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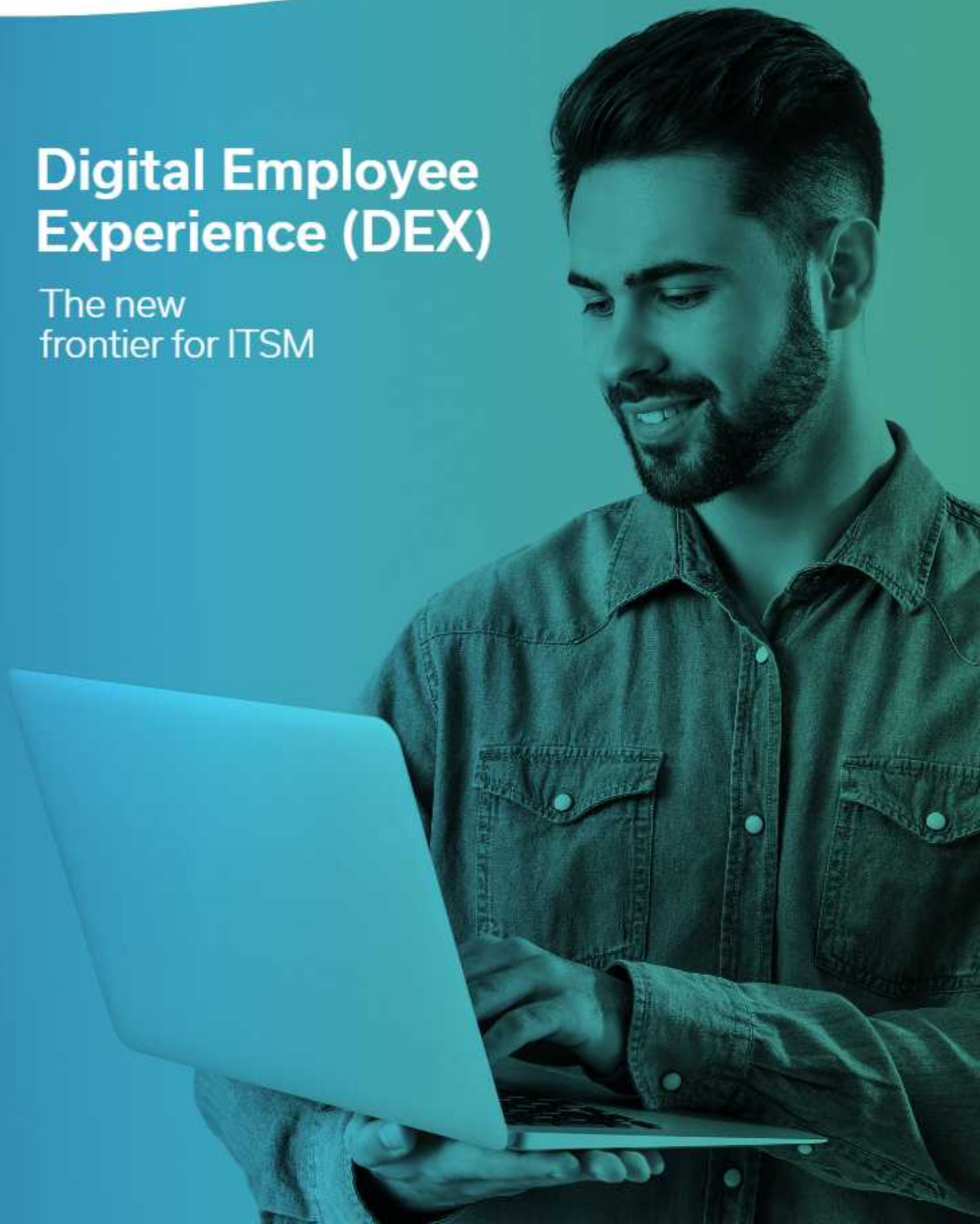
Digital Employee Experience (DEX)

The new frontier for ITSM



One of the many changes the IT service management (ITSM) industry saw during the global pandemic was the rise in employee (or end-user) expectations and the increasing consideration of employee experience as a measure of an IT organization's performance and value. The growth in the latter was confirmed in the AXELOS 2023 ITSM Benchmarking Report, where 67% of survey respondents stated that their organizations understand the need to deliver a better employee experience, with another 18% expecting them to in 2023. Only 9% of respondents thought their organizations would never see the need for improving the employee experience.

