business results, both senior leadership and frontline managers need to be aware and trained in the use of the technology and its data outputs. Responding to employee feedback will be an essential component to building a people-first culture. Employees must feel heard, and that will occur only if frontline managers respond to feedback and develop action plans to further employee goals, impacting both workplace culture and career development opportunities.

Employee insights gained through technologies can be powerful tools to drive not only business objectives but also individual employees' career journeys. These insights can guide reskilling efforts and career opportunities to help an organization retain high-potential employees, which can have a significant impact on the overall business.

Conclusion

Now is the time for organizations to build a resilient organization starting by focusing on employee listening. Success requires implementing the right measurement tools, using the data effectively, and providing leadership to cultivate employee loyalty and to create a people-first culture that drives results.

To build resilience, organizations should consider that:

- » Leaders and managers are critical to success.
- » Employee mental health and well-being should be, and is becoming, a top priority.
- » Working remotely is filled with complexities, so flexibility is needed.
- » Workplace policies should be reevaluated.

Organizations should organize around employee needs, empowering business leaders. Employee data must make its way to frontline management to empower managers with the ability to make decisions to earn employee wins.

Companies should invest in and implement employee listening and management processes and tools. Vendors' toolkits can be used to enhance employee listening interactions and feedback and to gather data. Managers can gain insights and identify problem areas and create solutions with such tools. Data insights and employee comments can be used to create organizational resilience and drive business impact.

About the Analyst



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Lisa Rowan is Research Vice President for IDC responsible for global research on human capital and talent management software and services. Ms. Rowan provides expert analysis focused on both the business services and software used to address HR and talent-related dimensions. Her research addresses developments in human capital and talent management applications, human resources consulting, and HR outsourcing services.

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