How to Nail IT Satisfaction for Employee Experience, Productivity & Profits

COMPLETELY
SAT!SF!ED

HANK MARQUIS

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DISCLAIMER: I'm an active C-level information technology leadership advisor, but I'm not *your* advisor, and buying this book doesn't create a client relationship between us, so check with your advisors before taking any drastic actions. The Satisfaction Stories in this book are "reality fiction"—condensed, realistic, and illustrative examples of common IT problems and subsequent solutions based on my IT practitioner, educator, and consultant career working with thousands of individuals at hundreds of firms spanning decades.

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PROLOGUE

You've got a neat digital workplace solution, but employees don't like it. Your IT operational metrics say they're happy, but they say they're not. Productivity and profit are down.

You think this is a training or Human Resource problem at first. You believe that if employees aren't satisfied or productive with the IT solutions you provide, it has to be because they're untrained or you need to give them the right technology.

But if that were true, additional IT spending would result in a better digital employee experience—higher satisfaction, increased employee productivity, and more profits. Yet you're spending more on IT than ever, and IT satisfaction is at an all-time low.

YOU'VE GOT AN

IT SATISFACTION

PROBLEM.

I'VE GOT A

SIMPLE 10-STEP

SOLUTION.

INTRODUCTION

I frequently speak with IT leaders. When I ask about IT satisfaction, I always hear, "Yeah, we're doing that already."

I get it. IT satisfaction is as unpopular as it is familiar. You might even think there is little to learn about IT satisfaction by now, but you'd be wrong. While most of us know what IT satisfaction is, only a few know how to deliver it.

How we equip our digital employees with technology continues to morph and expand. Today's remote and hybrid digital workplace solutions include:

- Dozens of SaaS and software applications.
- Half a dozen meeting and conference options.
- Multiple collaboration tools.
- Perhaps an AI chatbot.

Most IT leaders ask employees how much they like this technology and regularly check if they would recommend IT to a friend or are satisfied with IT. So, you can understand why many IT and business leaders think they've already handled digital employee experience (aka DEX) satisfaction.

Then why do I talk about a situation already dealt with? Why write a book on leading with IT satisfaction? Why would anyone want to read a book on it?

There are two main reasons for this book. First, IT satisfaction levels appear to be at an all-time low, partly due to the increasing complexity I just mentioned! Second, there's no longer a line between IT and business—business depends on IT. Today, every dollar of profit and loss depends on the digital employee experience we deliver.

> "Start with the customer experience and work backward to the technology."
>
> — *Steve Jobs*

Yet most of us must do more to improve our DEX. In other words, if your digital employees are unhappy, the tech you've implemented isn't helping them to succeed. They need to achieve their desired business results, and you can help them.

Leading with satisfaction isn't your task; it's your philosophy.

It's deliberately discovering what employees at the other end of your IT solutions (users) and their leadership (customers) care most about and making that experience the core of your leadership.

It's looking at everything you do for ways to improve the experience of your employees and those who use the IT solutions you deliver, whatever they are.

Ask yourself, "Why is this done this way? Can we do it better? Do we need to do it better?" You have to be fundamentally skeptical about everything.

Want higher employee productivity? Get a better understanding of how to measure employee experience authentically. Want to up satisfaction? Ask digital employees what they dislike most about IT. Want

to boost profits? Find out what makes employees the most engaged and productive.

We must ensure that satisfaction is at the heart of every IT solution, service, and product we build or deliver and every business function we support. It should be the starting point of every conversation we have.

We must consider IT a service, not a technology to achieve this. We must focus on designing experiences that are simple, intuitive, and engaging. We must think about how our solutions make our employees feel and how they can help them succeed.

Failing at IT satisfaction is failing to lead IT. When IT fails, our business fails.

IT satisfaction is an excellent measure of your IT performance. When it's low, throwing more money and tech at the problem isn't usually the answer—most of the time, it just worsens employee experience, and satisfaction drops even more.

If an employee struggles to find a client record, it's not their fault. It's probably because the process is complicated and takes too long, using too many different tools. You can't blame users. However, you can blame it on needing more focus on satisfaction with digital experience.

This problem is so pervasive that it even has a name, "digital friction." It affects everyone—us in IT, internal employees, and external customers and partners. It's like pedaling a bike into a headwind, taking more effort to go anywhere. It's an IT experience killer and a productivity sinkhole.

> "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."

— *Albert Einstein*

Think you don't have to worry about digital friction? Think again! Recent surveys show that it wastes up to 34% of employee time. Take a moment to consider how this impacts your business—not only in terms of employee turnover and low engagement but also in terms of end-customer churn and lost profits.

The best IT leaders are champions for a firm's external customers.

Zeroing in on the potential impact of IT decisions on your external marketplace also subsumes your digital employees' needs.

