

How AI can help address employee concerns

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Insight from [Henry Nothhaft, Jr.](#), president of [EssentialDX](#)

In a moment of unsettling candour, Tim Gurner, a multimillionaire property developer, recently announced, [“We need to see pain in the economy. We’ve got to kill that attitude \[of employee entitlement\] and that has to come through hurting the economy.”](#)

These words don’t merely reflect the viewpoint of one individual; they lay bare a broader, disturbing sentiment that has permeated the C-suite. This is not just about Gurner—it’s about a [widening chasm between corporate leaders and frontline staff](#) that’s growing at an alarming rate.

A collective call for change

In the wake of these escalating disparities, 2023 has emerged as a watershed year for labour movements that defy conventional boundaries. Consider the nearly 2,000 Amazon corporate workers who staged a walkout, protesting not just a mandated return-to-office policy but also their company’s unilateral decision-making processes that left employees feeling unheard and undervalued. Backed by international advocacy groups, these employees highlight a pervasive sentiment that extends across sectors, from tech giants like Meta and Google to traditional unions. Whether it’s resistance to arbitrary office returns or demands for comprehensive healthcare and safety measures, workers are no longer content with status quo solutions.

This surge in labour activism is fueled by a complex matrix of socio-economic factors. CEO pay has soared to dizzying heights while average workers shoulder increasing living costs, creating a jarring income disparity that is impossible to ignore. The crumbling lines between personal and professional lives and

eroding worker rights add to the volatility.

The confluence of these elements shapes a labour environment bursting with both challenges and potential. Beyond monetary concerns, workers are now advocating for a new social contract that addresses flexibility, inclusivity and a balanced work-life integration. It's a collective call that resonates across industries, job roles, and demographic groups, signaling an urgent need for a brand of leadership that is attuned to these intricate realities and empathetic to the human beings navigating them.

Lifting up employees

Contrary to conventional wisdom, fostering employee well-being isn't an act of corporate altruism; it's a strategic imperative. An avalanche of research supports the direct correlation between an engaged workforce and metrics that matter—increased productivity, customer satisfaction, and reduced turnover. For today's people leaders the mandate is clear: it's time to start listening.

Fortunately, understanding and addressing employee needs and perspectives is now easier than ever.

Harnessing AI to reignite employee engagement

The evolving dynamics of the workplace these past couple of years signal a pivotal and strategic shift in the role of people and human resources leaders. Traditionally overshadowed by other departments, HR now emerges as a vital bridge to reconnect leadership with its workforce. This shift has been accelerated by the rapid adoption of remote and hybrid work, spotlighting the critical connection between employee well-being and productivity. HR, traditionally in the background compared to more data-driven departments, is now at the forefront, tasked with harmonizing diverse employee needs with organizational goals.

At the heart of this transformation lies artificial intelligence (AI), revolutionising HR's approach to understanding and engaging with employees. AI transcends traditional workforce analysis, offering a nuanced exploration of individual and collective employee experiences. This technology enables HR teams to synthesize vast amounts of data, uncovering insights that were once the privilege of the largest corporations. More importantly, AI facilitates a new kind of direct dialogue with employees, enabling them to share their ideas, needs, and perspectives. This inclusive approach does more than gather their inputs as data; it fosters a sense of collaboration and trust, ensuring that employees feel heard and valued.

The integration of AI in HR practices marks a significant departure from conventional top-down decision-making processes. By leveraging AI, companies can tap into the collective wisdom of their employees, transforming it into actionable insights for effective policy development. This highly effective method aligns employee needs with the company's objectives. The collaborative nature of this approach builds an organizational culture in which policies are not merely imposed but are co-created with those they impact the most.

This shift towards a more inclusive, data-driven, and employee-centric HR strategy promises to transform the workplace. It creates an environment where employees are active participants in shaping their work experience. This participatory model paves the way for a more sustainable, productive, and future-ready organization, where the goals of leadership and employees are aligned in pursuit of shared success. By



integrating AI into HR operations, businesses can transform workplace challenges into opportunities for growth, collaboration, and mutual understanding, healing fresh wounds and heralding a new collaborative and transparent leadership dynamic.