



# Elevating Employee Experience with User Experience Statements

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## INTRODUCTION

The hybrid work model – a remote and in-office work blend – is becoming the new norm. As companies pivot to this model, they face a growing need to enhance the employee experience to attract and retain top talent. By focusing on sentiment throughout the employee’s journey, from applying, onboarding, familiarizing, growing, changing and leaving, companies can enhance the employee experience (EX) and turn it into a powerful lever against the pressing talent shortage.

### The Hybrid Work Challenge

As employees navigate between home offices and physical workplaces, they are seeking a seamless integration of both worlds. The need for clear communication, robust tech infrastructure, and a sense of belonging becomes more pronounced. Addressing these needs proactively can set organizations apart in the talent market.

In the dynamic world of EX, understanding and enhancing every interaction between employees and the organization is paramount. When managed well, these pivotal moments (or “moments that matter”) can significantly elevate the overall EX.

Of course, managing the employee experience is more than just giving employees fancy technology. According to workplace researchers from the global research firm Gallup, every interaction between employees and customers slightly impacts stock prices. Customers and employees know each other which means declining employee engagement can put your customer retention at risk. Therefore, creating a culture of engaged employees who build and strengthen relationships with your customers must be seen as a responsibility of the entire organization.

Imagine a new hire, Sarah, who joins your organization to work remotely, setting out her expectations:

**“As a new employee, I want to complete the onboarding process without any friction to start contributing to my new team soon.”**

Who would you call to explain the upcoming onboarding to her, and who do you think would be responsible for the overall experience?

We can generally identify three areas that make up an employee's experience: The technology that enables work, the place and environment where work occurs, and the motivational and cultural aspects that integrate and connect the individual.

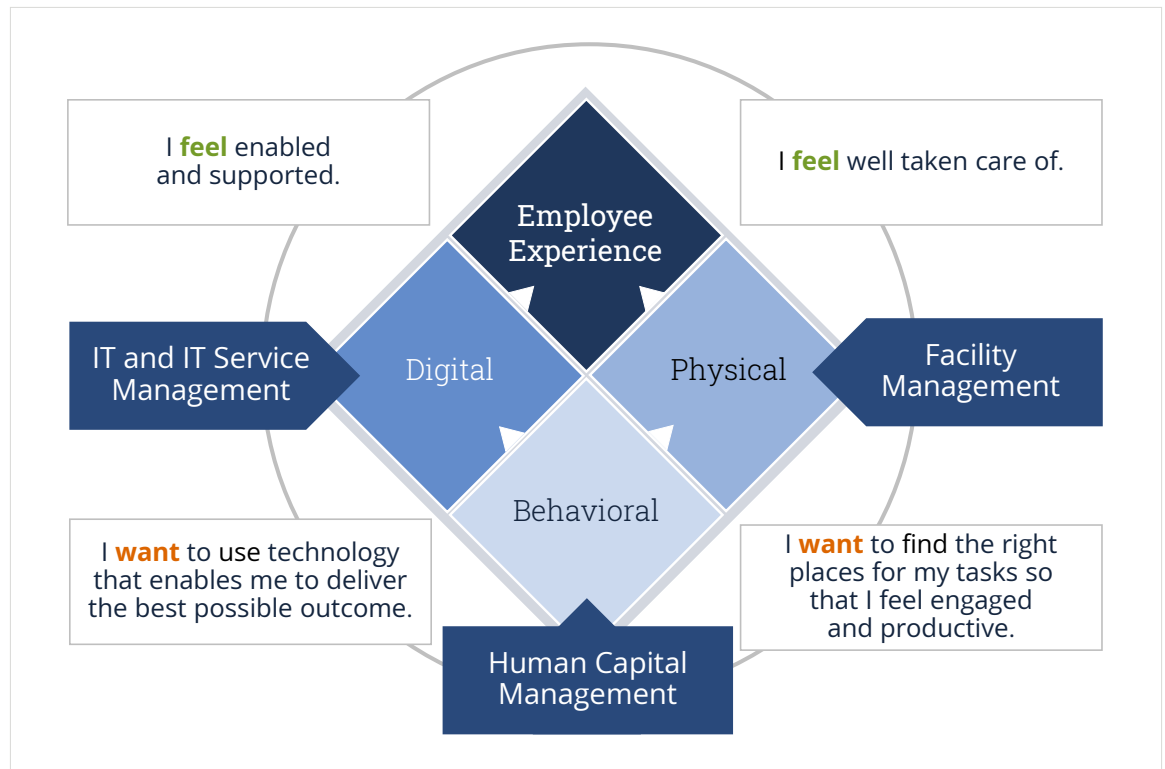


Figure 1: Key Stakeholder Groups that Create, Influence, and Drive the Employee’s Experience