Following is a recent example of what happens when you don't. I call these examples Satisfaction Stories and will use them throughout.

Satisfaction Story: *For Want of Leadership Focused on IT Satisfaction*

> **Background:** The IT organization of a legal services firm decided to force an update to the next version of their desktop productivity suite. The suite's email application didn't have the same features as the previous version. IT planners didn't use those features and thought no one else did (or worse, didn't know those features existed!) Thus, IT communicated no guidance to users, and users got the new version the next time they started the email application.

> **Results:** The forced upgrade lost thousands of client notes.

> **Conclusion:** Affected customer contact employees were unhappy and unable to support their clients and partners. Engagement dropped. External customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profits fell.

When your teams work on an IT solution, start with those outside your company who buy or use your products and services. Understand how your internal employees support those marketplaces. Ensure you test every IT product and service idea against the results it creates.

Leading with satisfaction is the key to a smooth workflow for everyone.

Being satisfaction-centric improves morale and makes good business sense. Giving our digital employees IT solutions that satisfy them means they're getting desired results—they can do their job well with your IT kit!

Let's use satisfaction to our advantage and ensure we eliminate digital friction and deliver the results our employees need. Great IT satisfaction accelerates your business, putting you one move ahead of your competition.

I've called this work *satisfactioneering*, and those that practice my approach *satisfactioneers*.

But satisfaction has a satisfaction problem.

When I chat with IT and business leaders about leading with satisfaction, it usually takes a while to get on the same page regarding what satisfaction is and isn't. Some think it means monitoring operational technology, the so-called "speeds and feeds" of information technology solutions. Others think it's about asking employees now and then how much they like IT, and others think it only applies to the IT service or help desk.

Satisfaction can be tricky for logical-minded IT leaders because it's more about feelings and subjectivity than technology. Leading with satisfaction requires putting people and their needs first and tech second, which can be challenging for some ITers. Plus, satisfaction is different between IT solutions and between workgroups for the same IT solution—one workgroup's idea of satisfaction might not work for another.

So far, I haven't met many in IT who said they lead with satisfaction, but those I did were winners.

The first step to optimizing digital employee satisfaction is understanding what it's not.

Satisfaction isn't a number, a survey, or a score. It's the opinion of very important people—your customers and users.

I know that idea is new to some IT leaders and their teams. But I've found that it helps to consider satisfaction as your "leadership compass" for IT. It gives you a clear idea of your "true north." It shows you what to do, for whom, and why.

That way, we're all headed in the right direction and avoiding the headaches of trying to resolve dissatisfaction. Without it, everyone loses out—including us—and nobody's happy.

> "If I had to run a company on three measures, those measures would be customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and cash flow."
>
> — *Jack Welch*

I've seen IT leaders following their "true north" identify improvement areas and get impressive investment returns.

But I've also seen IT leaders who didn't and watched them brush off opportunities to increase profits and productivity. It's a shame because if we break our old habits, we can take advantage of opportunities that could completely change the game.

IT satisfaction is like a misunderstood superpower. It will change how you think, act, and lead.

Behind this confusion are the many ways to measure satisfaction with an experience. Is there one best way to measure digital workplace satisfaction, or is any method as good as another? Can't IT products gauge satisfaction automatically? Can you be strategic about experience satisfaction, or is it tactical?

In 1980, Dr. Noriaki Kano revolutionized product management by introducing a model for customer-defined quality. It outlined five requirements for customers to have a great product experience and three types of product requirements. Businesses started using Kano's model to adjust product investments based on consumer needs. Today, many IT organizations still rely on Kano's model to create CSAT surveys—which isn't ideal. Kano designed his model for product management. Today there are more up-to-date models to measure and improve IT satisfaction.

The next step was the concept of service satisfaction as distinct from product satisfaction. This approach became a popular marketing construct in 1988 with the publication of SERVQUAL by "Parsu" Parasuraman, Valarie Ziethaml, and Leonard Berry (PZB.) They argued that service businesses could stand out by understanding their customers'

expectations and perceptions and using the gap between them to measure and improve their service quality.

Their big idea was that service quality is about satisfaction over time. That you can measure and shape satisfaction using psychometric tools. PZB clarified that customer satisfaction was crucial but presented their concept in a marketing science journal as a basic skeleton to adapt to fit one's needs. In other words, heavy reading for marketing professors.

So, it sat for a while. And then came the one-liners.

How likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague?

In 2003, Fred Reichheld, then a Partner at Bain & Company, a global consultancy, created *Net Promoter Score* (NPS.) It's a "one-line" customer loyalty measure. Most of us know it from buying on the Internet. Its question is usually a variation of: "On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend us to a friend or colleague?"

