Weston Morris:

Welcome to the Digital Workplace Deep Dive. I'm your host, Weston Morris.

Weston Morris:

On our quest to better understand and how to measure and improve employee experience, you've probably noticed in some of the recent podcasts we have focused a lot about the technology. How happy is your PC? How happy is your device? How happy is your UC platform - Zoom or Teams or WebEx. But in this episode, we're going to dive deeper into the human side of things. It's really a subjective question, quite different from the objective data that we've been collecting. How happy are your employees? Now the tricky part about this is that employee happiness has traditionally been something that IT didn't worry about, it's been in the HR department. But now that IT and the CIO are worrying about experience management and collecting XLAs, the CIO is beginning to look at employee happiness and even beginning to look at well-being. So those are clearly topics that have historically had an HR point-of-view, so I think this is a fascinating topic. To help me dig into this, I've got with me two experts on the human side of things. Matt Burgon from Qualtrics who is the global solution strategy for employee experience. Welcome Matt.

Matt Burgon:

Thank you Weston, appreciate you having me here.

Weston Morris:

And I've got your colleague here with us, Matt Evans. Matt is the senior product scientist for employee experience. Welcome to the show, Matt.

Matt Evans:

Thank you very much for having me, Weston.

Weston Morris:

When we talked earlier, Matt and Matt, to set up this episode the other day, you offered to share some topics. One of them being the science behind employee experience, you offer to talk a little bit about how effectively some companies that you're working with are using this experience data and also some pitfalls to avoid when measuring employee experience. So when we're done, I hope to have some recommendations that we can share with how the CIO and the CHRO can work more effectively together in measuring and using this employee experience data that you're helping us to collect so that we have more productive and happier workers.

Weston Morris:

So let's start with what I saw with IT leaders from 10 years ago, 15 years ago. Back then in IT our job was to give people the technology, give them a device, lock it down, give them their apps, set up a service desk, maybe some field services if they had problems. But today as I mentioned, CIOs are now paying attention to XLAs, and that is driving them to now look beyond PC happiness to people happiness. Now, all of a sudden the CIO is actually caring about the employee experience. And I'd like to ask you, how much are you seeing this new focus on employee experience with the companies that you work with?

Matt Burgon:

Even a few years ago, this drive of experience by CIOs was just a trickle and now it's a fire hose. Everybody I talk to is talking about it. And there's a couple of key indicators that I am seeing. One of the first things that I'm seeing is that organizations are actually creating new roles, like a chief experience officer or they're building brand new teams, like a digital experience team who are wholly focused on understanding and improving broken employee experiences related to technologies. You know, CIOs are really starting to understand that if the technology experience isn't good, it's not just an inconvenience for employees, but it actually leads to key core KPIs, like productivity, retention and employee engagement. The other thing I'm seeing that I think has been really interesting is within Qualtrics, we work with a lot of the largest SIs in technology providers in the world.

Matt Burgon:

I was on a call just a few weeks ago with a CTO of one of these large SIs. And he was telling, two years ago, nobody was talking about XLAs or experience level metrics, and nobody was thinking about that as part of a contract. And he says now he has dozens of RFPs that have come to his team that have an XLA or an experience level component to it. So, if they want to compete for business as a SI, they have to include experience in the work they're doing. Customers ultimately are demanding that experience metrics be included as part of what they're delivering. Just even with those two indicators, we know that organizations and CIOs and technology leaders are saying that this is a critical piece of our business that we want to focus on.

Weston Morris:

That trend is something I have to agree with as well. I might just share a little story, in a client workshop, and we actually started drilling down with them, not just what XLAs might mean across the board, like how happy generally everybody is and productive, but very specifically they produced new technology and they have a research and development team. They said, you know what? That research and development team has special needs with regard to experience. They have different devices with high CPU usage and high capacity and disk, and they need to be very fast and they can't be down. If they're down, we're slow to get a new product out the door. This is very different from their sales organization, which could be on the road, in a client location, in a coffee shop, when sometimes they might be in the office. So they really wanted to define their experience even to the next level. What is their experience by persona? And I know at Qualtrics, I saw on your website, you've got this experience trends report that you just published for last year and tons of data in there. Matt Evans, as the senior scientist on this type of data, can you unpack a little bit on what that research reveals?

