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What's Buzzing in CX World This Month?

A LOOK AT EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE - THE KEY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FACTOR

Perhaps a reasonable place to start would be to look at the level of EX job satisfaction A series of related articles **from Becky Norman at CX Magazine** provide useful insights into the current situation.

She reports that

UK workers are reporting record low job satisfaction, and they are less willing to go 'above and beyond' at work than they were a decade ago. This is according to new analysis from the Resolution Foundation's latest British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey. Job satisfaction fell from 81% to 74%, the lowest figure recorded in any BSA survey to date. The proportion of employees willing to go the extra mile to help their employer succeed also fell – from 69% in 2015 to 55% in 2025. More than 4,600 people aged 16 and over across the UK took part in the latest BSA wave in 2025.

The Dissatisfaction Drain: Workers Want More Pay and Flexibility

Alongside sliding job satisfaction, UK workers today place more importance on a stable salary than they did 10 years ago. The proportion saying a high income is important when choosing a job rose by 11 percentage points – from 67% in 2015 to 78% in 2025. Yet fewer than a quarter (23%) feel their current job provides the income they need to feel secure.

Flexibility is also, unsurprisingly, valued more today. The survey saw a 15% rise in the proportion who deem it important to choose their own working hours (from 46% to 61%). Still, fewer than a third (31%) say they have this flexibility in their role.

This growing dissatisfaction is not confined to the UK. Last week, Gallup reported that US employee engagement has dropped to its lowest level since 2011.

The drain has also arrived in a challenging labour market, so high turnover isn't necessarily the problem employers will face. New data from HP's Work Relationship Index finds two thirds (67%) of UK knowledge workers feel that leaving their job is too much of a risk.

This adds to the growing body of evidence of the job hugging trend. People are clinging to their jobs out of fear of economic volatility amid a cooling labour market, rather than choosing to stay because they are satisfied in their role. In this climate, organisations risk reading stable retention as a marker of health, when workers could in fact be disengaged but not comfortable with leaving.

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As Perry Timms, founder and chief energy officer at People and Transformational HR, told CXM: "Low turnover has always been treated as a positive HR metric, but stability only tells you that people haven't left."

If people are dissatisfied but sticking around, the result is what Timms calls "passive organisational drag". Employees will do what's expected of them, but they won't go above and beyond – which is exactly what the BSA data has found.

So How does that affect CX?

CX is aa operational area that may often extend into "above and beyond" to deliver a satisfactory customer experience. Take that away and the potential for customer dissatisfaction and its attendant perils becomes a greater reality.

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Looking slightly wider at the actual Impact of AI on customer service headcount where the short answer is that the effect appears to be relatively modest at present according to new research from Gartner. Of 275 service and support leaders surveyed in July and August 2026, just 21% said their organisations had cut human agent headcount because of AI. Where cuts have happened, they have gone deep. Among organisations that reduced headcount because of AI, the average reduction was 16.7% of the workforce over the previous 18 months. Some of those businesses are already reversing course: 7% of leaders said their organisations had rehired human workers after earlier reductions, and 11% plan to rehire within the next 18 months.

Kathy Ross and Emily Potosky, analysts in the Gartner Customer Service & Support Practice, shared their views on the findings from the Gartner Customer Service & Support Conference in Denver.

Why Has AI's Impact on Customer Service Headcount Been So Modest?

*Potosky notes that most leaders are shrinking their teams indirectly, through measures that take time to show up in the numbers. Nearly half (45%) have frozen hiring, and 39% are redeploying agents to other parts of the business. Just 20% have turned to enforced job cuts. "Despite pressure to reduce human agent headcount, widespread reductions are not yet evident in the data," said Potosky. "**Instead, service leaders are largely using AI to reshape work and increase capacity, not replace their workforce at scale."***

Inside the 'Cut Fast, Rehire Later' Trap

The rehiring figures suggest some organisations moved before the technology was ready. Organizations can fall into a 'cut fast, rehire later' trap when they reduce headcount based on expected AI value rather than demonstrated results. When AI can't cope with the volume or difficulty of work leaders had planned for, Ross warns, service standards can slip. A smaller team may then lack the capacity to absorb the extra load. Gartner sees the early rehiring as backing for its prediction that half of companies that cut customer service staff because of AI will rehire by 2027.

*Undoing a cut is expensive, she adds. Each replacement has to be found, onboarded, and trained, and organisations may also have to rebuild the expertise that departed with experienced staff**. Leaders should treat workforce reductions as an outcome of proven and sustained AI performance, not as a prerequisite for achieving value from AI***

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So How do Employees View and Use AI Tools at Work?

Becky Norman looks at Deloitte UK's inaugural GenAI Workforce Survey to find a few , perhaps unexpected insights

UK workers are paying for AI tools themselves at an estimated cost of £958 million a year, according to Deloitte UK's inaugural GenAI Workforce Survey. One in six generative AI (GenAI) users funds at least one work tool out of their own pocket, and 63% of working adults aged 18–70 knowingly use GenAI for work.

The survey is the largest single-country study of workplace GenAI use conducted to date. Ipsos polled 25,000 nationally representative UK workers, ***Bought It Themselves, Taught Themselves***

Putting the personal spend figure alongside the training figure makes for a concerning read. Nearly half (49%) of employees who use GenAI at work say they have had no formal training on using it safely and effectively. The top three use cases are searching for information, drafting emails, and creating summaries. Premium tools, in other words, doing much of the work a search engine can fulfil.

Studies elsewhere show a similar pattern:

- *Exploding Topics' AI workforce research found 29% pay for their own AI tools at work and 50% receive little or no employer training.*
- *The Conference Board found 55% of employees use AI regularly, but only a third had received employer training in the previous six months. Some 28% had none at all.*

What Happens to the 70 Minutes Workers Save?

Deloitte finds UK workers claim to save 70 minutes a week using GenAI, and says most of that time goes into doing more work for the same employer. The productivity gain, therefore, goes to the organisation, not the person who bought the tool.

Why UK Workers Paying for AI Tools Themselves Keep It Hidden

Concealment explains why this AI spending doesn't get expensed. Deloitte found:

- *31% of GenAI users work without their employer's knowledge.*
- *23% perceive a stigma attached to using the tools.*
- *64% of weekly users worry managers will think AI can do their job.*

Hayley McKelvey, chief AI officer at Deloitte UK, makes the link: "Workers who feel a stigma around adopting GenAI tools are more likely to conceal their use."

Who they hide it from is less obvious. Cybernews data found 59% of US employees use unapproved AI tools, and 57% of those say their direct manager knows and does not mind.

What This Means for UK Employers

For UK organisations not providing AI tools to workers, Deloitte's study paints a concerning picture. There is an unbudgeted AI input the organisation cannot see, a training gap leaving them exposed, and a stigma issue fuelling the secrecy.

Providing access, on its own, won't solve the problem. As Paul Lee, partner and head of industry insight at Deloitte UK, says: "The organisations that gain the greatest advantage from AI will be those that move beyond simply providing access to tools and focus on helping people use them with the appropriate guardrails and purpose."

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