



2025 Employee Perspectives

Key Drivers to Attracting and Retaining the Best Talent

Attracting and retaining talent has never been more important. Clubs can become employers of choice by focusing on what matters most – key experience drivers.

By Eric Hutchison, Ph.D., Michael Gregory, and Eric Brey, Ph.D.

Key Insights

- Clubs can become employers of choice by identifying and prioritizing their employees' distinct wants and needs.
- Once employees enter their second year of employment, overall perceptions of the employee experience noticeably decline in most areas.
- Employees agree that clubs effectively foster a strong working environment, especially by creating a sense of belonging.

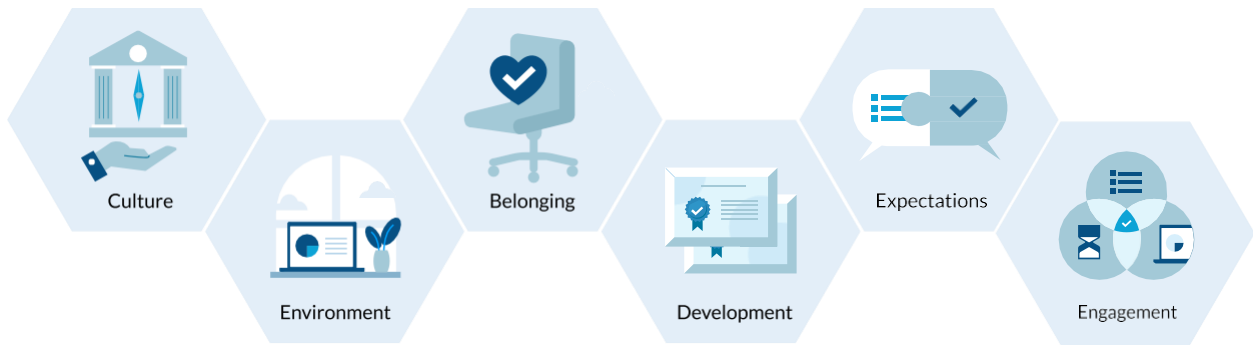
Employee Experience Dynamics

The employee experience is a critical factor in a club's long-term success. By fostering a positive and engaging work environment, clubs can boost employee morale, productivity, and retention. These elements are essential for meeting and exceeding increasingly high member expectations.

But what does it take to create an environment where employees can succeed and even thrive?

The Club Employees' Perspectives ("CEP") research provides insights into creating a positive working environment by focusing on six factors: belonging, engagement, expectations, development, environment, and culture (Figure 1).

Figure 1: GGA Employee Experience Model



Note: GGA reviewed extensive Organizational Psychology and Management research to identify factors and variables that align with the club industry's unique expectations.

Building and maintaining a quality employee experience requires a focus on the following workplace dynamics:

- **Culture:** Is a reflection of an organization's shared values and beliefs. It evolves over time and is shaped by the board, club leadership, members, and staff. Supporting a culture that aligns with employees sets the club up for long-term success.
- **Environment:** The physical and emotional conditions of the workplace communicate a message to employees. When workspaces reflect a positive club image, staff feel more valued and respected.
- **Belonging:** The sense of acceptance and value at work. This concept predicts employee retention, as those who belong experience lower stress, anxiety, and burnout, resulting in higher job satisfaction.
- **Development:** Employees who feel supported in developing their skills and abilities perform more effectively and experience greater long-term success.
- **Expectations:** Employees who clearly understand their expectations and how their work contributes to the club's mission can focus on their tasks more efficiently and confidently.
- **Engagement:** Focuses on employee commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication, which can predict organizational performance and success. Engaged employees tend to be more productive and are more likely to contribute positively to their teams.

These constructs are central for leaders because they influence employee satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. By prioritizing these areas, leaders cultivate a positive work environment and improve employee engagement and retention.

Building a Successful Employee Experience

Leaders must concentrate on key elements of the employee experience to position a club as an employer of choice and help ensure long-term success.