Matt Evans:

On our annual experience trends report, we ask about 14,000 employees around the globe about their employee experience. In addition to typical employee experience topics like engagement and intent to stay, which, by the way, engagements held serve, but intent to stay has declined. Probably not a big surprise on the intent to stay front. We also asked about employee technology experience for the first time, and we really covered three main overall themes on technology experience. First, we looked at how experience with technology relates to expectations. What we found is that only about 3 in 10 people from our studies say that their technology experience is exceeding their expectations, and when we think about happiness as the extent to which reality exceeds expectations, there's a lot more room for happiness when it comes to technology. This is also a very similar number to how people feel about their overall work experience.

Matt Evans:

Then we looked at the "is the grass greener". 55% of people say their technology at their current company is actually better than their previous company, which seems pretty good. But if you think about it, technology should really be constantly improving, it's not like rock music, right? You don't hear people say, "I just don't understand this Google the kids like, give me that Ask Jeeves any day". No. So you'd think that people would have a more favorable view just based on technology being more current, more intuitive, faster, more reliable - but it's really only about half of people who feel that way. Finally, we asked about productivity: about two-thirds of people say that their technology enables them to be as productive as possible, but that's a full 33% of the workforce who say they could be doing more if they had better tools. All in all, it's not terrible but from employees' perspective, there really is room for improvement.

Weston Morris:

Well, I think that gives us a good reason to continue the podcast then. We've got some things to offer and some help to suggest. I'd like to dig into a little bit about the wellness side of things here, because in our previous podcast, we really have focused on a lot of things you just mentioned in your survey, like how well are their devices running? Are their devices and the technology meeting, what they expect, but now we're also able to see things that we could present to a manager, that 60% of their employees are in back-to-back Teams or Zoom meetings for 7 hours or more a day, or that they've had very few one-on-one meetings with a manager or a skip manager. These are things that in the past, I think would've been considered more HR functions, but we're now collecting that data in IT. I'm really curious what you've got in the way of collecting and analyzing data that might be related to this space around wellness or wellbeing.

Matt Evans:

The Mayo Clinic did a great study a couple years ago looking at the impact of electronic health record systems and their impact on physicians. EHR (electronic health records) are notoriously poorly regarded in the healthcare industry for user friendliness. So there's a 1 to 100 scale called a system usability scale that's used to assess user friendliness of all types of technologies. Google search has been measured in the 90s, a microwave oven is in the 80s, MS Word in the 70s. EHR systems in this study was a 45, which would classify as an F and in the bottom 10% of technology usability overall. That's the bad news, but the good news is that for every 1-point increase in perception of usability, they saw a 3% reduction in the likelihood of burnout for physicians. So think about that, if you look at a major hospital system, you make things just a little bit easier to navigate, a little less complexity.

Matt Evans:

And you're talking about keeping dozens and dozens of doctors from becoming detached and despondent. So better technology for something is seemingly mundane as recording patient notes can really make for better doctors and our own research into wellbeing. It shows that things are okay- not great, not bad overall. But two things that I want to point out are that remote work has overall had a really positive impact on wellbeing - physical, mental, and financial. And the relationship between technology and wellbeing is just as strong as the relationship between wellbeing and resources being provided, and manager support of work-life balance. So the traditional actions that you might think of when you associate with improving wellbeing, like training managers to be more empathetic when it comes to supporting work life balance, giving people a truckload of wellbeing benefits. Those are no longer linked to actual perception of wellness than whether I don't want to throw my laptop out the window.

Matt Burgon:

Weston, if I can jump real quick, you brought up something that's really compelling in this whole conversation we're having. Technology can tell me that Matt's on back-to-back meetings for seven hours a day, every day. From a technology perspective, a lot of organizations would look at that and say, "Hey, he's being super productive. <laugh>, he's in a lot of meetings, he's getting a lot of work done", right? And if we look at only that view of the operational data that organizations have access to, we sometimes get a little misguided on what it actually means. When I'm in seven or eight hours of meeting of back to back Zoom meetings a day, I'm getting burnt out. If organizations aren't collecting kind of that experiential data, they're only seeing half the picture, and that thing that they're thinking is super productive could actually be really destructive to the organization.