## Who Is in Charge of Employee Experience?

Elevating EX is a collaboration between various teams:

**IT and IT services** are at the forefront of providing Sarah with a seamless digital experience, equipping her with the necessary devices, tools, access and platforms to perform her duties effectively from a remote setting. This includes ensuring she has secure access to the company's networks, collaboration tools for communication with her team and technical support to troubleshoot any issues that arise, setting the stage for her productivity and engagement from day one.

Although **Facility Management** might seem less directly involved in the remote work scenario, it plays a crucial role in enhancing the physical workplace experience. For remote employees like Sarah, this could translate into managing and providing access to shared workspaces if needed or ensuring she has the right ergonomic equipment to set up a comfortable and productive home office. Facilities Management must adapt to support employees wherever they work, ensuring their physical environment is conducive to health, safety and productivity.

**Human Capital Management** addresses the behavioral aspects of work, focusing on Sarah's emotional, motivational and cultural integration into the organization. They are responsible for orchestrating her onboarding process in a way that connects her with the company's values, culture and people. This involves administrative tasks and training and fostering a sense of belonging, recognizing her contributions and supporting her professional growth and well-being in a remote work environment.

Just like the employee lifecycle, experiences themselves go through a lifecycle. Every experience an employee like Sarah has will shape her expectations for future experiences. Whether it's her first day logging in, an interaction with the team or how she settles into her new role, each moment builds on the last. This cycle of experiences influences not only how Sarah views her workplace but also how she will approach her work in the future and what she wants from a new employer if she decides to move on.

The experience lifecycle is a continuous loop within which each experience sets the stage for the next, highlighting the importance of creating meaningful interactions. It is marked by four stages: anticipation, encounter, reflection and integration.

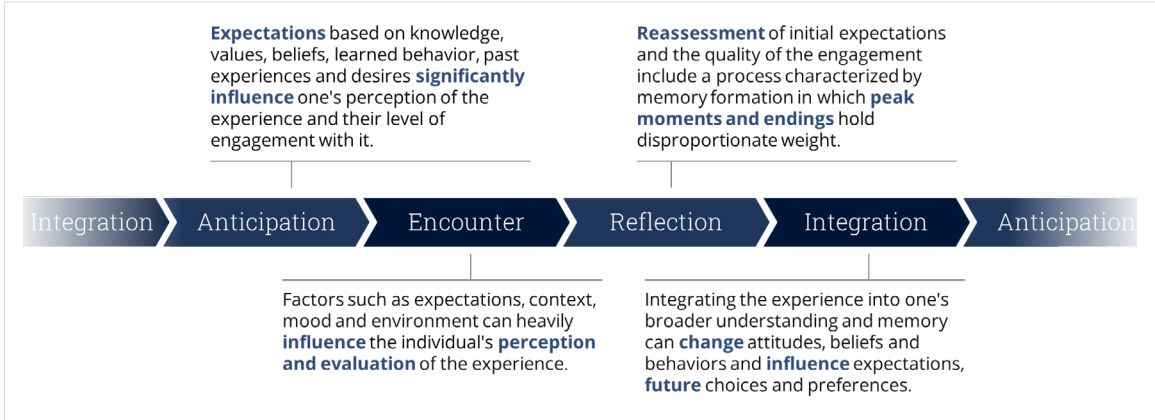


Figure 2: The Experience Lifecycle

Since expectations set the stage for the experience, which will influence future expectations, designing, delivering and managing the experience are tasks that require close collaboration between all parties designing the experience.