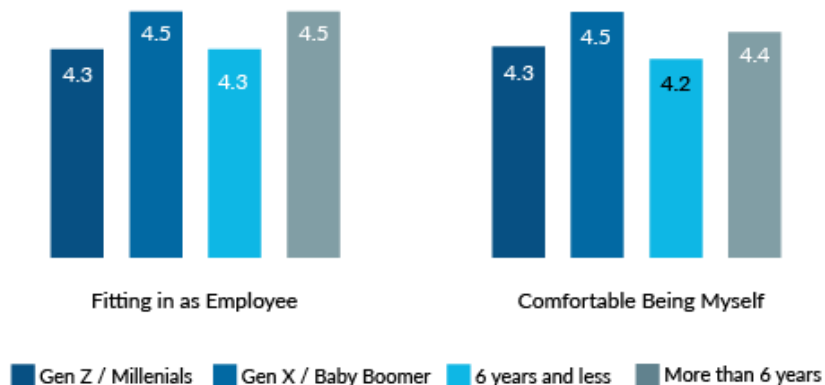
Manage Expectations: It is important to manage expectations through clear communication and defined expectations. Overall, employees surveyed in the CEP study believe their talents are utilized and their skills are reflected in expected outcomes, as indicated by high agreement scores (4.4/5 and 4.3/5, respectively). Clubs can clarify and uphold expectations, particularly for new employees, by aligning the position description, discussions during interviews, onboarding, and performance evaluations. This approach provides a realistic preview of the role and ensures that employees remain aware of the expectations throughout their journey with the club.

Provide Development Opportunities: Providing professional development opportunities is a powerful way to boost employee morale and engagement. While CEP research indicates that, on average, 71% of club employees report feeling supported through development opportunities, training, management support, and employer concern for well-being, clubs can further enhance these perceptions. While differences exist among types and levels of employees, clubs can create growth opportunities by conducting training needs assessments, asking employees about their long-term goals, and then identifying development opportunities that align with their ambitions.

By providing effective opportunities for professional development, employees can remain engaged in the dynamic club environment.

Create Belonging: To foster a sense of belonging and enhance job satisfaction, productivity, and retention, clubs can cultivate feelings of connection and acceptance among employees. Results from our research show that employees perceive a strong sense of fitting in within the industry (4.4/5), with the most significant opportunity for improvement lying in showing concern for overall employee well-being (3.6/5).

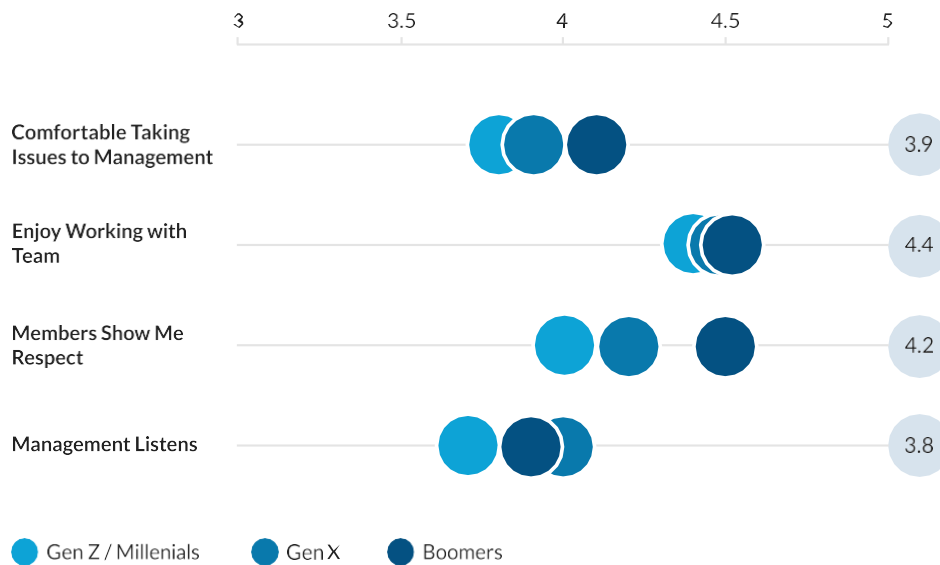
Figure 2: Generation and Length of Tenure Experience Comparison



However, differences arise when considering age and tenure; Gen Z and Millennials do not agree at the same levels as their older and more experienced colleagues, as shown in Figure 2. To build a sense of belonging, providing structured onboarding and facilitating meaningful connections through ongoing team bonding and collaboration is important. Leaders can empower employees by offering growth opportunities, recognizing achievements through employee of the month programs, and engaging them in the decision-making process, where appropriate.