Weston Morris:

There is a lot of focus on experience measurement and management right now, and some would say two reasons. One, we're coming out of a pandemic and some people are unhappy about their work. And then the so-called great resignation where people are leaving, so now we better pay attention to employee happiness. Is this just a trend? Is this something that's just going to disappear?

Matt Evans:

Back about 10 years ago in 2011, there was a couple of folks, Theresa Malay and Steven Kramer. They wrote a book called "The Progress Principle". They asked hundreds of people across seven companies to keep a daily diary about their work days, such as "How was your motivation?", "How do you feel about your colleagues?", etc. They found no better indicator of whether someone had a great day than if the person was able to make progress in their work. They found no better indicator of a terrible day than if they experienced a setback. Think about all the ways that technology can support progress or cause a setback. I think everybody I've ever talked to in client services has had the experience of the dreaded unexpected system update right in the middle of delivering to a client, right? Or a slow boot up when you're trying to get that proposal out the door by a five o'clock Friday deadline. But then, think about the good times that you have, like automating a workflow to get out of a boring and repetitive task, or getting a second monitor for the first time - those can be outstanding work days. I think Matt Burgon actually has a really good example of how we've seen this in action.

Matt Burgon:

It's kind of interesting, a couple of years ago, Qualtrics completed a technology engagement project with Microsoft where we wanted to look at the experience of employees that were using a Microsoft-managed desktop versus some other technology device. If you're not familiar, Microsoft's managed desktop is really focused on driving some of those key operational things and improving them like a faster boot time, reducing the number of crashes, and improving the battery life in your laptop. So, we measured groups that were utilizing the new managed desktop and those that weren't. What was really unexpected is the significant factor of change that we saw between the two groups. For example, the group that utilized the Microsoft-managed desktop versus those that did not had 31% higher engagement, 59% higher productivity and 121% higher employee rating - that type of impact is practically unheard of.

Matt Burgon:

In fact, these numbers were so surprisingly large that the Microsoft sponsor, the lead on the Microsoft side, came back to the team and said there's something wrong with your calculations. There is no way

that we are getting this type of change with the Microsoft-managed desktop. The teams went back, they did the recalculations, reviewed the data and it was absolutely accurate. As consumers, we really have come to kind of expect a certain level of experience when we interact with technology. We're driven by Netflix, Apple, Google or Amazon and that's what we expect when we come into work. If we come into an office and it feels like we're stepping back into the 80's with our technology experience, it creates a gap as an employee. As an employee, I want to work with a company that either has addressed those gaps, or I know is actively addressing those gaps because it drives my engagement and productivity. Because of what we see here, I'm with Matt Evans on this, this is not a trend. This isn't a flash in the pan. This is something that we'll continue to see where the expectation for technology matches what we have in our consumer lives. And if organizations aren't actively monitoring it, measuring it, and making changes it will impact them.

Weston Morris:

Well, I think gentlemen, we've established the importance of including the subjective component in looking at getting employee experience. We really need to be asking employees, how do you feel? So I'd like to ask each of you, I'll start with you, Matt Burgon, what are some examples of missteps of an enterprise? Do You have examples of them trying to do this and maybe not doing it effectively?

Matt Burgon:

This is relatively new space for a lot of technology leaders and CIOs. Generally, when we talk about employee engagement, it's owned by HR who has been really running this motion for decades. For the past couple of decades, IT's focus has been the enterprise technology uptime and the stability of my platform, privacy and security. They haven't really thought about experience, they haven't had to. So there's two missteps that I've seen - the first is organizations who aren't thinking about the voice of the employee that relates to technology and haven't bought into the importance of this concept yet. A couple years ago, I was meeting with a large retail organization about a deployment of a new tech platform that would ultimately be utilized by all of their frontline employees. We had multiple conversations about bringing in the voice of the employee into the design, the build and the rollout of this project and making sure that they had key listening points throughout the entire project to help de-risk and ensure that what they delivered to the field to the end user actually met needs. In our final discussion with this client, they told me very bluntly, We don't care about the employee experience with this technology. We're rolling out a global system and they'll have to use it because there is no other option and that's their problem. Now, the problem with that is the number one concern on our CEOs today is talent. If we're telling our employees that we don't care about your experience working with us, we're essentially inviting them to go to the competitor. This organization, ironically, a year later, they came back to us and they started using the Qualtrics platform to gather the voice of the employee with this same technology deployment. They realized they had the gap and they learned, but organizations not paying attention is the number one.