It's a significant change for IT organizations that have long employed best-practice IT metrics that measure performance from the IT supplier rather than the end-user perspective. This approach has caused a disconnect between IT's view of their service and support capabilities and those of end-users. Importantly, this disconnect is hidden for many IT departments because they continue to perform well within the parameters of their chosen metrics and cannot see where the end-users struggle with the services and support they receive.

The solution to this disconnect and its unwanted impact, is using employee experience to better measure and understand how the corporate IT organization is meeting employee and business needs.

The common issues of traditional IT metrics

Before looking at the opportunity of the employee experience, there's a need to understand the issues caused by the metrics IT organizations currently employ. Though there are potentially many, the disconnects between IT and employee perceptions can be traced to two main root causes:

1. IT measures what it thinks is important, not what end-users believe is important. The result is that the metrics focus on operational areas such as volumes and speed rather than the received outcomes. For example, an IT service desk ticket might meet average handling time targets, but the end-user is still unable to work (due to their IT issue not being resolved).

2. Measurements are taken at the point of IT service creation rather than at the point of end-user consumption. The IT organization sees IT performance as great, while the end-user view might be the polar opposite.

Employee experience measurement addresses both of these root causes to provide IT better insight into their performance. Importantly, this insight rises above the "mechanics" of IT service delivery and support to report on the relative success of IT and business outcomes.

[1] https://my.axelos.com/resource-hub/report/the-axelos-itsm-benchmarking-report-2022

Employee experience and its importance

Before looking at the IT perspective of employee experience, it's important to appreciate that employee experience is an area that is important to all internal service providers, and likely sits best with the corporate Human Resources (HR) organization from an overall ownership perspective. After all, HR is responsible for "all things people."

This pan-organization view fits in with the many employee experience definitions that see it as a blend of the culture, technology, and the physical workplace that impacts how employees see working for their employer. For example, *"Employee experience is the way in which employees internalize and interpret the interactions they have with their organization, as well as the context that underlies those interactions. According to Gartner research, only 13% of employees are fully satisfied with their experience."*

However, a 2019 Forrester Research employee experience definition focuses on enabling employees to do what they need to do (and when they need to do it): "Psychological research shows that the most important factor for employee experience is being able to make progress every day toward the work that they believe is most important. But when presented with this option, managers will consistently rank it dead last. Clearly, we have a gap." This Forrester definition allows IT organizations to consider how well their IT service delivery and support capabilities help or hinder the employees they serve in being productive.

While this focus on employee productivity is key to many corporate employee experience investments, it's important not to overlook some of the softer implications of poor employee experiences, given the link to better business operations and outcomes, that also impact productivity. For example, where poor employee experiences:

1. Increase employee resignation numbers and potentially hinder the recruitment of new staff
2. Cause employees to feel stressed and potentially impact their mental health

Ultimately, if your IT organization is committed to improving business operations and outcomes, it needs to focus on employee experience and its improvement. This commitment starts with measuring experiences.

Measuring employee experience

Some people might argue that because their IT organization already measures customer satisfaction (CSAT), it is in tune with the delivered employee experience because CSAT surveys allow employees to feedback on IT performance.

However, CSAT is not a proxy for employee experience due to issues such as:

1. Low levels of survey feedback responses
2. Feedback skewing as a result of great and poor service experiences eliciting feedback more often than middle of the road experiences
3. An operational focus on the "IT mechanics" (as with other IT metrics)
4. Limited context
5. A delay in feedback requests and receipt

Consequently, CSAT scores offer little insight into how employees really feel about the delivered employee experience. This issue adds to the aforementioned disconnect and has brought the need for focused ways of measuring employee experience to the forefront.

[1] https://www.gartner.com/en/human-resources/glossary/employee-experience

[2] https://www.forrester.com/blogs/the-employee-experience-index/

When it comes to solutions able to report on employee experience, it's not yet a measure that's built into traditional ITSM tool suites — meaning third-party solutions are needed. To date, different experience management solution vendors have approached the collection, analysis, and presentation of experience data differently. This situation isn't helped by the lack of a standard industry definition for experience management and is also driven by the historical technology and business-need focus of each solution vendor.

