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- » Date: August 2023

## **Title:** Employee Experience Builds Connection – Manager Experience Builds Success

Managers in the line of business (LOB) are only as strong and capable as the level of organizational enablement and empowerment they receive to connect LOB activities to the goals, objectives, and reported outcomes managed by operational leaders – meaning the CEO, COO, CFO, CIO, and CHRO. However, manager empowerment is tied directly to the success of employee experience (EX) transformation.

As organizations embrace EX transformation, they seek to improve operational efficiency and productivity, which means decoupling how organizational leaders gather and assess metrics from how LOB employees contribute data in their respective flows of work. Managers play a pivotal role in translating LOB insights into organizational actions and responses. EX transformation success often begins in the LOB where managers listen to employees and align resources, people, tasks, and work around employee asks, needs, and opportunities for growth. According to IDC's *Employee Experience Buyer Sentiment Survey* (November 2021), LOB managers are nearly 6x more likely to steer successful EX transformation efforts than team or group leads. The same data shows that LOB managers are 4.5x more likely to drive successful EX transformation than division leads or the C-suite.

More than 80% of organizations now understand the value of and embrace concepts in EX transformation. While more than 75% embrace collecting data around the voice of the employee (VoE) – sentiment surveys, pulse surveys, feedback, and structured communications insights – fewer than 50% recognize the integral value that manager experience (MX) plays in executing on VoE-driven change, according to IDC's *Employee Experience Buyer Perception Survey*. Across most work environments, improving MX helps to enhance EX and facilitate EX transformation. While successful EX transformation relies on manager empowerment, organizations still significantly disempower managers to independently respond to LOB employee pressures, make decisions, or take calculated risks based on experience and expertise. While investment in leadership training is rising, organizational leaders are still slightly more likely to pursue command-and-control decision structures than to enable real-time managerial decision authority based on experience and data-driven insights, according to IDC's *Future of Enterprise Resilience Survey* (May 2023).

MX empowers LOB managers to provide the resources, insights, communications, and metrics needed to make decisions, troubleshoot, and enact change in the flow of work for a subset of employees. Managers must navigate their own experiences as employees while overseeing how daily engagements, tasks, assignments, processes, and objectives impact the experiences of employees who report into them. Successful MX empowers both aspects of what managers face, giving them insights in their flows of work to make decisions for their teams, to manage their personal workloads, and to justify their decisions, recommendations, and actions to the leaders into whom they report.

The following example looks at how enabling managers facilitates manager-employee alignment for operational success.

Retail store employees were assigned shifts two weeks in advance. The night before a pending shift, a worker called out due to a family emergency. The store manager had the timekeeping resources to automatically staff that shift by

choosing from a list of available and qualified employees. The manager secured a replacement worker and spoke with them ahead of time to deter potential co-working issues based on that employee's history with the assigned team.

Noting the missing team member's strengths, the manager reassigned tasks based on that information and the preferences of the remaining team members and the replacement worker to ensure a seamless work environment across the day's shifts. As the day progressed, employees reported two unexpected events that changed the task list, pushing some tasks into later shifts. The manager was able to continuously optimize task assignments across shifts as the list changed in response to the reported disruptions and differing customer traffic flows. This meant that not all employees were assigned to their preferred tasks. The manager used the task management tools to recommend that employees who took on non-preferred tasks be first for their preferred tasks in their next shifts. Through the organization's employee recognition system, the manager also recognized the employees for their flexibility in the face of change.

The combination of dynamic scheduling resources, team preference insights, real-time communications management, shift swaps, and more enabled the manager to respond to worksite issues in real time. The manager's primary motivation was to keep store operations moving to support operational and sales performance. However, the outcome of her actions was to minimize disruption of that day's work so employees could engage with customers. It also ensured that workers who took on non-preferred responsibilities were quantifiably recognized. The manager was empowered to make quick decisions that reduced the risk of untimely responses that could have threatened employee morale and customer experiences and spending.

Empowering and enabling managers also empowers and enables employees. EX transformation is built on connecting the real-time realities of the LOB with how the organization responds within the context of its objectives and key results. Managers serve as a bridge between employee experiences in the LOB and how VoE data, insights, and calls to action impact the organization's responses and direction. Consequently, MX must enable managers to make and justify decisions in the flow of business to keep employees focused on their own work, engagements, growth, and success.