NPS is non-diagnostic. That means if your score is low, you need to use another tool to know what caused it to be so. Nor do you don't know what "good looks like," and even if you did, you couldn't unpack an NPS score into the five factors we humans use to decide whether we're satisfied.

The company made it easy for me to handle my issue.

In 2010, the Corporate Executive Board created the *Customer Effort Score* (CES) when their research showed that "effort" is a crucial driver of customer loyalty.

Like NPS, CES is a "one-line survey." CES's question is usually, "To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The company made it easy for me to handle my issue."

Like NPS, CES isn't diagnostic.

However, both are valuable in identifying a dissatisfied individual, albeit in different circumstances.

Do we need yet another book on IT satisfaction?

Since IT satisfaction has been an important topic for so long, you'd think we'd all know how to deliver, measure and lead with it, right? That's what I thought when I started trying to improve IT delivery by removing digital friction. But I quickly realized that many satisfaction measures like CES and NPS don't measure user-perceived *Quality of Experience* (QoE)—the difference between IT consumer (customers and users) perception and expectation.

I found measuring satisfaction piecemeal wasn't enough—it doesn't tell us why someone might be dissatisfied, only that they are, which was very frustrating. I realized that we needed a diagnostic approach.

I encountered many approaches and vendors discussing satisfaction, but none had a solution for systematically improving it. I found no one with an answer for leading with it or delivering and improving the quality of experience in a human way based on the employee's feelings about the results they get from using the tech vs. the tech itself.

Everything centered on technical, operational metrics, the so-called IT "speeds and feeds."

But nowadays, it's almost impossible to separate services from products—and we rely heavily on customer satisfaction to survive.

If satisfaction diagnosis was interesting in the 1980s, we live and die by it today.

Most of us were trying to deliver satisfaction but weren't doing it correctly.

As an IT consultant and leader, I focused on improving IT by working backward from employee satisfaction and productivity.

I started using all the traditional IT satisfaction approaches and eventually realized what didn't work. Every client engagement was an opportunity to learn something new. I refined my approach after working with others who shared the same vision of how employee satisfaction and productivity can lead to higher profits and better business results. Our focus on the users worked.

We learned how to analyze employee experience from a people-centric (*humanistic*) perspective.

Humanistic metrics measure people's satisfaction qualitatively by looking at how they feel about an experience—the emotions of their achievements. Our humanistic approach showed us how to measure an employee's IT experience. We were like medical doctors reading a patient's EKG to determine heart health. We had the key to designing and delivering the perfect business experience.

Thanks to this, I had a reliable way of leading with satisfaction. After I'd diagnosed satisfaction in hundreds of cloud service providers, tech organizations, IT field service units, and corporations, I felt confident enough to share my knowledge with others. I started blogging about

my approach, presented the strategy at IT industry events, and consulted for Fortune 50-1000 firms.

I created templates and tools and founded, led, and sold software and SaaS companies to automate different approaches. I built a web-based AI tool to automate my new system. I was a premier IT executive coach for a well-known global advisory company. I've been lucky to learn from supportive and skeptical IT leaders who have helped me perfect my technique over the years.

The process in this book is thoroughly researched, tested, and proven reliable to connect IT experience with technology to deliver the desired outcomes that satisfy digital employees and bring business results. That's why we needed a new book on IT satisfaction. This book is it!

- I'll show you how to understand your satisfied and dissatisfied IT customers and users by teaching you the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among workgroups.
- I'll also teach you how IT satisfaction breaks down into five components so that you can perfect each one. I'll show you how to design IT solutions and experiences that make employees more productive and help your business make more money.
- I'll provide a repeatable process for effective IT satisfaction measurement, monitoring, and improvement. It'll give you a straightforward and effective method to achieve IT satisfaction.
- You'll learn how to develop an actionable IT satisfaction improvement plan that identifies the causes of digital friction and outlines how to reduce it. Finally, you'll get the tools that tell you and your team exactly how much money, time, and other resources you need to improve satisfaction levels, employee engagement, and retention, leading to increased

profits.

- Plus, you'll learn how to prioritize delivering satisfaction and discover that satisfaction can be awesome (it is!)

I wrote this book specifically for you, someone with the ambition and ability to revolutionize the digital employee experience for your team, group, function, business, or enterprise:

- An IT leader who wants to measure satisfaction and use those survey results to make IT changes that benefit employees and the business.
- A business Marketing or Sales executive who senses their customers aren't happy and needs help figuring out why.
- An HR leader dealing with high turnover, difficulty hiring, low morale, and increasing recruitment costs.
- A Customer Success Manager stuck in the middle between business and end-customers and seeing the tension first-hand.

Leading with satisfaction to boost DEX is an excellent IT strategy.

