

# Using the Employee Lifecycle Approach to Address Workforce Challenges

With more workers attracted to remote work opportunities, manufacturers must meet the challenge of recruiting and maintaining top talent for the plant floor. Learn how to assess your organization's strengths and weaknesses that can determine whether a potential employee chooses to join and remain at your company.

**THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE** framework is a widely used approach to managing the multiple stages an employee experiences throughout their tenure with a company. How a company manages these stages can make or break the overall experience an employee has with it. This article takes a look at the stages of the employee lifecycle and examines some of the most significant challenges faced by consumer packaged goods companies (CPGs) in managing this framework, as well as some of the solutions

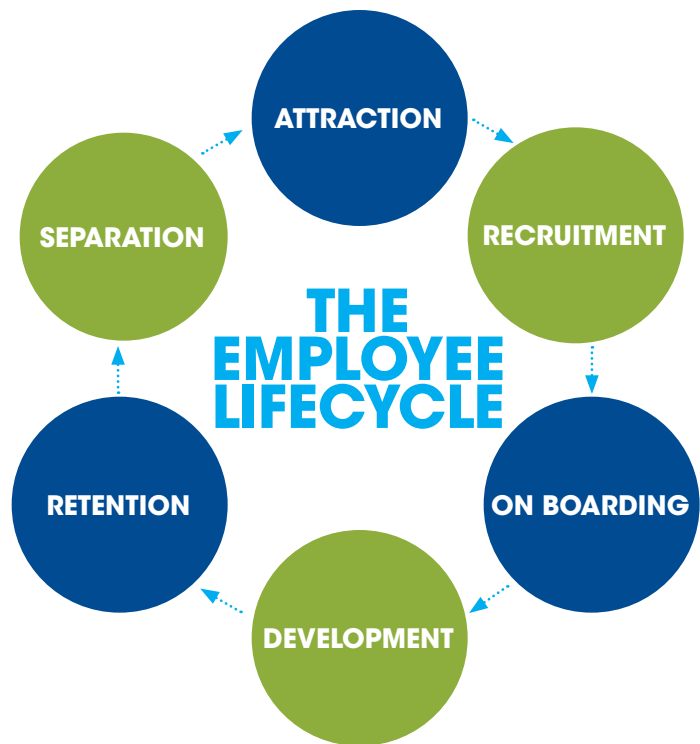


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CPGs have implemented to overcome them. In addition, talent accelerator groups (TAGs) are highlighted as one of these solutions.

The employee lifecycle framework generally consists of six key elements that reflect the stages an employee or potential employee experiences in their time with a company:

- 1. Attraction**—what captivates or gets the attention of a potential employee early in their career decision-making process
- 2. Recruitment**—the process that potential employees go through as a company pursues them
- 3. Onboarding**—how a company brings on and prepares employees for the earliest experiences with the company
- 4. Development**—the ongoing training and career path opportunities experienced by employees
- 5. Retention**—the manner in which the company engages and taps into that discretionary effort throughout employees' time with the company (see sidebar on PMMI's OpX Leadership Network Workforce Engagement Framework on page 14)
- 6. Separation**—the time and manner in which employees exit the company

For CPGs and OEMs, one way to look at the entire employee recruitment and retention process is to organize all activities around the employee lifecycle framework to assess a company's relative strengths and weaknesses at all critical control points. How well a company performs at each point can greatly determine whether a potential employee chooses to join and remain at the company.

## CASE IN POINT

### Challenges and opportunities in the employee lifecycle



TAMI LUPTON



OLIVIA MUNOZ

To gain additional insights into the employee lifecycle framework and real-life experiences that illustrate some of the challenges and solutions associated with it, FSO Institute interviewed Tami Lupton, director of human resources at Pretzels Inc., and Olivia Munoz, project engineer at Amway. Lupton and Munoz are members of FSO's recently introduced Workforce Engagement Talent Accelerator Group professional peer groups for emerging leaders and high-performing individuals.

**FSO INSTITUTE: Out of the six elements of the employee lifecycle, which ones pose the greatest challenges for you at Pretzels Inc.?**

**LUPTON:** The employee lifecycle approach is a very useful tool. However, we tend to focus most of our efforts at Pretzels in the beginning stages—attraction and recruitment. For us, attraction is all about our brand. It became a major focus for us a few years ago, as we became aware of our reputation at one of our plants, where due to our demanding scheduling system—seven days per week, 12 hours a day—we had to change the way we think in order to become more attractive to potential candidates. Through some employee-friendly scheduling changes and leadership changes, we were able to turn things around. Additionally, the sheer growth in our company—especially our recent expansion into Lawrence, Kan.—emerged as a source of attraction, as Pretzels is now seen as an employer of opportunity and job security.

During the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic, we held career drive-throughs that were very effective and efficient, given the challenges we were facing. With restrictions loosening, we've been able to continue our job fairs, live videos, and traditional media outlets. However, our most significant recruitment efforts are now those we conduct via social media.

**FSO INSTITUTE: What are some of the solutions you've put in place to address retainment challenges?**

**LUPTON:** Like many companies, we continue to look at onboarding to make a lasting impact on new employees by focusing on nurturing them early in their careers at Pretzels. Although all our positions, including bakers and extruders, have an early train-

ing system in place, we focus intently on packers, since those employees constitute a sizeable portion of our workforce. For them, we offer extensive training during their first three weeks, both in the classroom and on the plant floor. To engage new employees early on, we reach out to them through our Trumpia messaging platform before they begin work. We communicate with them through all types of messaging, including texts, pulse surveys, etc. This platform was especially helpful for us during the pandemic, as many employees were remote, but needed to be kept in the loop on things.