Each interaction Sarah has with the organization, whether through digital communication tools, feedback sessions or her use of company facilities and support services, can be seen as touchpoints. However, there are pivotal instances known as moments that matter within this broad spectrum of interactions. These key events or milestones significantly stand out for their profound impact on the employees' perceptions, feelings and engagement with the organization. Moments that matter transform ordinary touchpoints into powerful opportunities that can positively reinforce the employee's commitment and satisfaction or lead to



disengagement and dissatisfaction. On top of that, each touchpoint represents an opportunity to shape her experience and perception of the company.

As a result, establishing an experience management organization such as an Experience Management Office (XMO) has become a leading practice among people-centric organizations. XMO teams ensure the right experience is delivered by collecting and interpreting data from touchpoint interactions and deriving meaningful actions.

Therefore, carefully designing and managing these touchpoint experiences is vital because they are the building blocks of Sarah's overall journey with the organization. By thoughtfully crafting each touchpoint, the company can deliver outstanding experiences that have the potential to exceed an employee's expectations.

This approach helps foster a positive work environment, enhancing employee satisfaction and increasing retention and productivity. In essence, well-managed touchpoints are how an organization can consistently deliver value and support to its employees, making every interaction count toward a positive, fulfilling employee lifecycle.

How can we ensure these touchpoints are proactive in design and positive in outcome?

The answer lies in elevating touchpoint design by transforming the well-known concept of user stories into forward-thinking user experience statements to design an appealing, people-centric touchpoint experience.

## Evolving User Stories into User Experience Statements

The concept of user stories is an important one in design thinking and software development. It aims to capture user needs beyond mere functionalities. Collecting user stories is a simple and powerful way to ensure the software development process focuses on delivering value to the user. Rather than focusing on specific features, such as a button, user stories delve into the essence of user interaction, focusing on how individual actions come together into a certain quality of experience. User stories adhere to the principle that relying on a single tool can limit problem-solving capabilities, a way of working that is encapsulated in the adage, "If all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail."

A typical user story is a simple, concise description of a feature in a simple format: **"As a [type of user], I want [an action] so that [a benefit/a value]."**

The beauty of user stories is their simplicity. They don't go into technical details but focus on user needs. They serve as a starting point for discussions between team members and lay the groundwork for further elaboration, such as acceptance criteria, mockups or technical specifications.

Over time, due to its effectiveness in helping teams focus on user needs and desired outcomes, the concept of user stories has been adopted and adapted in various project management methodologies beyond software development. Today, user stories can also be a great starting point for creating employee-centric experiences.

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### Elevating Employee Experience Design with User Experience Statement



Figure 3: Examples of User Stories Related to Employee Experience

## Understanding User Experience Statements

Taking the user story to its next iteration will give experience design practitioners a deeper understanding of users' feelings about their previous touchpoint interactions. To have an impact, they need a more holistic view of what really resonates with users.

While user stories are a powerful tool in Agile development, they do not fully address the nuances of the user experience and emotional engagement. They tend to focus on what the user wants to do and why, but not necessarily on how the user wants to feel or the quality of the experience from an emotional or aesthetic standpoint.

At its core, an experience statement adds exactly this to a user story. It's a comprehensive and user-centered method that is instrumental in designing and improving experiences, whether in a product, service or workplace environment.

An experience statement can be seen as a narrative that encapsulates an employee's desired journey or interaction in an organization. User experience statements focus on aspirational emotional outcomes, paving the way for touchpoints with the company that shape positive future experiences.

## The User Experience Statement Formula

To create an impactful experience statement, EX teams should follow this formula:

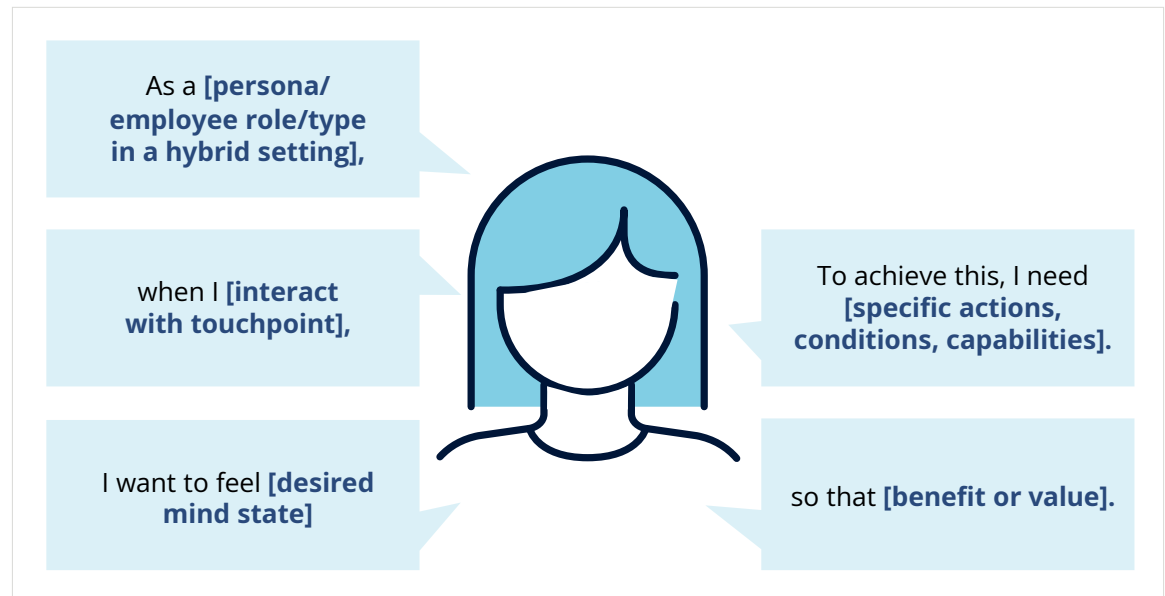


Figure 4: User Experience Statement Formula

The following explains each of the elements that go into the experience statement formula:

- **Persona/employee role/type in a hybrid setting:** Identifying the specific persona, employee role or type is crucial as this sets the context and ensures the experience is tailored to the needs and perspectives of a particular group. This specificity helps create a more targeted and relevant experience.
- **Interaction with touchpoint:** Specifying the interaction with a particular touchpoint (e.g., process, tool or event) helps pinpoint the exact moment or scenario the experience occurs. This helps focus efforts on critical moments in the user journey.
- **Desired mind state:** Articulating the desired emotional or psychological state (e.g., confident, integrated, informed) is key to understanding the emotional journey of the persona. This elevates the statement from merely functional to being empathetic and user centric.
- **Benefit or value:** Clarifying the benefit or value the persona seeks to achieve from this experience ties the statement back to tangible outcomes and goals. This helps align the experience with the broader objectives or values.

- **Specific actions, conditions and capabilities:** Outlining what needs to be in place (actions, conditions, capabilities in terms of knowledge, skills and behaviors) for the experience to succeed provides a clear roadmap for implementation. It translates the empathetic aspects of the statement into actionable items.

## 4 Steps to Crafting Effective Experience Statements

1. **Define the desired mind state:** Before crafting the experience statement, clearly define the desired emotional outcome or mind state you want the employee to achieve at that touchpoint. This could be feelings of empowerment, clarity, belonging, motivation, etc. A key challenge will be to find the leading mind state or emotion, as e.g., **empowerment** may require a different set of conditions and capabilities than **belonging**.
2. **Use forward-looking language:** Frame the story using aspirational language. Instead of "I felt lost during onboarding," aim for "I want to feel welcomed and guided during onboarding."
3. **Highlight the benefits:** Beyond just the desired feeling, emphasize the benefits or value that achieving this mind state will bring to the employee and the organization.
4. **Identify actions that support the desired mind state:** Outline specific actions or changes that can help achieve the desired emotional outcome. This gives a clear direction for designing the touchpoint experience.

**As a new joiner, when I get my onboarding, I want to feel ...**

**Confident**

- Self-assuredness in role
- Understanding of expectations
- Comfort in asking questions
- Readiness for contribution

**Integrated**

- Connectedness with colleagues
- Familiarity with company culture
- Involvement in team activities
- Awareness of resources and support systems

... **So** I can start contributing to my team effectively and efficiently. To achieve this, I need **a clear roadmap, regular mentor check-ins and an accessible Q&A platform.**

Figure 5: Examples of User Experience Statements



## IT Touchpoint Analysis with User Experience Statements

User experience statements are also useful in analyzing existing touchpoints. Because these statements enable a deeper exploration into the emotions and needs along the employee journey, they can do a great deal to enhance understanding and improve interactions between employees and the organization.