Emphasize a Positive Environment: A positive and inclusive work environment supports employee well-being and fosters an effective workplace environment. This involves creating psychological safety through open communication, accountability, and viewing mistakes as opportunities for growth. Our findings in Figure 3 indicate that Gen Z and Millennials view the employee environment less favorably than their Gen X and Baby Boomer counterparts. This suggests that generational challenges exist not only among members but also within the workforce as a whole¹. Considering the industry-wide challenge surrounding member behavior and the impact this can have on employees², leaders must actively involve members to help ensure a positive working environment for all employees.

Figure 3: Generation Comparison of Work Environment



Monitor Employee Engagement: Creating a positive and supportive workplace is fundamental for employee retention and exceptional member service. From the joy of working with a team to club members showing respect, monitoring engagement allows clubs to identify issues early and find ways to enhance retention and boost overall service quality for members. Our findings reveal a significant satisfaction gap between the first and second years of employment, suggesting a

¹ Club Members' Perspectives: Insights into the Changing Needs and Wants of Private Club Members (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

² Club Leaders' Perspectives: Finding Success and Facing Challenges 2024 (West Palm Beach, FL: GGA Partners), 2024.

"honeymoon phase" during onboarding. This underscores the need for clubs to strengthen post-onboarding engagement strategies to maintain employee satisfaction throughout their tenure.

Build a Strong Culture: A club's culture, or personality, is shaped by shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes, both organically and with leadership support. Understanding the critical aspects of culture is fundamental to the employee experience. Perceived turnover has proven to be a challenging metric, with an average rating of 3.0 out of 5. This rating, indicating indifference (or a "neither agree nor disagree" response), suggests potential concerns. This neutral perception is significant because it can reflect workplace stability, impact member experience, and be an early warning sign for issues such as burnout or limited career growth.

Club culture defines the club's working environment and significantly includes how employees see their roles, organization, and overall experience.

The Club Leader's Opportunity

Leaders who focus on the dynamics of the Employee Experience Model can readily adopt strategies to enhance the employee experience and be better equipped to attract, retain, and motivate top talent.

To prioritize enhancing the employee experience, leaders can begin with the following steps:

1. **Understand the Employee Experience:** Like your members, leaders must address key touchpoints and milestones in the employee lifecycle. The experience mapping process identifies areas for improvement, aligns employees with club goals, and optimizes your people and culture strategy to enhance the club's brand as seen by employees.
2. **Identify Moments of Truth:** Pinpoint experiences that significantly impact employee satisfaction, both positively and negatively. By locating critical employee touchpoints, leaders can reduce turnover, improve service quality, and enhance employee satisfaction and engagement.
3. **Gather Feedback:** Use listening sessions, team meetings, and surveys to understand employee perspectives. Engaging a trusted external partner to manage employee surveys can boost confidentiality and improve response rates, resulting in more accurate and actionable insights.
4. **Implement Changes:** Use feedback to improve the employee experience by tackling challenges and offering opportunities for further development. Align initiatives and performance goals with employee needs and the club's mission and monitor the impact of changes on employee satisfaction and overall performance.

By prioritizing key drivers of employee experience—belonging, engagement, expectations, development, environment, and culture—clubs can create a workplace that attracts and retains top talent. By proactively aligning workplace initiatives with employee needs; leaders can enhance retention, boost performance, and strengthen organizational culture, ultimately elevating the member experience.

Visit www.ggapartners.com/perspectives to discover more about how effective strategy can help you become an employer of choice, explore insights from the Club Employees' Perspectives research, and learn how GGA Partners can support your club's long-term success.

