

How to improve employee experience with executive vision



A growing disconnect between leadership's strategic vision and employees' daily experiences is harming morale, retention, and productivity. As organizations increasingly prioritize employee experience management, bridging this gap has become essential for fostering a people-first culture.

In this blog, we'll explore what employee experience truly means, the key areas where the disconnect between executives and employees occurs, and actionable strategies to align leadership vision with employee needs.

The disconnect effect: Why it matters

The disconnect effect occurs when executives and employees view workplace priorities differently, leading to misaligned strategies and reduced engagement. For example, executives

often emphasize long-term goals like skill development (cited as a priority by 45%), while employees focus on immediate concerns such as morale and engagement (41%).

We first uncovered this [disconnect between leaders and employees](#) in our [2024 Workplace Trends Report](#), and the gap has yet again proved to be a top challenge in workplaces globally.

This gap isn't just a philosophical difference—it has real consequences. When employees feel disconnected from leadership's vision, it negatively impacts retention, productivity, and innovation. In fact, only 24% of organizations report high levels of job satisfaction, yet companies with satisfied employees are nearly 7x more likely to see revenue growth.



Improving alignment requires a robust employee experience strategy that addresses leadership goals and considers employees' daily experiences and expectations.

Key areas of disconnect and how to

address them

One of the biggest challenges in employee experience management is the disconnect between executive vision and the realities employees face daily. This often results in misaligned priorities, reduced engagement, and weakened morale, directly impacting retention and productivity.

To address this, leaders need an employee experience strategy that not only aligns their goals with employees' needs but also fosters trust, collaboration, and purpose. By focusing on specific areas—such as morale, recognition, wellness, and technology—organizations can build an employee experience framework that bridges gaps and creates a more unified workplace.

In this section, we'll explore these key areas and provide actionable insights on how to improve employee experience.

Key areas of disconnect between leaders and employees

Morale vs. skill development

Employee input and recognition

Wellness and mental health

AI and human connection

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1. Morale vs. skill development

Effective leadership balances long-term strategic goals with employees' immediate needs. While professional development and upskilling are critical for driving innovation and competitiveness, they must be supported by a workplace culture that values morale and engagement. Without a focus on day-to-day employee satisfaction, organizations risk burnout, disengagement, and turnover, undermining their broader objectives.

The disconnect: Executives prioritize professional skill-building as a long-term growth strategy, while employees see low morale and disengagement as more urgent challenges.

How to improve employee experience: Combine professional development programs with morale-boosting initiatives like recognition programs and well-being support. An effective employee experience model integrates both short- and long-term needs, fostering satisfaction while building skills for the future.

Here's why: Organizations that prioritize morale see stronger retention and [improved engagement](#), laying the groundwork for sustainable growth.

2. Employee input and recognition

Employees want to feel their voices matter. Recognition and [meaningful feedback](#) are key drivers of engagement, yet many organizations fail to create systems that amplify employee input. When employees perceive their ideas and contributions as overlooked, it can lead to frustration, diminished motivation, and a disconnect from [leadership's vision](#).

The disconnect: While 63% of executives believe employee input is valued, only 10% of non-supervisory employees feel heard.

How to improve employee experience: Create feedback loops using tools like employee experience surveys or [impact check-ins](#) to gather input and act on it. Regularly communicating how leadership decisions reflect employee feedback can close this gap.

Best practice: Encourage employees to share ideas and celebrate contributions, using recognition as a core part of your employee experience framework.

3. Wellness and mental health

A workplace that prioritizes wellness and mental health fosters trust, resilience, and long-term engagement. Employees thrive when they feel supported not only in their professional roles but also in their personal well-being. However, a gap often exists between leadership's perception of wellness initiatives and employees' actual experiences of these efforts.

The disconnect: 95% of executives feel their organization adequately addresses wellness, but only 66% of non-supervisory employees agree.

How to improve employee experience: Make mental health resources and wellness programs visible and accessible across all levels of the organization. Equitable support builds trust and reduces turnover.

Here's why: Investing in your employees' wellbeing pays off in more ways than one. Workplace mental health initiatives yield a [4x return on investment](#).

4. AI and human connection

Technology, particularly AI, has the potential to revolutionize the workplace by automating routine tasks and freeing employees to focus on high-value, [human-centered work](#). However, its implementation must align with fostering connection and collaboration, not eroding them.

Employees often fear that AI could depersonalize work or threaten job security, creating tension in adopting new technologies.

The disconnect: While 90% of executives believe AI will free up time for human connection, only 32% of employees share this optimism.

How to improve employee experience: Use AI to handle routine tasks, freeing employees to focus on meaningful, human-centered work. Communicate transparently about AI's role in alleviating fears about job security.

Digging deeper: When integrated thoughtfully, AI supports employee experience management by reducing administrative burdens and fostering deeper collaboration.

Inclusive leadership: A critical solution for employee experience management

Leaders who adopt inclusive practices can help bridge the disconnect and foster alignment. Inclusive leadership means recognizing diverse perspectives, encouraging reflection on how individual roles impact organizational goals, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued.

Unfortunately, only 33% of employees report being regularly encouraged to consider how their work impacts their team or company. Building this connection is essential for improving accountability and collaboration. By using an employee experience framework focused on inclusion, leaders can create an environment where employees feel a sense of purpose and belonging.

***Tip:** Arbinger's [Job Map tool](#) empowers employees to contextualize their work in terms of the people they impact and the areas of responsibility that make up their job. By enabling employees with this tool, leaders can help bridge the disconnect between an employee's responsibilities and their impact on the organization.*

Building a people-first culture with executive vision

Aligning executive vision with employee experience requires deliberate effort and consistent communication. Here are actionable steps for leaders:

1. **Regular engagement:** Move beyond annual reviews. Discuss collaboration, personal development, and well-being on an ongoing basis to create a deeper connection with employees.
2. **Invest in [leadership development](#):** Equip leaders with the tools to listen, empathize, and foster accountability, using an employee experience model that prioritizes human connection.
3. **Measuring employee experience:** Use metrics from employee experience surveys and insights from impact conversations to identify gaps, track progress, and refine your strategies over time.

Companies with a strong employee experience strategy—focused on trust, empathy, and accountability—report higher retention, stronger innovation, and greater revenue growth.

Closing the gap between executive vision and employee experience

The disconnect between executive vision and employee experience isn't unconquerable. By prioritizing employee experience management, organizations can create a culture where employees feel heard, valued, and aligned with leadership's goals.

A comprehensive employee experience framework not only improves morale, but also strengthens the connection between

daily tasks and the broader organizational mission. When leadership and employees are on the same page, the result is a thriving, innovative, and resilient workplace.

The disconnect effect and its underlying insights were brought to light in Arbinger's 2025 Workplace Trends Report. [Get your free copy here.](#)

Get ahead of the curve with Arbinger's 2025 workplace trends report

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84% of companies address this

What qualities do you look for in a good leader?

Quality	Percentage
Trustworthy & reliable	88%
Ability to listen genuinely	75%
Accountable	72%
Can coach when it's due	70%
Adaptable	65%
Proactive	60%