To adapt experience statements for this purpose, it's necessary to modify the formula to incorporate some reflection. This adjustment allows for retrospection into past interactions, providing insights into how these experiences have impacted employees and identifying areas for future enhancements.

**"As a [persona/employee role/type in a hybrid setting], when I [experience or situation], I felt [emotion] because [reason]. I need [action or change] to [desired outcome]."**

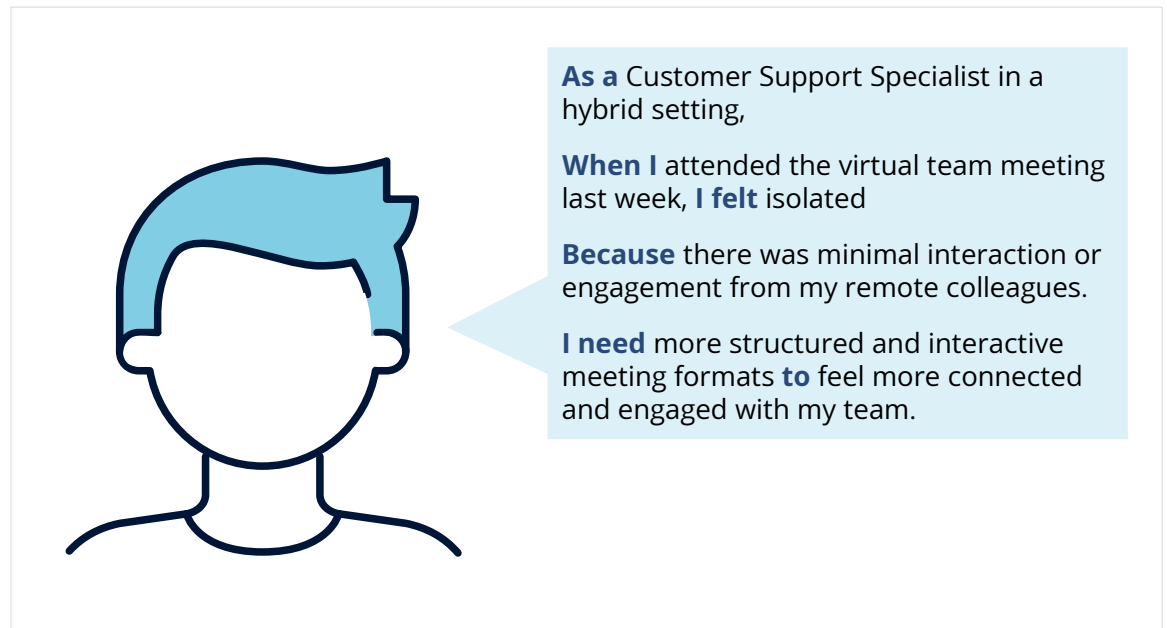


Figure 6: Retrospective User Experience Statement Used in a Touchpoint Analysis

Three ways to harness the power of user experience statements:

- 1. Gather stories:** Engage with employees from across the enterprise, encouraging them to share their experiences related to their touchpoints with the company.
- 2. Analyze and prioritize:** Identify common themes, pain points and opportunities across the stories. Prioritize which touchpoints will make the greatest impact.
- 3. Implement and measure:** Roll out enhancements, measure their impact and make adjustments based on feedback.

Workplace strategy teams or EX teams deployed by managed service providers should incorporate experience statements into any touchpoint-related analysis. This ensures a human-centric approach, focusing on actual emotions and needs and establishing a distinct vision for each touchpoint experience. This clarity can help employees understand what to expect, leading to more impactful and meaningful interactions. Ultimately, this enhances the overall EX as it guides the design of experiences that address current issues while it shapes a positive future for employees, informed by their expectations and needs.

