

Beyond Trends: Crafting a Meaningful Employee Experience



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Around this time each year, we're flooded with predictions about the "next big thing" in HR for the upcoming year.

At ERC, we've certainly contributed to these conversations in the past, but this year, we're taking a different approach. Rather than chasing the latest trends, we encourage you to step back and adopt a more holistic perspective—viewing your HR strategy through the eyes of your employees.

This is the moment to evaluate where improvements can be made throughout the employee lifecycle and set your own path by ensuring your employee experience aligns with your organization's culture. Don't just follow trends—create your own.

While we won't promise that the insights in this article will become the next big HR trend or solve every challenge, we can confidently say that they are 1) data-driven, 2) actionable and accessible, and 3) proven effective by [NorthCoast 99](#) award-winning organizations.

Attract: Is Your Organization Ready for Talent?

Instead of wondering where to find job seekers, take a moment to look inward. Evaluate how well your organization is positioned to attract and engage the talent already out there.

A smooth, efficient recruitment process that consistently results in hiring qualified candidates can be accomplished with a few simple strategies.

One key tactic is to keep job descriptions up to date so that when the need arises, you can quickly post an open position that draws in the right applicants. NorthCoast 99 winners, for instance, take an average of eight deliberate steps to elevate the candidate experience.

Best Practices of Top Workplaces



Top workplaces take an average of 8 steps to enhance the candidate experience

Based on 2024 NorthCoast 99 data

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Beyond the basics, consider two less common elements of the candidate experience.

First, provide candidates with bios or additional information about the interviewers—something 72% of NorthCoast 99 winners do.

Second, seek feedback from candidates about their experience with the hiring process, a practice followed by 59% of these high-performing organizations.

Lastly, build your employment brand from within. When interviewers can confidently answer culture-related questions with genuine examples, it increases the likelihood of finding candidates who are an excellent cultural fit.

This is your opportunity to let your organization's true colors shine!

Develop: Is Your Organization Demonstrating a Path Forward?

Help top performers visualize their career growth and how it aligns with your organization's goals. Career paths should be made clear as early as a candidate's first interaction with your job postings.

Consider shifting away from traditional annual performance reviews to a continuous feedback model. This approach can incorporate peer input and performance calibration exercises to reduce bias and provide a more comprehensive view of employee performance.

Transparent communication about growth opportunities for top performers is a key strategy for retaining talent.

Culture-building activities can also double as meaningful development opportunities. For instance, 54% of NorthCoast 99 winners host staff retreats, which encourage collaboration, welcome diverse perspectives, and tackle big challenges—while still leaving room for some fun.



If a large-scale retreat feels overwhelming, start smaller by hosting lunch-and-learns (in-person or virtual) or organizing topic-focused town halls during existing meetings.

Employees are eager to grow, and it's up to employers to ensure that development opportunities are accessible to everyone!

Engage & Retain: Is Your Organization's Culture "Sticky?"

Having a little fun at work is great (we encourage it!), but we also often point to the proverbial "ping-pong table in the break room" as a cautionary tale. Simply put, having (or not having), a ping-pong table won't make or break it for your top talent when it comes to engagement.

While having fun at work is important, relying solely on perks is not a sustainable engagement strategy. Add depth to your culture by fostering relationship-based connections outside of the work itself through community service activities, Employee Resource Groups, or mentorship programs.

In addition to the "fun stuff," a major piece of the culture puzzle is employee engagement and giving employees a voice. Monitor engagement levels with tools like eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score) and/or conduct stay interviews to track trends and inform actions based on the feedback received.

Ultimately, bringing your core values to life and integrating them into every stage of the employee lifecycle is vital. While having a set of core values is common, what sets you apart is how you embody and reinforce them in your daily operations. Widely communicate these values and create opportunities to recognize employees who exemplify them.

Best Practices of Top Workplaces

62%

personalize recognition
based on individual
preferences

Based on 2024 NorthCoast 99 data

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For instance, 62% of NorthCoast 99 winners personalize recognition to align with individual preferences, allowing both leaders and peers to celebrate outstanding contributions and strengthen cultural “stickiness.”

Lead with Culture, Not Just Trends

As you plan for the year, aim not just to follow trends, but to set your own—enhancing your employees’ experience in a way that aligns with your unique culture and vision.

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