Matt Burgon:

The second one I would say is lack of vision. We get a lot of organizations that say, yeah, this is critical. And so they just start throwing stuff out everywhere. They start doing tons of things with no idea on ultimately what they're trying to achieve or what they're trying to accomplish. They're dropping digital intercepts on technology tools, they're running surveys consistently and creating survey fatigue in their organization. The problem is if they don't have vision or focus or guiding principles, essentially they're throwing darts in a dark room, right? Occasionally they're gonna hit the dart board and they're going to maybe even hit a bullseye once in a while, but most of the time they're going to miss the mark because

they don't know, or they don't have a plan for what a really successful program looks like. So those are kind of the two key things where I see organizations, kind of start and stop and struggle - organizations that just don't care today.

Matt Evans:

Matt, if I could jump in there, you mentioned a phrase there that I really like - survey fatigue. I think a lot of people, when they hear survey fatigue, they just think that it means too many surveys. What it really means is that people don't feel like the company is taking that feedback that's being given and doing anything with it. They're not seeing action. So a lot of times what we see and it's with the best of intentions is leaders reach out to employees to get their feedback. But, usually because of competing priorities they really lose that focus on what comes next and what's the action that I'm going to take based on what people are telling me. Our friends on the HR side of the business are learning about this and I'm sure could convey their learnings on this to their counterparts.

Weston Morris:

I'm wondering, as I hear both of you describe this and you just mentioned HR - do you see a competition now between IT and HR and both producing surveys? Are you seeing them collaborating or saying, let's just do one survey. Is that another pitfall here where you've got two organizations hitting the same employees, maybe with similar questions?

Matt Evans:

Yeah, I think maybe historically it could have been an issue, Weston, but what we're actually seeing is an improved partnership between the CIO and the CHRO. Qualtrics did some research last year of 200 CIOs and we asked about their work priorities and how work has changed since the start of the pandemic. 81% of CIOs are collaborating more often with CHRO's now than they were before the pandemic. We work with one of the largest retailers in the world and they view their ability to quickly get awesome technology in the hands of their employees as a major competitive advantage, but how to measure the awesomeness of the technology? HR at the same organization has been measuring employee experiences for years. So the IT group partnered with the people analytics group to launch a multitude of listening programs that helped IT get the experience data that they need to make sure that what they're delivering isn't just meeting arbitrary service level agreements or operational metrics, but that it's delivering the experience that is intended.

Matt Evans:

One experience I can share from this client was, they were rolling out a mobile application to help with inventory management. This was going to be used by tens of thousands of workers all across the world. Rather than deploy broadly and hope for the best, or go through a painstaking set of hundreds of interviews and focus groups, they actually used the Qualtrics platform to deploy in-app feedback so the product team could see in real time how people were experiencing the new app. This allowed them to get the product right before a major deployment and saved hundreds, if not thousands of hours of time in manually gathering that experience feedback.

Weston Morris:

I'm going to declare an "aha" moment then for me. What I'm seeing is a new relationship is what you're describing between the CIO and the CHRO that maybe hasn't existed in the past. What I'm seeing is the CIO, if they're doing an experience program, they're collecting XLAs and experience data, they may even

have early indicators as to what's happening with a specific group of people. For example, your sales team in Germany is unhappy. We detected it as part of this team's rollout and the data we're collecting, but by the way, HR, you might wanna take a look at that because you don't want to lose that sales team. On the flip side, what I'm hearing is that the HR team is through their data collection, exit interviews when people leave the company, or they make a job offer and someone declines and they ask why? They may be collecting requirements about a potentially poor work experience that the CIO can be addressing. So bidirectional flow of communication. I think if we could get that word out to the CIOs and CHROs listening, I think we could declare victory on this podcast here.

Matt Burgon:

Absolutely Weston, that's interesting. I just got off a call about 30 minutes ago with one of the largest healthcare providers in the US. We've been running a technology listening project with their technology officer. Right now, they're starting with a holistic tech assessment, but for this call, he actually invited the HR lead on the call and said, "Hey, I think there's a lot of things that we're doing over here that could impact HR and we want to understand how we can connect these two together." As a technology leader, he's thinking very proactively about it. He even cited some of the insights that they found with regards to the technology experience such as onboarding, like if there's a challenge with getting the right technology, getting my laptop and how that impacts the experience for the whole onboarding process. So the "aha" moment that you had is exactly what we're seeing. And when organizations kind of embrace that relationship with the CIO and CHRO they can absolutely accelerate their programs, insights, and the action they take within these initiatives.