### Enhance Experience Level Agreements with User Experience Statements

A touchpoint experience is no single event. It is made up of various indicators that shape the overall experience. As a rule, you can identify at least three episodes that make up the touchpoint experience: Approaching the touchpoint, the interaction itself and, finally, leaving the touchpoint.

These experience indicators include emotional responses, satisfaction levels and specific technological aspects that are decisive for the desired experience and should at least meet the average level of expectation.

Critical indicators of employees' experiences with an employer are usually ensured by service level agreements (SLAs). Unlike traditional SLAs that focus on specific quantitative metrics (like system uptime or response time), experience level agreements (XLAs) measure the quality of experiences. They look at how service interactions make users feel and the satisfaction derived from these interactions.

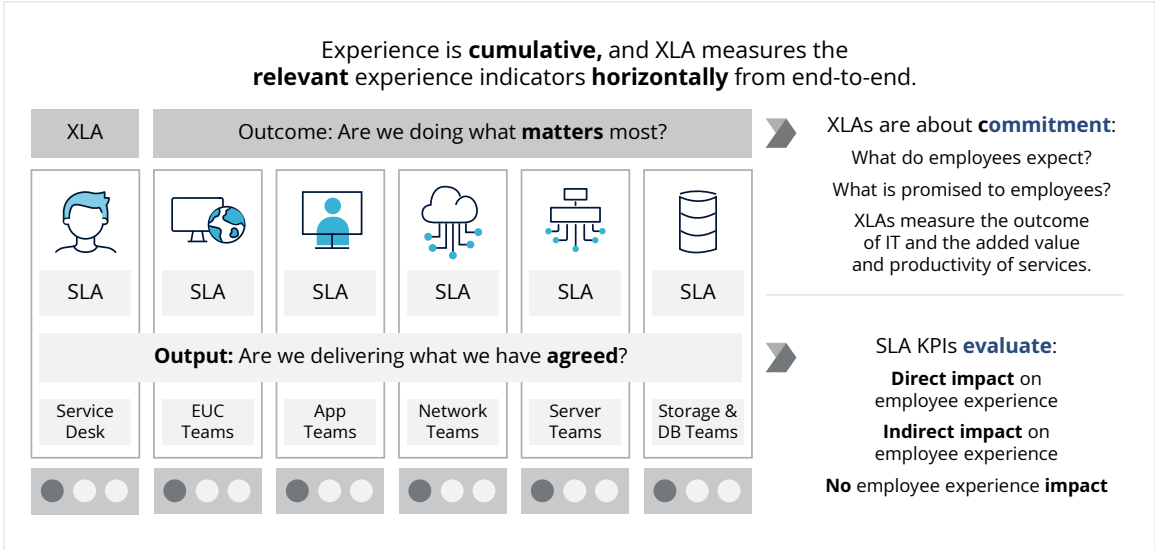


Figure 7: Securing the XLA with SLAs

Incorporating user experience statements into XLAs gives a holistic view of these experience indicators. By aligning SLAs with XLAs, organizations can guarantee that the technical infrastructure and support are in place to meet the experiential needs of employees.



User experience statements provide rich insights that are pivotal in defining and measuring the experience indicators in an XLA. Technological reliability and efficiency, ensured by SLAs, are foundational to the successful implementation of XLAs. This ensures a comprehensive approach to improving the EX in a hybrid work setting, where technology plays a critical role.

## How to Integrate User Experience Statements into an XLA

- **Define the desired experience:** User experience statements are blueprints for the ideal experience, guiding organizations in aligning services with employee expectations.
- **Set clear expectations:** Translating stories into XLA terms helps set clear, experience-driven performance standards.
- **Measure and ask for feedback:** Use narratives from user experience statements to guide feedback sessions, highlighting areas of alignment or divergence.
- **Aim for continuous improvement:** User experience statements are dynamic, ensuring XLAs stay relevant and aligned with changing employee aspirations.
- **Bridge the IT-user gap:** User experience statements offer insights into user emotions, guiding IT initiatives toward user-centric solutions.

## User Experience Statements Help Design a Better Hybrid Work Experience

The symbiosis of user experience statements and XLAs offers a groundbreaking approach to crafting superior EX in a hybrid work era. By putting experiences at the forefront, IT organizations can foster a positive, engaging and productive environment that resonates with today's dynamic workforce.