To offer employees the opportunity to work in different roles and to build bench strength for the organization, we offer further development opportunities for cross-training and skills development through our tiered program, our version of pay-for-skills. Having a pool of cross-trained employees greatly improves our scheduling capabilities.

While not always easy to see, these developmental opportunities can pay off in a variety of ways. For example, we made some significant improvements in our safety culture by making safety one of our core values and providing the necessary training to implement a safety-first culture. Our employees bought into it, took ownership of it, and became advocates for it. We were also able to build in a strong recognition program to reinforce it.

The separation stage of the employee lifecycle has a direct link to the attraction stage—the way a company treats its employees going out the door is as important as how it treats them coming in. You always want exiting employees to leave with a good taste in their mouths. In this stage, we are cognizant of our reputation and work hard to understand what motivates employees to leave, especially if they're leaving for reasons we can do something about.

## PMMI's OpX Leadership Network Workforce Engagement Framework: A Critical Tool for Retaining a Workforce

PMMI's OpX Leadership Network Workforce Engagement document provides a roadmap for engaging employees throughout their careers. It is based on three foundational elements that must be in place for effective engagement: vision, values, and leadership. The framework itself is focused on three key pillars: empowerment, enablement, and connection. Forty-seven characteristics that define highly engaged employees and companies are spread across these three pillars. For each characteristic, descriptions are presented for a traditional manufacturing facility, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. To help navigate the journey from beginner to advanced, leadership guidance is offered for each characteristic as well.

As an early adopter of the Workforce Engagement Framework, here's what Paul Schaum, COO at Pretzels Inc., says about employee engagement: "We saw early on that regardless of the projects undertaken in pursuit of better business outcomes, none could be successful without a fully engaged workforce to see them through. With help from the FSO Institute and PMMI's Workforce Engagement guidance document, we have made significant improvements in the overall engagement of our employees and continue to move the needle in a positive engagement direction."

The document is available for free download at [www.opxleadershipnetwork.org/engagement/download/workforce-engagement](http://www.opxleadershipnetwork.org/engagement/download/workforce-engagement).

**FSO INSTITUTE:** You've been involved in one of FSO Institute's professional peer groups for emerging leaders, the Workforce Engagement TAG. How has that helped your continuing development at Pretzels Inc.? Do you have anything like a TAG internally that enables peer-to-peer engagement?

**LUPTON:** TAG has provided me with the reassurance that we are not alone in the challenges we face at Pretzels Inc. Having the opportunity to share best practices and brainstorm solutions has been a great benefit, especially during the last 18 months.

**FSO INSTITUTE:** Out of the six elements of the employee lifecycle, which ones pose the greatest challenges for you at Amway?

**MUNOZ:** Over the past few years, the company has been going through restructuring efforts, which have become a challenge for both recruitment and retention. As a result of the organizational churn to move in a direction of accelerating sales growth combined with a strong job market, retention has been a challenge, as early-career professionals have been seeking other opportunities. Also, more tenured employees are opting into the voluntary separation packages that the company has offered. Furthermore, some initiatives, such as our internship program, which was

our primary pipeline to bringing talent into the organization and converting them to full-time employees after their graduation, have been scaled back due to both pandemic-related challenges for on-campus recruiting, as well as identifying our future recruitment strategies. As a result of the uptick in the voluntary separations of experienced employees, we now face organizational gaps and will need to hire some business-critical positions. Some of these require more experienced employees than those we would typically have in our internship program.

**FSO INSTITUTE:** What are some of the solutions you have implemented to address these challenges?

**MUNOZ:** I can speak to solutions we have implemented for recruiting young professionals into the workforce. For the past few years, I have been managing Amway's engineering division's internship program, and as a prior intern myself, I understand the mutual value to both the students and the company.

To recruit talent very early on a couple of years ago, when we had a significant focus on manufacturing automation initiatives, we partnered with a local high school robotics team and brought on two students between their senior year of high school and freshman year of college for a summer co-op program. This allowed us to retain one of the students

### ABOUT THE OPX INTEL SERIES OF ARTICLES

PMMI's OpX Leadership Network has produced more than 20 manufacturing process-improvement documents for CPGs and OEMs. The FSO Institute has facilitated the adoption and implementation of these documents, especially for food and beverage manufacturers. This series of articles shows how CPGs are using OpX and FSO documents to improve their overall manufacturing health and collaboration with OEMs and other suppliers. Learn more at [www.opxleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.opxleadershipnetwork.org) and [www.fsoinstitute.com](http://www.fsoinstitute.com).



for several summers and provide meaningful opportunities for them, as well as bringing in young talent that can provide new perspectives on process automation. Also, we have partnered with prior interns to serve as "campus ambassadors" that help our recruiting team identify top talent on campus and can candidly speak peer-to-peer about their experiences with our program to provide a first-person perspective to potential talent.

**FSO INSTITUTE:** You've been involved in one of FSO Institute's professional peer groups for emerging leaders, the Workforce Engagement TAG. How has that helped your continuing development at Amway? Do you have anything like a TAG at Amway that enables peer-to-peer engagement?

**MUNOZ:** TAG has given me new perspective on how others in the industry tackle similar challenges of recruitment and retention. Recruitment and retention in technical manufacturing roles has been an ongoing discussion industry-wide for years, and combined with a talent pool that is now more attracted to remote work opportunities, this can pose a challenge for companies to attract top talent and can accelerate the necessity for manufacturing automation. Similar to TAG, as part of Amway's diversity and inclusion networks, we

have a subset of our Women's Inclusion Network that is dedicated to our manufacturing and distribution groups for both hourly and salary employees in those areas. Broader to west Michigan, there are industry groups that provide networking and education opportunities, such as Inforum ManufacturingNEXT.

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