



# Improving Employee Experience in Financial Services

*Action Plan*

2025

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# Introduction

The banking and financial services industry faces significant challenges in cultivating meaningful employee experiences. While Brandon Hall Group's research indicates that 68% of organizations report satisfaction with their current employee experience (EX), this surface-level contentment masks underlying challenges. Traditional approaches to employee experience in financial institutions are proving insufficient as employees expect more personalized, responsive, and meaningful workplace experiences.

Financial services organizations operate in a highly regulated environment with distinct pressures — stringent compliance requirements, rapid technological advancement, and evolving customer expectations. These factors create a complex backdrop against which employee experience must be managed. The frequent restructuring, digital transformation initiatives, and sector consolidation further complicate efforts to build consistent, positive employee experiences.

Branch networks, wealth management firms, investment banks and insurance companies face distinct challenges in creating coherent employee experiences across diverse operational models. From customer-facing roles requiring high emotional intelligence to specialized back-office functions demanding technical expertise, the diversity of roles demands a sophisticated approach to EX.

This action plan provides financial services organizations with a structured framework for elevating employee experience, aligning with strategic business objectives, and creating sustainable competitive advantage through a focus on people. All data in this action plan comes from Brandon Hall Group™ research.

## The Strategic Imperative

Financial institutions that prioritize employee experience see improvements across multiple business dimensions, creating a compelling case for investment. The Brandon Hall Group™ research data reveals several key benefits that directly impact bottom-line results in banking and financial services: The retail industry faces specific retention challenges:

- ▶ **Employee satisfaction improvements** (44% of organizations report this benefit) translate into higher engagement and productivity — particularly vital in client-facing roles where relationship management drives revenue. In wealth management and private banking especially, employee satisfaction directly correlates with client retention rates.

- ▶ **Enhanced profitability and productivity** (39% each) demonstrate direct financial impact. In financial services, productivity gains often appear in operational metrics such as transaction processing times, loan approval rates, and customer onboarding efficiency.
- ▶ **Better customer satisfaction** (34%) shows the link between employee and customer experience — a crucial connection in financial services where trust and service quality determine institutional reputation. Research demonstrates that banks with higher employee engagement scores typically outperform competitors in customer satisfaction by 10-15%.
- ▶ **Reduced safety incidents** (33%) indicate improved operational excellence — minimizing operational risk events, compliance violations, and information security breaches that can result in significant financial and reputational damage.
- ▶ **Increased employee tenure** (29%) reduces recruitment and training costs — particularly valuable in specialized roles like financial advising, mortgage lending, or wealth management where deep client relationships and institutional knowledge drive business results.

Beyond these metrics, financial institutions that excel in EX report stronger employer brands (critical for attracting scarce talent in areas like fintech, cybersecurity and data analytics), easier recruitment of top talent, and greater innovation capacity. The comprehensive impact of EX initiatives extends far beyond traditional HR metrics to influence core business outcomes.

In an industry where talent shortages in critical areas pose strategic risks, where regulatory requirements demand operational excellence, and where customer relationships depend on knowledgeable, engaged employees, EX represents a foundational investment in business sustainability.

## Call to Action

Current approaches to employee experience in banking and financial services are often fragmented and reactive. Brandon Hall Group™ research found that 56% of organizations only survey employees annually or twice a year highlights a significant gap between employee needs and organizational responsiveness. This infrequent feedback cycle is particularly problematic in financial services, where rapidly changing market conditions, regulatory requirements and technological developments demand greater agility.

Financial institutions must develop multiple channels for continuous employee feedback, moving beyond annual surveys to real-time insight gathering. This might include pulse surveys after significant organizational changes, feedback mechanisms integrated into digital workspaces, and structured listening sessions with representative employee groups. For branch networks, mechanisms to capture front-line insights rapidly are especially valuable.

