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# Foreword

## Only together can we advance this field

‘Marketeers have been working on the customer journey for years, but when it comes to the employee journey, we’re only just getting started. That really surprises me. So it’s high time to get stuck in.’ This was the gist of my afterword in the book *Alignment 2.0*. Since then, PROOF really set to work on this important topic, teaming up with our customers to design and thoroughly flesh out elements of their employee journey.

Now, three years down the line, our fifth PROOF book is here, thanks to my colleagues’ dedication every day and our clients’ passionate professionals. *The Employee Journey – How to create a great employee experience* could not have come at a better time. Almost every day, we hear in the news that organisations are finding it harder to attract and retain the right staff. A large group of baby boomers will also be retiring soon, which will cause problems if organisations fail to put enough effort into their employee journey. These days, even at board level, it’s clearly recognized that attracting and retaining employees, and making them your ambassadors, is critical. All that is left to do now is to set aside a budget for a long-term approach, because working on alignment throughout the entire employee journey not only requires improved collaboration between HR, Communications and the business, but it also requires quality, right from analysis to strategy and from concept to implementation, measurement and correcting course where necessary.

The employee journey brings together internal branding and employer branding. It requires professionals who are passionate about this field, who want to listen to what is going on and are willing to work on improving how their organisation communicates. People with in-depth knowledge of their internal target groups, who think about how to get their message across. People who value quality and careful consideration.

Ultimately, it is always employees who make the difference, for better or worse. So the employee journey is important for all sectors – business-to-business and business-to-consumer, as well as the public sector. Over the past seventeen years, PROOF has been successful thanks to its aligned employees and their aligned network. Our employees put expertise at the service of our clients every single day, going the extra mile to turn ‘good’ into ‘better’. And the passionate professionals who work for our clients challenge us to develop effective solutions, seeing us as a partner rather than a supplier.

To make real progress, you must dare to share, as I learned from Luc van Beers, PROOF’s founder. In this book, authors Sascha Becker and Wenda Bolink share their vision and experiences over the past several years as strategists at PROOF, supported by a good deal of desk research of course. They have mapped out the employee journey clearly and described it from the perspective of both the employer and the employee.

Here at PROOF, we will continue to work on our passion and share our expertise. We invite you to actively share your experiences with the employee journey with us too, because it takes teamwork to advance this field. Feel free to call or email us, or drop in to see us at PROOF’s office at the Veemarkt in Amsterdam.

Happy reading!

Bea Aarnoutse  
PROOF Managing Director

# The employee journey in a nutshell



## Five questions to authors Sascha Becker and Wenda Bolink

### **1. We keep hearing more and more about the employee journey. Why?**

*Sascha:* ‘The importance of the employee journey and its translation into a great employee experience has long been underestimated. I still see organisations not paying enough attention to this topic and their approach is often piecemeal. Even leading brands with an excellent external reputation often don’t have the employee journey on the board agenda, which is astonishing. Companies often need to recruit someone quickly and so automatically switch to a tactical mode: what tools can I use? That may be effective in the short term, but it certainly won’t help them win the war for talent in the long term. For years, marketeers have been working on what is often a very structured and carefully crafted customer journey. But we’re only just getting started when it comes to the employee journey. Talent is scarce and there are many factors these days that determine whether or not people choose to join or stay with a particular organisation. Attracting and retaining the right talent and making employees your ambassadors is essential. A strong reputation, satisfied and loyal customers – it’s all determined by your employees. They’re the ones who make the difference for your customers. Happy employees mean happy customers, it’s as simple as that. And that’s what generates business value in the long term.’

*Wenda:* ‘Exactly. But how do you make sure that scarce talent chooses you? Or that your employees give their very best every single day and fulfil the customer promise? And that, when they eventually leave your company, they do so with a positive feeling? That takes conscious, sustained investment in improving the employee experience throughout the entire employee journey.’

## **2. So the employee journey is a sort of holy grail?**

*Sascha:* ‘The journey is a means to an end, not an end in itself. But the great thing is that all organisations actually already have an employee journey. It’s just that they’re often not aware of that and don’t invest enough time, money and attention in optimising it. Mapping out the journey that existing and potential employees take helps a lot, as it highlights points for attention and helps Communications and HR set priorities.’

*Wenda:* ‘And it creates consistency, especially if you base the journey around your promise to future and current employees. Revisit this promise at every touchpoint and constantly ensure it is confirmed. That will ensure you tell a consistent story and continuously give it meaning.’

## **3. Easier said than done. How can an organisation actually put that into practice?**

*Wenda:* ‘There is no one-size-fits-all solution for the perfect employee journey. We can, however, identify six touchpoints during the three stages of the employee journey: “looking around and applying”, “working at the organisation” and “moving on”. And those touchpoints include things like looking at your careers site, job interviews, the first working day and exit interviews.’

