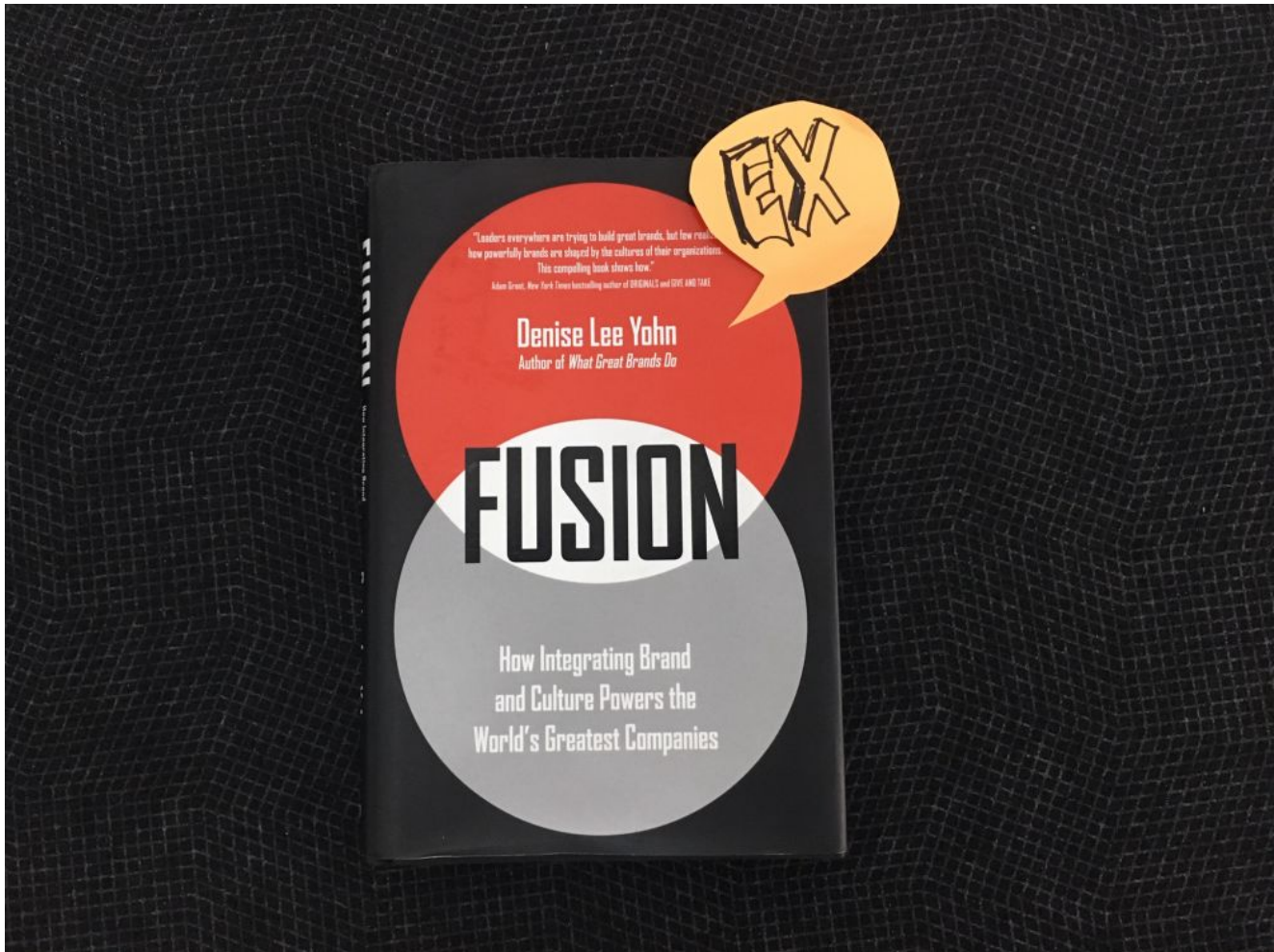


How employee experience (EX) helps Airbnb attract and keep great staff

thegrowthfaculty.com/blog/Employeeexperiencestaffretention



CX is the acronym for Customer Experience.

