



Critical Moments in the Employee Journey

How to build a culture that supports and
engages people when it matters most



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Introduction: Meeting People Where They Are to Build Trust

One of your top employees, Carmen, is having a rough week. When she comes into work in the morning, she seems distracted and less expressive than usual. It's clear by the end of the day that she isn't performing at her normal level, and in passing, a coworker notes this to her manager.

Her manager sets up an impromptu one-on-one before she leaves for the day. Carmen gets a sinking feeling that one day of lower performance is already reflecting poorly on her and she's about to be penalized.

But what if that's not how the story ends?

What if rather than giving a reprimand, Carmen's manager leads with empathy and asks what she's going through. She explains to her manager that a change in her childcare situation is making it tougher to keep up with her schedule. Immediately, her manager aims to help her tackle the problem both on and off the job. For starters, Carmen can immediately request to switch a couple of her upcoming shifts — right from her phone — to get a little breathing room while she adjusts. Then, thinking longer term, her manager suggests training resources that could help her qualify for a potential role change that offers a more flexible schedule.

Carmen leaves reenergized and reassured that her employer cares about her wellbeing. This shows the difference you can make by recognizing those moments that provide an opportunity to build trust with employees.



If this isn't a priority for your organization right now, it should be.

The average employee desires a workplace where they can trust their management, take pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with. However, traditional approaches to HR and people management technology don't focus on these vital aspects of the employee experience — nor do they capture the data needed to do so. As a result, these solutions create processes that may be efficient, but they are blind to critical employee needs. Employers that fail to embrace cultural and tech strategies that address what employees really want are at significant risk of losing talent to competitors that care.

To create a workplace where people can flourish, employers need to stop seeing things in terms of tasks, budgets, or shifts on a schedule. It's time to see and understand the whole person to help employees thrive in the right ways at the right times.

Some people have ego needs. Some have income needs. Some have learning and development needs. If I understand your needs and you understand our goals, it's a joint effort to meet them.

— **Evan Wood, Ph.D.**,
Vice President of People & Strategy, Ft. Wayne Metals



68%

of employees now say that improving their wellbeing is more important than advancing their career.¹

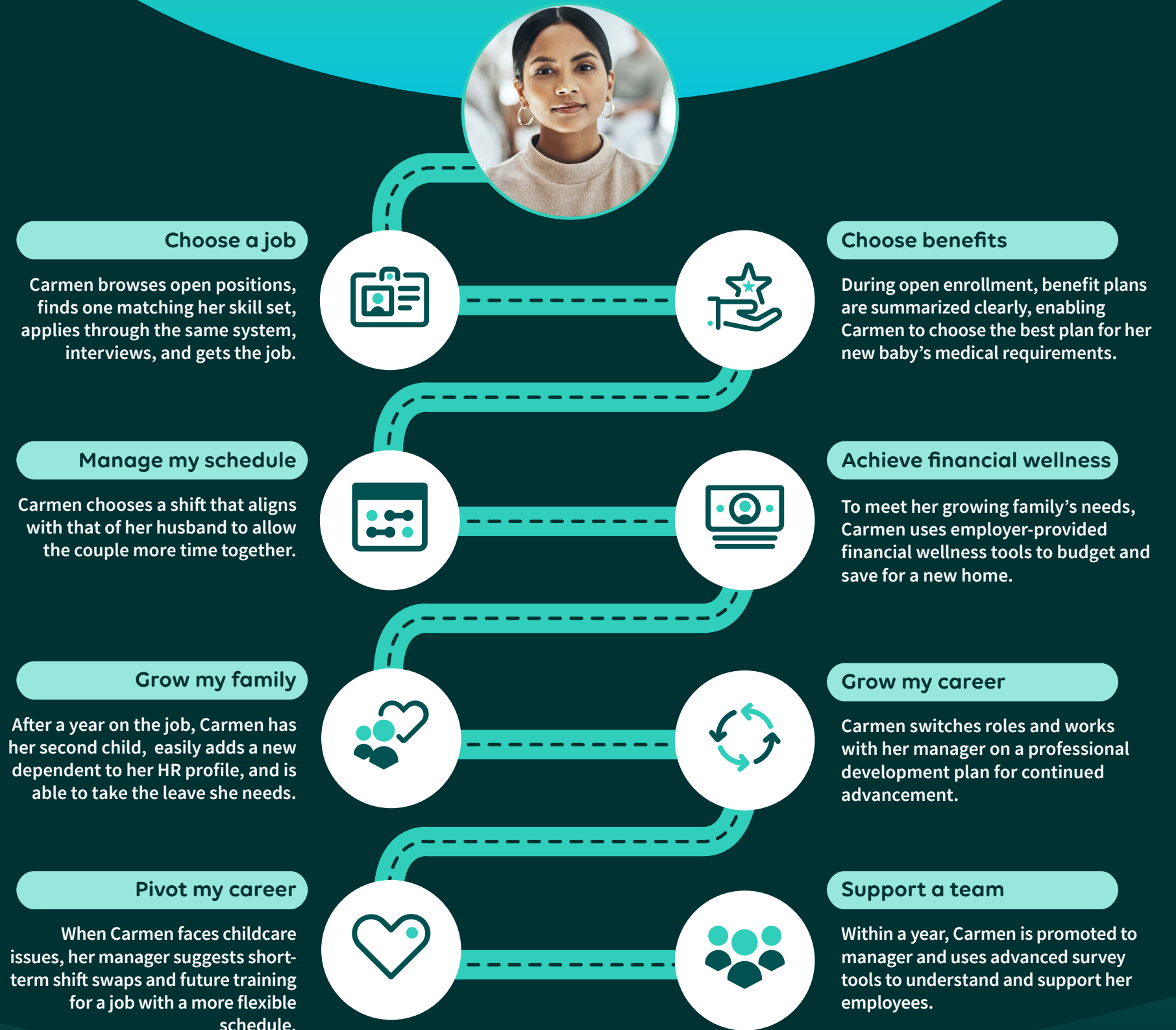
Let's revisit Carmen, the employee mentioned earlier, following her through her employee journey and highlighting how her employer addresses her needs at critical moments.