Above all, if you want your business to thrive, you must ensure that digital employees are happy and productive. That means leading with satisfaction so you can match what they expect with your IT delivery.

"Strategy becomes the particular array of activities aligned to deliver a particular mix of value to a chosen array of customers."

— *Michael Porter*

Use digital employee satisfaction as your guide. Your "true north" should be your employees using digital workplace solutions without hassles.

When it comes to IT solutions, employees are the ones who know where the issues are. As an IT leader, it's essential to understand what they expect of IT and how they perceive IT—these two things aren't always the same. If IT isn't providing a more than adequate experience, dissatisfaction is the symptom, not the cause.

To boost the value IT brings to your company's profits, you must understand why your solutions are vital to employees: the business outcomes and the individual needs of every team—Sales, CSM, IT, and other business or IT functions.

You need to lead with satisfaction as your compass to diagnose the root cause of dissatisfaction and where your IT service strategy, design, transition, and operations functions broke down.

Dissatisfaction leaves a trail of clues to its causes—if you know where to look.

IT can cause problems; we all know this. Whether it's slow systems, outdated software, or frequent crashes, it's frustrating when technology gets in the way of our work. As someone who's been there, I know that IT dissatisfaction can be a real business problem.

But I also found out that dissatisfaction contains the secret to our success. By paying attention to the signs of IT dissatisfaction, you can uncover the root causes of the problem and take steps to fix it.

Here are some tips on recognizing the clues and using them to improve your IT systems and boost your business performance. Let's dive into the world of IT dissatisfaction!

- **Your business employee productivity is falling.** Do digital employees in companies with 6+ communication tools, 10+ apps, and multiple SaaS services truly spend 5 hours per week in support? Yes, they do! And to make matters worse, it can take over 9 minutes to get back into a workflow after switching between workplace applications. On top of that, the average digital employee changes contexts up to 400 times a day! These work disruptions—and that's what they are—could be a problem for businesses that need their employees to be able to handle more work as they grow.
- **Your profitability and cash flow are shrinking.** Do your IT investments help you stay ahead of the competition? Keeping up with IT innovation and delivering satisfying employee experiences is critical to staying competitive and boosting your profits. Not investing in IT can lead to unhappy end-customers, low morale, difficulty recruiting and keeping top talent, lowering productivity, and costs you market share and profits.
- **You need help figuring out how to resolve dissatisfaction.** Are your business customers grumbling that things need fixing? Are survey response rates dropping? Are conversations with business unit heads getting a bit heated? If so, you may have a satisfaction issue caused by digital friction, and you should reexamine your approach.
- **Employee morale is low, and you have difficulty recruiting and retaining talent.** Digital friction is a top cause of low morale because employees can't get their job done, affecting their self-esteem and ability to succeed personally and

professionally.

- **Your company needs to improve end-customer satisfaction and loyalty.** When employees are disengaged, it shows up as low external customer satisfaction in your marketplace.

When employees have trouble using your IT solutions or don't get the help they need, it affects your business and profits. So, please, get to know them! Ask them what you can do to help. Talk to them directly, and rely on something other than summaries from others.

Finding a disconnect between your understanding and theirs could signify a satisfaction issue that needs addressing immediately.

Leading with satisfaction is well worth your time and effort—and it takes little of it.

Completely Satisfied shows you how to give your internal customers and employees IT experiences that fulfill their expectations without relying on inflexible "best practices." I'll give you insights and explain how to quickly satisfy your employees and customers.

I'll show you how to turn your most disgruntled employees into ardent supporters. You'll learn how to adjust the IT value chain to deliver an experience that puts and keeps digital employees "in the zone" to give your company a competitive advantage.

Start where you are—right now!

All IT leaders measure employee satisfaction in some way, but many lack an understanding of what drives satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

By understanding your drivers of IT dissatisfaction, you can measure and monitor DEX more effectively, gain actionable insights, and learn where and how to make changes to your IT solutions and delivery to satisfy your employees and their internal and external partners completely.

As an IT leader, you have the power to take ownership of empowering your team and driving innovation that enhances digital employee experience.

By exploring new approaches and strategies—like those in this book—you can make a real difference in the success of your organization.

> "I always get to where I'm going by walking away from where I have been."

> —*Winnie the Pooh*

The place to start is improving IT satisfaction for IT solutions (aka, IT products and services) already in production. The "10 Steps" assume you've got one or more such opportunities, and the sequence of steps is remedial. Their order will differ if you're building a new service from scratch. For instance, you would start with Step 9 and create your service concept first!

So let's start where you are by sorting out what satisfaction looks like and why delivering it can be tricky. Let's figure out precisely what you're trying to accomplish so we can make sure everyone's completely satisfied—you, your team and business partners, and of course, your employees.

WHAT SATISFACTION IS AND IS NOT