Experience statements help build a better hybrid workplace by:

- **Bridging the gap:** Experience statements can help identify and bridge gaps between remote and in-office experiences, ensuring employees feel valued irrespective of their work location.
- **Attracting talent:** A well-designed hybrid work experience can be a significant draw for potential employees, especially those valuing flexibility.
- **Retaining talent:** Companies can increase employee satisfaction and retention rates by proactively addressing challenges and enhancing EX.

XLAs represent a shift for IT from merely delivering services to ensuring delightful experiences.

Incorporating user experience statements into this framework ensures these agreements are not just based on abstract principles but are rooted in real, aspirational employee journeys. As organizations increasingly recognize the value of a superior employee experience, integrating experience statements into XLAs offers a robust, people-centric approach to meeting and exceeding these expectations.

User experience statements are a powerful approach for designing a great employee experience, particularly for hybrid work settings. They integrate employees' feelings, mindsets and experiences and give organizations the information they need to foster a more empathetic, engaging and fulfilling workplace experience.

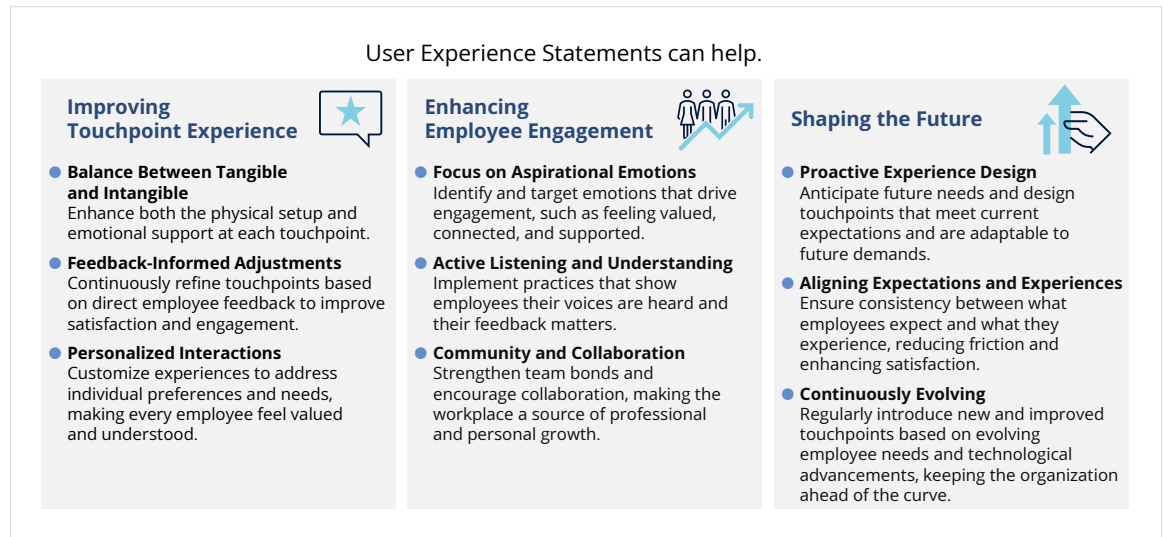


Figure 8: Why User Experience Statements Matter

The transition from traditional user stories to more holistic user experience statements is an important step in better understanding and meeting the diverse needs of today's workforce.

These statements can help to provide and maintain a clear vision for the touchpoint experience, ensuring alignment across teams and stakeholders and making them a valuable means for fostering a cohesive and consistently positive employee journey.

Engage with ISG to analyze and transform your touchpoints into moments that really matter.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **Elevating Employee Experience Design with User Experience Statements**



#### **ROMAN PELZEL**

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Roman Pelzel is a thought leader and trusted advisor with more than 25 years of experience in leading and facilitating digital workplace strategies and technologies as well as ITIL/value-driven service management in different business areas. He has made it his mission to sustainably connect talent and technology by helping organizations transform their digital workplaces into a digital work state experience that puts people first. Roman is a recognized expert in workplace management technologies as well as hardware and software rollouts. He contributes to his client's success with his comprehensive expertise gained in various roles, combining leadership, coaching, and technical skills.



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