How to Provide Support at Crucial Moments

Employers have the opportunity to uniquely support their people at key moments throughout the employee journey. By meeting employees where they are with the right technology, resources, and options, employers can foster trust, promote growth, and make people feel valued and understood.

The ability for us to highlight and foster the individual talents that people bring to the table helps us create a great workplace because, in doing so, everyone feels a greater sense of purpose as well as a deeper connection to each other and the organization at large.

— Mario Brown,
Chief Talent Officer, First Horizon Bank



An Experience Worth Talking About

By now, you've probably guessed that focusing on your people's journeys is not only the right thing to do; it's a smart business practice. A people-focused culture yields bottom-line benefits by creating an environment of trust, purpose, and pride that helps you more effectively recruit and retain a high-performing workforce.

4X

Stay tuned into people's needs to set cultural standards of trust and belonging. Companies recognized for their culture strategy outperform the market by nearly **4X**.²

89%

Invest in your employer brand by providing a great employee experience. An impressive **89%** of employees at top organizations for employee experience would recommend their employers to others.³

\$56M

Establish operational processes that combat disengagement by building transparency and trust. Organizations that address top contributors to disengagement save around **\$56 million** annually.⁴

When your employees feel supported in the right ways, it builds their sense of trust and belonging and motivates them to share stories of their great experience, thereby enhancing your reputation as an employer of choice.



UKG has generated amazing outcomes for our people with technology that allows us to meet them where they are by soliciting feedback — and then taking action on that feedback — to elevate our culture and build trust as well as a deepened sense of belonging.

— **Tina Barte,**
VP of HR, Heartland Motor Company

Checklist: What to Look For

When you begin the task of evaluating how HR software can help you tap into trust-building opportunities at the moments that matter most to your people, keep the checklists below handy to be able to compare vendors in the areas of highest importance to your organization. You can check off these boxes as you go through your discussions to keep track.

Belonging

Accessible solutions
Reliable culture benchmark data
Employee resource group (ERG) support
Employee community building
Nudges for managers to assist in aligning with their team's needs
Artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce bias

Listening

Variety of survey options
Sentiment analysis for employee feedback
Personalized development opportunities
Recommended actions based on feedback
360° performance conversations
Team-level engagement opportunity highlights for managers

Flexibility

Self-scheduling from any device
Time donations between employees
Proactive leave eligibility
Hybrid work support
AI shift recommendations matching employee preferences
Integration into applications employees use every day

Wellbeing

Benefits beyond healthcare
Charitable giving/environmental, social, and governance (ESG) support
Safety standards
Flight risk and burnout prediction
Earned wage access
Wellbeing conversation tips for managers

Transparency

Feedback opportunities
Clear communication channels
One place for standards
Unbiased process and job role requirements
Fair recruiting standards and timely hiring processes
Plain language AI assistance to answer common questions

Development

Career goals and path tracking
Succession planning
Easy access to learning
Internal mobility
Mentorship support
New-hire support

AI Guidance

Opportunities for growth
Proactive recommendations to address trends like employee fatigue
Manager coaching and leadership recommendations
Interview guides and job descriptions
Conversational analytics that provide recommended actions

The mandate is clear: Build trust in the right moments or get left behind.

Seeing the whole person behind every employee ID — the needs, preferences, expertise, desires, passions, creative instincts, and more — isn't just a popular idea. It's a business imperative.

No matter what challenges your people are facing, listening with empathy is the best way to ensure they receive the support they need to grow, thrive, and make a strong contribution.

Just like your employees, your organization is on its own journey. You can achieve transformation by making purposeful choices about the technology you adopt. The first step is to find solutions built to guide you through each moment of the employee experience so all your people can realize their full potential.

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References:

- 1 Jen Fisher and Paul Silvergate, *The C-Suite's Role in Well-Being*, Deloitte (June 2022).
- 2 Great Place To Work, 100 Best Companies to Work For in 2024 Deliver 'Staggering' Business Performance (April 4, 2024).
- 3 Great Place To Work, *The Power of Purpose in the Workforce*, The Great Place To Work Institute (2024), p. 8.
- 4 Aaron DeSmet et al., *Some Employers Are Destroying Value, Others Are Building It*, McKinsey & Company (Sept. 11, 2023).

[Back to Intro](#) >



Our purpose is people

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