*Sascha:* ‘There are also six factors within these three stages that organisations can work on to influence the employee experience, from leadership and learning to developing an empowering environment. But we recommend always keeping things manageable: you can’t eat an elephant in one bite. Figure out where the greatest difficulties are – and therefore the greatest opportunities – and focus on those first. But be sure to start on the inside. Involve your existing talent in your plans and ensure internal alignment. You have to deliver internally what you have promised externally.’

## **4. Got it. So who actually owns the employee journey?**

*Sascha:* ‘Ultimately, senior management is responsible. If they don’t believe in investing in the employee journey and making it a priority, there’s little point in working on this topic, as it’ll then be nothing more than a shiny but useless new toy, a pointless game for Communications or HR. And that’s a waste of your time and money. But if you don’t invest in the journey, you’re missing a significant opportunity. If you look at what your organ-

isation gets out of aligned employees, including financially, and if you do your homework, the business case is an easy one to make and, you can quickly get what you need to convince your board and senior management. As soon as you talk to senior management in terms of euros and business value creation, you can usually make your case quickly.'

*Wenda:* 'It's up to Communications and HR to make senior management aware of this and encourage ownership. That takes time. We've come a long way in the Netherlands. In our experience, you have to do a lot of lobbying, you're on a mission... Once you have the commitment of senior management, Communications and HR can work together to flesh out the rest of the journey. Both are key players who can reinforce and complement each other if they work well together. They can work with the business to come up with ideas for "products" to promote and ultimately shape these products based on the needs, desires and requirements of the organisation and its people.'

## **5. Does the journey ever 'end'?**

*Wenda:* 'For both employees and the organisation, there really isn't an end as such. In an ideal journey, you keep in touch with employees who have left, through alumni activities, for example. The journey also never really ends for the organisation itself. It's an investment you have to keep making. Employee needs are constantly changing, new generations join the workforce and the labour market is constantly changing.'

*Sascha:* 'This means that organisations must have – and keep – the employee journey as a permanent fixture on the agenda. You need to constantly anticipate changes in the world – changing desires, needs and trends – and continuously work on all the factors that ensure that talents feel connected and engaged. That's the only way for you to get the most out of your company's most valuable asset – your employees – both now and in the future.'

# Introduction



The right talents who choose you.  
Happy and healthy employees who  
contribute to your organisation's success.  
And former employees who remain your fans.  
A great employee journey really pays off.  
Benefits include increased sales and reduced  
employee turnover and absence. Moreover,  
it makes your organisation attractive to the  
talented new employees that you need in  
order to achieve your company's ambitions.  
Together with the increasing shortage of  
talent worldwide, this means that investing  
in the employee experience is becoming  
an absolute must.

## The employee experience throughout the employee journey

The employee experience is the sum of all an employee's interactions with an organisation, from before they join until after they leave. These interactions, or touchpoints, include looking at your careers site, job interviews, the first working day, staff meetings, contact with the manager, feedback meetings, performance appraisals and exit interviews. In working on the employee journey, you map out all of these touchpoints. Each of them should be aligned with the needs and requirements of new and current employees to make sure they feel at home, know how they can contribute to the organisation's success, are supported in doing so, and therefore give their very best and are successful every single day. This ensures employees feel a natural give-and-take in their relationship with their employer.



### **HAPPY EMPLOYEES = HAPPY CUSTOMERS = MORE BUSINESS VALUE**

Happy, healthy employees who feel at home, give it their very best every single day and know what they can do to help achieve an organisation's ambitions are key to its success. They help to increase customer satisfaction, create sustainable business value and improve your organisation's reputation in the long term.



## Touchpoints in the employee journey

Creating the ideal employee experience throughout the employee journey might sound easy, but organisations who manage to motivate their employees *and* get them to do the right things are few and far between. It takes more than just providing some football tables, beanbags and scrum boards. Neither is organising parties and get-togethers, or staff meetings where authentic leaders rap and challenge each other and their teams to increase the company's NPS score (an indicator of customer loyalty). The main thing you should be focusing on is how to support employees systematically and in the right way so that they feel good and can be and remain successful.

In many organisations, however, touchpoints are negative experiences for employees, and these are missed opportunities to further develop the organisation and attract and retain the right talent. For instance, some organisations don't respond to job applications, fail to provide adequate support during an employee's first hundred working days, or don't acknowledge what is going well. They ask employees for feedback and then fail to act on it, or fail to pay sufficient attention to employees who are leaving the organisation. There are many more examples of crucial touchpoints that negatively affect employees, lessening their enthusiasm and making them less likely to act as an ambassador for your company. This has major consequences – you lose your most valuable asset and therefore all the returns that asset could bring you.

## The employee journey as a tool

The employee journey is a tool that lets you identify the key touchpoints between current and potential employees and the organisation. This highlights the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and shows you where you can improve the employee experience, so you can focus on the high-impact touchpoints for employees and target the right interventions.