Matt Evans:

Matt, I would even say that it doesn't have to be this major complex partnership. It could be something just as simple as an IT leader who wants to do some level of experience measurement and borrowing an IO psychologist that happens to sit in HR to help with a little bit of survey design. You could start small, start the relationship from there and then see where things go and how things expand.

Weston Morris:

I love that, we could definitely use some help in the IT department, the CIO department, with how to do a survey and how to do it effectively. We might say that's a tip to share, but let me just ask each of you - is there one tip that you could share with the CIOs that are listening to say, Hey, you're interested in getting started with an experience management program. You may be thinking DEX only, digital experience management tool only. You need to think about the employee side, the surveying of them. What is one suggestion you have for them that you'd like to share as they get started? I'll start with you, Matt Burgon.

Matt Burgon:

I'll jump back to the recommendation that I made when we were talking about missteps. CIOs really need to think about their strategy and what they want to accomplish in terms of gathering the employee voice and making it part of their business. I'm not saying that the vision has to be so complete where they have every I dotted and every T crossed in every survey and interaction, but they do need to turn the lights on, so they know where to throw the darts. They need to think about the depth and the scale of the program they want to run, and they need to think about the commitment that they can make to take action on changes based on what we're hearing. If we're only getting feedback and we're

not taking action, we're not improving the experience, and the research tells us that you're better not to ask if you're not gonna do anything with that data.

Matt Burgon:

The retail company that Matt mentioned previously, they're actually very hesitant to provide references because they view their focus on improving the technology experience as a competitive advantage in the marketplace. They want to remain the first mover and they don't want the other retail providers out there to know what they're doing. In this case, the CIO knows that if I pull the voice of my employee into my technology, I get to do things that impact the entire organization. He gets to talk to HR about how he's helping to drive engagement. He gets to talk to the CFO about how he's lowering costs and increasing productivity by eliminating poor technology experiences. And he's talking to the CEO about here's what I'm doing to help retain your talent. I'm ensuring that working at the organization is effortless. So if I have one tip, that's it - figure out your focus and move fast. Organizations that wait for months or years are absolutely going to get caught behind the early movers. And that's a place that just, nobody wants to be.

Weston Morris:

Great advice, Matt! How about you, Matt Evans? One little tip for the CIOs listening?

Matt Evans:

Fail fast and start slow. Some of what we have seen is that the ones who have been successful aren't necessarily starting with the 50,000- or 100,000-person technology assessment, digital intercepts. They may just start with one specific function of the company who has a real interest in improving their employees' technology experience. Figuring out those lessons as you are getting started with experience management in the technology space with a smaller group can be really impactful when you decide to go larger.

Weston Morris:

I really want to thank you both for sharing your experience and your time here with us. Matt Evans, you quoted quite a bit from the research. Would you mind sharing a link and we can put it in the podcast speaker notes for people looking for proof points around the employee experience?

Matt Evans:

Absolutely, I'll send two. I'll send you one on the overall employee experience and then one where we dove a bit deeper specifically on the employee technology experience.

Weston Morris:

Excellent, I think our listeners will enjoy looking at both of those. Just a quick recap, what we heard here today while talking with Matt and Matt, I think we really made the point that it's important to make sure you're including people happiness as part of your employee experience program. It needs to be part of your XLAs. It's not trivial, it is definitely something that you'd want to include. Going back to the "aha" moment that I had earlier is the importance of the relationship between the CIO and the CHRO now that both are looking at employee experience. Hopefully our listeners found something that can help them as they move forward with experience management. Again, I'd like to thank both of you for your time today.

Matt Burgon:

Thank you, Weston

Matt Evans:

Thanks, Weston.

Weston Morris:

You've been listening to Matt Burgon, the global solution strategy lead for employee experience and Matt Evans, the senior product scientist for employee experience, both of them coming to us from Qualtrics. This is the Digital Workplace Deep Dive. I'm your host, Weston Morris. Thanks for listening.