The implementation of AI-driven analytics to process and act on available data ensures quick response to emerging trends. Financial services organizations already possess vast data resources that can inform EX initiatives — from performance metrics to system usage patterns. Leveraging these existing data assets can accelerate insight development without creating additional administrative burden.

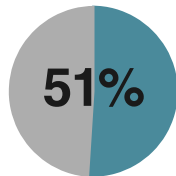
Creating cross-functional teams dedicated to EX improvement breaks down traditional silos that are particularly prevalent in financial services, where business units often operate with significant autonomy. These teams should include representatives from retail banking, commercial banking, wealth management, operations, technology, risk management, and other key functions.

Aligning EX initiatives with business objectives and measurable outcomes ensures that investments deliver tangible value. In banking, this might mean connecting learning programs to sales performance, linking operational improvements to risk reduction, or demonstrating how workplace flexibility enhances talent retention in critical roles.

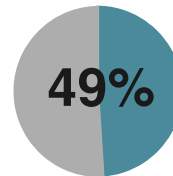
These priorities should be supported by strong change management practices and clear communication strategies to ensure successful implementation. Financial institutions must recognize that employees face significant change fatigue from ongoing digital transformation, regulatory updates, and market adjustments. EX initiatives must be positioned as enablers of success rather than additional change burdens.

# Current State

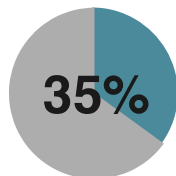
Brandon Hall Group’s research identifies several critical barriers to effective employee experience initiatives in financial services. These challenges require careful consideration and strategic planning to overcome:



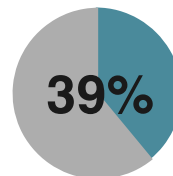
**Lack of data (of organizations):** Despite the data-rich environment of financial services, organizations struggle to gather comprehensive, actionable data about employee experiences. The problem often lies not in data quantity but in data integration — connecting HR information, performance metrics, learning data, and operational indicators to create a holistic view of employee experience.



**Lack of insight:** Even when data is available, many financial institutions struggle to derive meaningful insights. Advanced analytics capabilities that are routinely applied to customer behavior or risk management are rarely deployed for employee experience analysis. The shortage of specialized talent in people analytics compounds this challenge.



**Poor communication:** Ineffective communication channels limit the impact of EX initiatives. In financial services, communication is further complicated by regulatory constraints, dispersed organizational structures, and varying technological capabilities across different business units. Branch employees, corporate functions, and specialized units like investment banking often operate in different communication ecosystems.



**Change resistance:** Cultural and organizational barriers often impede EX improvements in financial services. Long-established workflows, complex compliance requirements, and traditional management approaches can create resistance to experience-enhancing innovations. Middle managers, in particular, may hesitate to adopt new approaches without clear demonstration of value.

The interrelated nature of these challenges requires a systemic approach to improvement. Financial services organizations must address these barriers holistically rather than treating them as isolated issues. This means creating integrated data environments, building analytical capabilities, addressing cultural barriers, and developing multi-channel communication approaches simultaneously.

Financial services organizations face additional industry-specific challenges including heightened regulatory scrutiny, which can limit flexibility in work arrangements and processes; legacy technology systems that impede workflow improvements; and significant variation in work environments between corporate offices, branch networks, and operational centers.

## Implementation Framework

Successful implementation of EX initiatives in financial services requires a structured approach that acknowledges both the complexity of the industry and the need for sustainable change. Each phase builds upon the previous one, creating a foundation for long-term success.

### Strategy Development and Goal Setting

With a clear understanding of the current state, financial services organizations can begin developing targeted EX strategies:

- ▶ **Define clear EX objectives** aligned with business goals and employee needs.
  - For retail banking: Enhance branch employee experiences to improve customer service.
  - For investment management: Create environments fostering innovation and engagement.
  - For wealth management: Build collaborative cultures supporting holistic client service.
- ▶ **Create integrated action plans** addressing multiple EX components simultaneously.
  - Balance enterprise-wide consistency with business-unit relevance.
  - Address physical workspaces, technology tools, and management practices together.
- ▶ **Establish governance structures** with clear accountability.
  - Include representation from control functions (risk, compliance, legal).
  - Ensure alignment with regulatory requirements and risk management practices.