Consequently, some experience management solutions focus solely on capturing human feedback (or sentiment), while others use technological capabilities to monitor and assess IT performance from an end-user perspective, and some employee experience solutions do both.

The solutions that use technology to monitor the IT infrastructure have been labeled as "digital employee experience (DEX) management" offerings. These are covered in more detail in the next section.

The term DEX can be used interchangeably with "employee experience" when denoting that the employee experience with technology is the focus.

Digital employee experience solutions

Because various DEX solution vendors offer different approaches to DEX management, usually based on their previous market offerings such as endpoint management solutions, the available DEX solution capabilities will differ—ranging in breadth and depth of capability. While most solutions share commonalities, a procuring organization shouldn't assume that a DEX solution offers suitable capabilities relative to their specific needs. To assist with this evaluation, the commonly available DEX solution capabilities are shown in the table below.

Common DEX Solution Capabilities

DEX Solution Capability	Capability Overview	
Technology-based monitoring of experience and performance	**Covering:**	• Operating systems (OSs), including Microsoft Windows, macOS, Linux, and mobile OSs • Hardware attributes such as CPU, memory, and patching level, and boot performance • Application performance, including availability, responsiveness, crashes, and errors
Sentiment capture	• DEX solutions offer both pre-built and customizable survey templates • This data might more accurately reflect employee perceptions and also provides insight into "what matters most" to employees	
Experience scoring	• The combination of technology-based and sentiment data to create an overall experience score • There's no industry standard, with each DEX solution provider having its own calculation method	
Automated remediation	There are three ways this is invoked:	• Auto-remediation based on policies • IT-staff-initiated • End-user-initiated
Machine learning use cases	• Data-based issue identification • Root-cause analysis and diagnosis • "Self-healing" • Issue prevention using pattern recognition and synthetic transactions	
Reporting and analytics	Real-time insight into:	• Endpoints • End-user experiences across IT services
Integrations with other systems	• Pre-built integrations • The ability to create bespoke integrations via an Open REST API, a Web API, or an SDK	

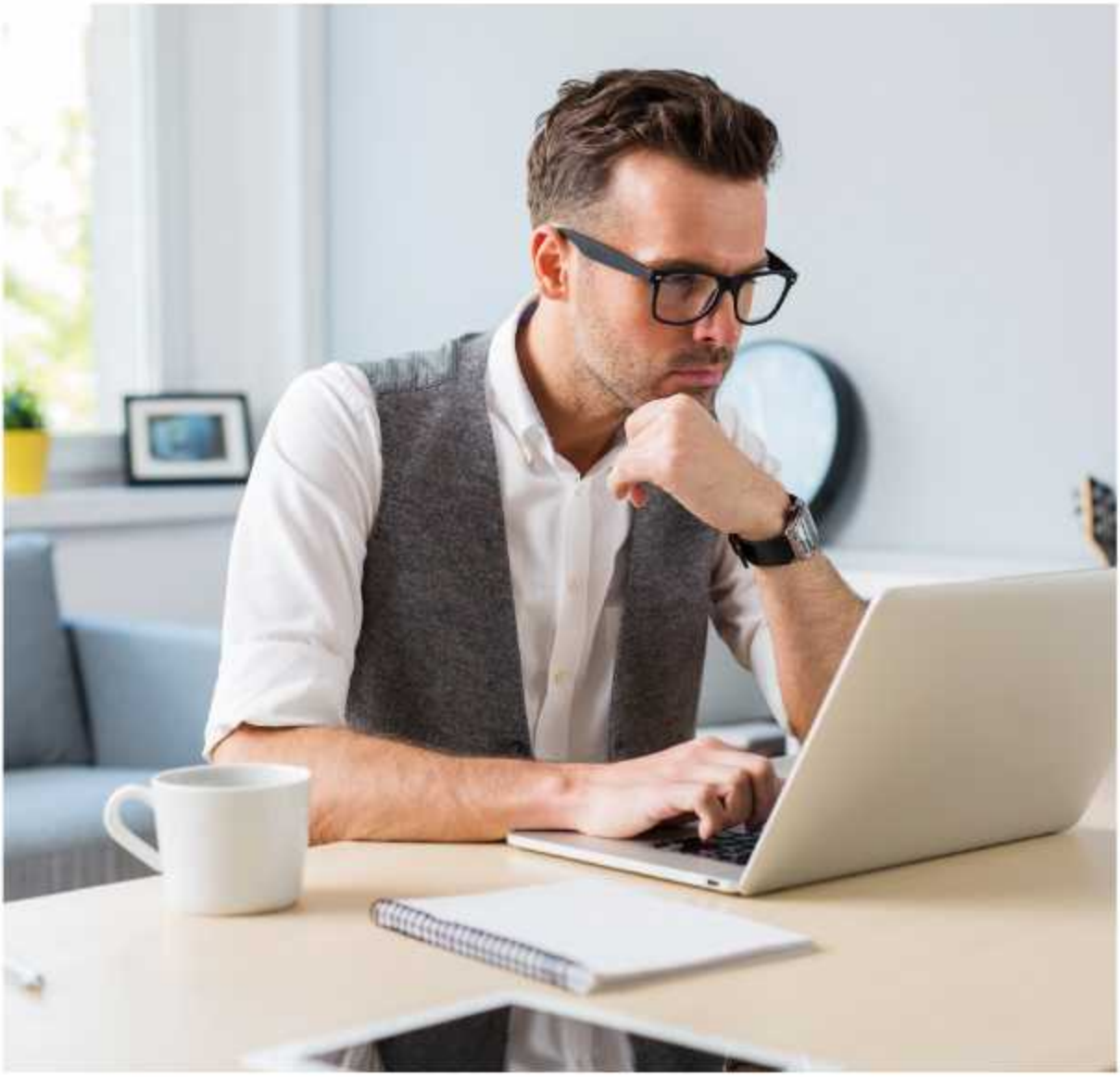
While specific machine learning use cases are called out in the above table, the other listed DEX solution capabilities are also likely to employ machine learning capabilities.