## A framework

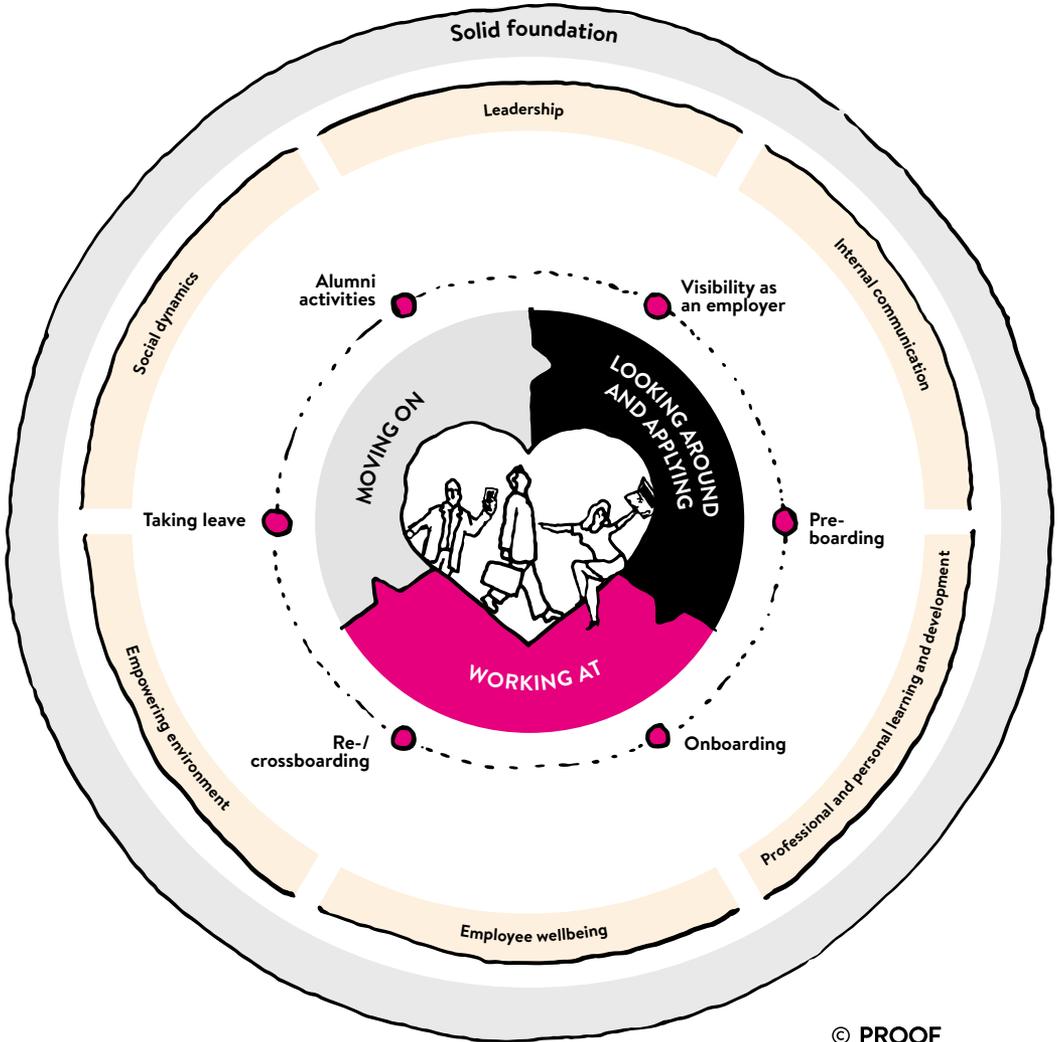
The right employee journey is different for every organisation, as it depends on the status quo, the organisation's size and ambitions, and the resources available (budget and FTEs). However, there are various universal factors and key touchpoints that you can influence in order to create an excellent employee experience.

Before your organisation starts working on the employee journey, it first needs to get the basics in order and build a sound foundation. There are six 'dials' that you can then turn to influence the employee experience throughout the entire journey. We call these dials the six influencing factors. From the perspective of current and potential employees, there are six key touchpoints during the employee journey that you can use to positively influence your employees. If you shape these touchpoints in the right way, your company's promise will be felt at every touchpoint and you will be working systematically on employee alignment.

This book gives you a bird's eye view of the entire employee journey. We address the six key factors and six key touchpoints, giving you some tools to improve the employee experience. We realise that many organisations have a legacy to deal with, which can sometimes make it difficult to implement improvements. Start by looking into where the greatest obstacles are in your organisation and what factors are involved, and address these first. Make plans for the short and long term, and start on the inside, so that you deliver internally what you have promised externally. After reading this book, there will be nothing to stop you working purposefully on creating the best possible employee experience throughout the employee journey.

Over the next few pages, we briefly explain each element of the employee journey framework. Further on in the book, we go into more depth about the key factors and touchpoints.

# THE EMPLOYEE JOURNEY FRAMEWORK



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Stage



Touchpoint



Factor