▶ **Develop resource allocation plans** reflecting organizational priorities.

- Acknowledge different needs of various employee segments.
- Address distinct requirements of front-line staff, relationship managers, and specialists.

Financial institutions should articulate measurable goals for EX improvements, linked directly to business outcomes like customer retention, operational efficiency, risk reduction, or innovation metrics. These connections create a compelling business case for continued investment and demonstrate the strategic importance of EX initiatives.

## Process Enhancement and Optimization

Financial services organizations can optimize processes to enhance employee experience while maintaining necessary controls:

- ▶ **Identify and eliminate unnecessary administrative burdens** that drain employee time and energy without adding value. In financial services, process optimization must balance efficiency with compliance requirements, finding ways to streamline while maintaining appropriate controls.
- ▶ **Redesign workflows to maximize value-adding activities** and minimize frustration points. This might include simplifying loan origination processes, improving client onboarding experiences, or enhancing internal service request systems. Process improvements should focus particularly on high-volume, high-impact activities that shape daily work experiences.
- ▶ **Implement technology solutions that simplify complex tasks** while providing appropriate decision support. Modern workflow tools can guide employees through compliant processes while reducing cognitive load and error potential. Robotic process automation can eliminate repetitive tasks, freeing employees for higher-value activities.
- ▶ **Establish feedback loops that enable continuous improvement** based on employee input. Front-line staff often identify process issues before they become apparent at management levels. Creating mechanisms to capture and act on these insights accelerates improvement cycles and demonstrates organizational responsiveness.

In banking specifically, process optimization should focus on reducing friction in customer interactions, minimizing unnecessary compliance activities while maintaining rigorous controls, and creating more intuitive digital tools for both employee and customer use.

## Partnership Building and Community Engagement

Financial services organizations can enhance employee experience through strategic partnerships:

- ▶ **Develop deeper collaboration** between business units, technology teams, and people functions to create integrated employee experiences. Breaking down traditional barriers between these groups enables more holistic approaches to experience design.
- ▶ **Foster cross-functional communities of practice** that allow employees to build broader professional networks and share knowledge. These communities are particularly valuable in specialized areas like regulatory compliance, client advice models, or emerging technologies.
- ▶ **Create mentorship and sponsorship programs** that facilitate knowledge transfer while building organizational connections. These relationships help navigate complex organization structures and can significantly enhance retention, particularly for diverse talent.
- ▶ **Build external partnerships** with educational institutions, technology providers, and industry associations to bring fresh perspectives and specialized capabilities. These relationships can help address talent pipeline challenges and accelerate innovation in employee experience.

Financial services organizations should leverage their community engagement and corporate social responsibility initiatives to enhance employee experience. Providing opportunities for employees to contribute to community development through skills-based volunteering or financial education programs creates purpose and connection beyond daily work responsibilities.

## Training and Capability Development

Learning experiences are critical components of employee experience in financial services:

- ▶ **Establish continuous learning pathways** addressing both technical and developmental needs.
  - Include regulatory certifications and product knowledge.
  - Develop advisory skills, leadership capabilities, and technological fluency.
  - Connect learning directly to career progression opportunities.



- ▶ **Implement blended learning approaches** combining multiple delivery methods.
  - Balance digital self-service with high-impact instructor-led experiences.
  - Accommodate different learning preferences and operational constraints.
  - Create microlearning options for time-constrained branch employees.
- ▶ **Foster peer learning communities** that build connections while transferring knowledge.
  - Structure knowledge sharing between experienced advisors and newer team members.
  - Use communities of practice for specialized knowledge areas like compliance.
  - Celebrate and recognize knowledge-sharing contributions.
- ▶ **Develop manager capabilities** focused on experience enhancement.
  - Equip middle managers with practical coaching and performance support skills.
  - Train leaders to balance operational demands with employee development.
  - Create accountability for learning application and skill development.