But CX is nothing without EX, a newer acronym which stands for **Employee Experience**.

According to Denise Lee Yohn, the author of *What Great Brands Do* and *Fusion*, EX is the critical strategy that Airbnb relies upon to build brand and pursue its purpose.

How well does EX serve Airbnb? EX-tremely well!

- **Profits** at Airbnb are projected to increase by 3400% in 4 years;
- It enjoys the **strongest advocates** of any brand, according to YouGov BrandIndex;
- It's one of the **best companies to work for**, according to jobs site Glassdoor;

- **120,000 people applied** for 900 positions at Airbnb in 2016;
- It **reached a \$31 billion valuation** in less than 10 years.

Lee John, writing up Airbnb's case study in *Fusion*, says that when the lodging rental and hospitality company adopted its famous "Belong Anywhere" slogan in 2016, it needed to bring the **concept of belonging inside the company** as well.

Airbnb made operational changes to make this happen.

- It merged the talent department, the recruiting department and the company culture department into one **"Employee Experience"** group.
- EX at Airbnb now starts well before an employee officially joins the company, with candidates **interviewed TWICE** just to assess their fit with Airbnb's core values.

Lee Yohn's case study also shows Airbnb has a week-long on-boarding before they begin their jobs, which include daily experiences that reinforce the values, brand identity, purpose and values of the company.

- **Food in the café changes daily** to reflect different travel destinations, and hosts are celebrated everywhere, including in conference rooms themed to match host properties, and on posters in the hallways.
- Airbnb offices include a kitchen, library, gardens, and device charging stations, to mimic amenities associated with home. In this way, **the company supports employees' sense of belonging** – the core value and brand identity of Airbnb.

She emphasises that not all brands have to have "happy, feel good" EX.

tough place to work

Instead, she quotes Jeanne Meister, founding partner of HR advisory and research firm Future Workplace, who coined the helpful phrase **"Workplace as an experience."**

extend to all staff

"There are no second class citizens in a great culture," he says. "Remind everyone that every boat has a hull underwater providing buoyancy and stability, even if you can't see it. Everyone on the team is important and making a valuable contribution, from the admin staff to the leadership, even if they're not in the limelight."

Dean Robertson is now Partner, Platform Engineering, at Deloitte Consulting, after an invitation in late 2018 for his whole team at Mexia to join Deloitte, who were clearly impressed with Mexia's brand and culture.

Mark Levy, Airbnb's global head of employee experience, sums it up for Lee Yohn this way:

"Anything that sets employees up for success or improves our culture should be part of EX."

And, if you need convincing EX is for you, Lee Yohn quotes U.S. research conducted by Jacob Morgan, who wrote *The Employee Experience Advantage*:

Organisations who invested most heavily in EX were:

- Included **11.5 times as often** in Glassdoor's Best Places to Work
- **4.4 times as often** in LinkedIn's list of North America's Most In-Demand Employers
- **28 times more often** listed among Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies
- **2.1 times as often** on the Forbes list of the World's Most Innovative companies
- **Twice as often** in the American Customer Satisfaction Index
- Recording **four times the average profit**
- Recording **two times the average revenue**
- **25 percent smaller**, suggesting high levels of productivity and innovation.

So, in 2020, there's no excuse not to make EX **a top priority** for your company.

Lee Yohn says that companies can only transform themselves if their core values are woven into the fabric of their EX at every point in an employee's journey with the company.

"You must imbue the core values of your desired culture in the daily experiences you create for your employees so that they can soak them in, and reflect them back with their behaviours and attitude," she says.

"As the company's core values come to life for employees, a better culture and stronger brand identity emerge."