Improving employee experience

While employee experience or DEX solutions are great for identifying the current level of employee experience and improvements, they still require your organization to focus on experienced-based improvements. After all, employee experience is unlikely to improve just because it's being measured.

Therefore, capturing and analyzing experience data is just the starting point. As with any form of feedback, the real value of the data and information is in how it's used to drive improvements. Initial experience data will offer some "low hanging fruit"—the areas that cause employees pain and adversely impact their productivity. Beyond this initial experience data, data analysis can be used to identify the issues that aren't immediately as visible or low hanging.

Over time an organization's focus on employee experience improvement needs to move from reactive — addressing the issues identified in feedback and its analysis —to being used to proactively to drive IT strategies and investment decisions. Proactive strategic planning is where the experience data and insight help prioritize and focus future IT changes or improvements on the things that impact employee experience, and therefore business operations and outcomes, most positively.



7 practical tips for succeeding with employee experience improvement

How does your organization proceed if it understands the benefits of focusing on employee experience, including DEX, but is unsure of where and how to start? Here are seven practical tips that can be applied to get you started, no matter the technology solution employed:

1. Introduce DEX with a specific ambition and focus rather than simply following an industry trend or adopting it because it's the "right thing to do"
2. Understand that experience management requires a cultural change to be successful
3. Recognize that introducing experience management might increase some IT costs (due to improvements), but those costs will be outweighed by the additional business value derived
4. Agree on what experience management means for your organization rather than blindly following someone else's definition (including this one)
5. Appreciate that real employee experience improvement takes time, especially the required cultural changes to support it
6. Create an employee experience baseline from which to assess improvements and achievements as soon as possible
7. Focus on "quick wins" to provide early successes and motivation (and potentially funding) for further employee experience investment

Next steps

If you would like to learn more about how to address the listed opportunities and challenges,

Talk to SymphonyAI Summit for more details

USA
SymphonyAI Summit
3300 Hillview Ave
Palo Alto, CA. 94304

India
SymphonyAI Summit
Tower 3, 5th floor, SJR I Park, Whitefield
KR Puram Hobli, Bengaluru
Karnataka 560066

UAE
SymphonyAI Summit
Shams Business Center
Sharjah Media City Free Zone
Al Messaned
Sharjah, UAE

Malaysia
SymphonyAI Summit
Office number 969, Suite 9.01, Level 9
Menara Summit, Persiaran Kewajipan, USJ 1, UEP
47600, Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan

Email: summit.sales@symphonysummit.com
Visit: www.symphonysummit.com