## Measurement and Accountability Systems

Effective measurement supports continuous improvement of employee experience:

- ▶ **Establish baseline metrics across multiple dimensions** of employee experience, using both engagement survey data and operational indicators. Financial services organizations should connect these metrics to business outcomes like customer satisfaction, operational risk incidents, innovation output, and financial performance.
- ▶ **Implement real-time feedback mechanisms** that provide ongoing insight into employee experiences. These might include pulse surveys, digital feedback tools, and structured listening sessions with representative employee groups.
- ▶ **Create accountability through clear ownership of experience metrics** at leadership and management levels. Including EX indicators in performance evaluations and incentive structures signals organizational commitment and drives consistent focus.
- ▶ **Develop predictive analytics capabilities** that identify potential experience issues before they impact engagement or performance. Early warning systems allow proactive intervention and demonstrate organizational responsiveness.

Financial institutions should balance quantitative measures with qualitative insights, recognizing that numbers alone cannot capture the full complexity of employee experience. Focus groups, employee journey mapping, and observational research provide valuable context for interpreting metrics.

## Legal and Ethical Considerations

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Financial services organizations must navigate specific legal and ethical considerations in EX initiatives:

- ▶ **Maintain regulatory compliance while enhancing flexibility where possible.** Work arrangements, communication practices, and technology adoption must align with regulatory expectations while creating positive employee experiences. This requires close collaboration between HR, legal, compliance, and business functions.
- ▶ **Ensure fairness and transparency in experience design** across different employee segments. Branch staff, corporate functions, and specialized roles should receive equitable attention and investment, with experience initiatives tailored to specific needs rather than applying one-size-fits-all approaches.
- ▶ **Address data privacy concerns in employee experience monitoring.** Financial institutions already manage significant privacy requirements for customer information—similar rigor should apply to employee data used in experience analytics.
- ▶ **Consider ethical implications of AI and automation in employee experience.** As financial services adopt more automated decision support, the impact on employee autonomy, skill development, and job satisfaction requires careful monitoring and mitigation.

These principles should guide decision-making in areas like performance management, work design and technology adoption.

# Future Trends and Predictions

Brandon Hall Group™ research identifies several key trends that will shape the future of EX in financial services:

- ▶ **AI-Driven insights** will transform employee experience management.
  - Financial institutions will apply advanced analytics capabilities to EX.
  - Personalized interventions will become possible through predictive models.
  - Real-time sentiment analysis will enable proactive experience optimization.
- ▶ **Hybrid work evolution** will continue reshaping financial services.
  - Customer-facing roles will maintain significant in-person components.
  - Support functions will operate in increasingly flexible models.
  - New approaches to collaboration and performance management will emerge.
- ▶ **Digital experience integration** will accelerate across banking operations.
  - Employees will expect consumer-grade technology experiences at work.
  - Intuitive interfaces and personalization will become standard expectations.
  - Pressure to modernize internal systems will intensify.
- ▶ **Ethical AI and automation** considerations will gain prominence.
  - Financial institutions must balance efficiency with employee wellbeing.
  - Principled approaches to technology adoption will become necessary.
  - Human-centered design will guide digital transformation initiatives.
- ▶ **Wellness and resilience** focus will intensify industry-wide.
  - Mental health support will become standard in high-pressure roles.
  - Work-life integration initiatives will expand beyond traditional benefits.
  - Resilience training will help employees navigate industry change.

# Ensuring Sustainable Success

Sustainable success in EX initiatives requires a systematic approach focused on continuous improvement and adaptation:

- ▶ **Leadership commitment** must extend beyond verbal support.
  - Senior executives should regularly engage with EX initiatives.
  - Leaders must visibly model desired behaviors.
  - EX metrics should be incorporated into executive dashboards alongside financial and risk indicators.
  - Executive compensation should include EX-related performance factors.
- ▶ **Continuous learning** mechanisms ensure ongoing improvement.
  - Regular assessment of program effectiveness using multiple data sources.
  - Best practice sharing across branches, departments, and business units.
  - Adaptation to changing needs through flexible program design.
  - External benchmarking against industry leaders and cross-industry innovators.
- ▶ **Employee involvement** creates relevance and ownership.
  - Ambassador programs engaging employees at all levels.
  - Multiple feedback channels tailored to different employee preferences.
  - Co-creation opportunities in program design and implementation.
  - Recognition systems that reinforce positive contributions to EX.
- ▶ **Technology evolution** supports changing EX needs.
  - Regular platform assessment ensuring alignment with requirements.
  - Integration optimization across multiple systems and tools.
  - User experience improvement based on feedback and usage patterns.
  - Mobile-first design principles for maximum accessibility.

Financial institutions should establish clear ownership for employee experience at both executive and operational levels, with dedicated resources appropriate to organizational size and complexity.

# Recommendations

Financial services organizations must take a systematic, phased approach to improving employee experience. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for success:

## Short-Term Actions, 0-6 Months

- ▶ Conduct comprehensive EX assessment across all employee segments.
- ▶ Implement continuous feedback mechanisms tailored to different employee groups.
- ▶ Establish cross-functional EX governance team with representation from business units and control functions.
- ▶ Develop baseline metrics connecting employee experience to business outcomes.
- ▶ Train managers on basic EX principles and their role in shaping daily work experiences.

## Medium-Term Initiatives, 6-12 months

- ▶ Implement integrated EX data environment connecting HR information and performance metrics.
- ▶ Deploy AI-driven analytics to identify experience patterns and predict potential issues.
- ▶ Redesign high-impact work processes based on employee feedback.
- ▶ Develop career frameworks providing visibility to growth opportunities.
- ▶ Enhance recognition programs acknowledging contributions aligned with values.
- ▶ Create EX-focused communities of practice across business units.

## Long-Term Strategies, 12+ months

- ▶ Implement personalized employee journeys tailored to individual preferences and roles.
- ▶ Develop predictive analytics capabilities enabling proactive experience optimization.
- ▶ Create advanced measurement systems demonstrating ROI of EX investments.
- ▶ Establish innovation programs focused on employee experience enhancement.
- ▶ Build external reputation as an employer of choice in financial services.

Throughout implementation, maintain balanced focus across different employee segments, ensuring both front-line staff and specialized functions receive appropriate attention. Connect initiatives explicitly to organizational purpose, helping employees find meaning beyond transaction processing.

## Conclusion

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The journey to excellence in employee experience requires unwavering commitment and systematic execution from financial services organizations. Success requires patience, persistence and willingness to evolve approaches based on evidence. Financial institutions must balance enterprise-wide consistency with the reality of diverse business models. They must maintain necessary controls while creating environments that foster engagement and innovation. They must connect individual experiences to organizational purpose while acknowledging personal motivations that drive satisfaction.

Organizations that make this commitment while following a structured framework will thrive in an increasingly competitive talent marketplace. They will create environments where employees deliver exceptional client service, manage risks effectively, and drive innovation. They will build sustainable competitive advantage through people—the most critical asset in financial services.

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**Herman JvR** ([herman.jvr@brandonhall.com](mailto:herman.jvr@brandonhall.com)) designed this report. Herman is a digital media specialist who has 11 years of working experience in the film and marketing industry. He specializes in digital media content creation. As a graphic designer at Brandon Hall Group™, he handles all design and video related tasks.

# About Brandon Hall Group™

With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 30 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group™ is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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