

7 Questions with Bright Horse

Do you want to learn more about Experience and Experience Management from the experts? In these monthly volumes we will be speaking with exciting people who want to share their journey to XLAs . We will learn about their personal journey to experience management, the real-time business insights and advantages of measuring experience and hints and tips about how to succeed in this revolutionary movement. So, sit back and enjoy !

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April's Guest:

Paul Wilkinson

Paul has been actively involved in ITSM for more than 40 years in a variety of roles from operations, to development to IT management. He was also actively involved in the development of ITIL Practitioner which introduced the Guiding principles to align ITIL to a more Agile way of working. Paul was Business Development Director of GamingWorks, the company that develops business simulation games such as the internationally renowned 'Apollo 13 - an ITSM case experience'. He was also co-author and developer of the 'ABC of ICT' (The Attitude, Behavior and Culture of ICT) publications, having conducted ABC workshops and simulation workshops with delegates representing more than 5000 organizations world-wide. Paul is now retired and labels himself as the 'Pointy-Fingered-Grumpy-Old-Man-In-IT' and Chief architect of 'The Shiny New Thing that Really Helps'. He is now doing one last tour of ITSM events to share some insights and tips for the future. Helping us learn to avoid his painful mistakes from the past.

Let's talk!

Tell us about your journey to implementing improved Experience Management and XLAs. How? When? Why?

I have conducted business simulation workshops around the World in which I play sometimes the CEO and/or end-users of IT services. It never fails to amaze me that teams across the globe rarely connect with the 'business' or the 'users' in the simulation to understand their needs and how they experience IT. Delegates usually recognize that this represents reality. Often IT organizations hide behind meaningless SLAs, meaningless in the sense that they are not aligned with users' needs. You often hear the term watermelon SLA's green on the outside and red in the middle.

In a workshop with one IT organization, we suggested they invite end users. They did. Sixty end users of a Belgian council including the Mayor were invited to an ABC (Attitude, Behavior, Culture) workshop to explore how the users experienced IT services and IT people. The users complained that the incident priority mechanism was NOT aligned to their needs, needs which change at various times in the year, such as IT outages being poorly resolved when deadlines must be met for tending for government subsidies, or there are long queues at the council swimming pool because the ticket system is out, IT explaining 'single user, the single app', they will look at it tomorrow!. Nobody in IT had sat down and designed the 'ITIL' processes to align with the needs and experiences of the council users and their citizen clients. This simple workshop of 'engaging' with stakeholders resulted in users! Yes, users! Being invited into incident and change process design teams.

In your opinion what has caused organizations to focus on Experience Management?

There are two reasons for this. One is that Experience management is the latest shiny New Thing. Everybody wants to leap onto the bandwagon. Many have no concept of what it really means but want to offer 'Experience Management' solutions and throw buzzwords like 'user journeys' into their glossy brochures. Meaningless Service Level Agreements and the changing role and power of consumers in an online world are also key triggers. Consumers are quick to shift loyalties and take their business elsewhere if they get a poor experience.

How has the implementation of Experience Management improved your business?

My wife found a new online store. Here she gets offered discounts for being a loyal customer, she receives an email about upcoming updates, and at the end of building an album, she sometimes receives a pop-up asking for feedback on the experience. One time when she complained about the quality of a few of the printed pages she received a free voucher for printing photos. Needless to say, she is enthusiastic about this and tells people if it comes up in conversation, she is a 'promoter' of this brand, often adding 'but the company I used to use - brand X' was so bad that they....' The poor experience adding to the previous brand stores 'NDS' - my wife's 'Net Demoter Score'.

In terms of how this affects my own business. GamingWorks designs, builds, and deploys business simulation games - forms of experiential learning, or learning by doing. Before we offer a simulation we sit down with the sponsor and explore 'what do you want people to learn and experience in this training', the interventions in the simulation are then designed to test, validate and explore these experiences. When designing new simulations we invite end users to help design, capturing early experiences and feedback and using these to improve game design. At the end of a game, we capture 'what did you experience and apply today in this simulation, that you need to take away and apply in your organization. Making this approach to experiential learning also a continual improvement workshop, helping teams accelerate their growth and performance.

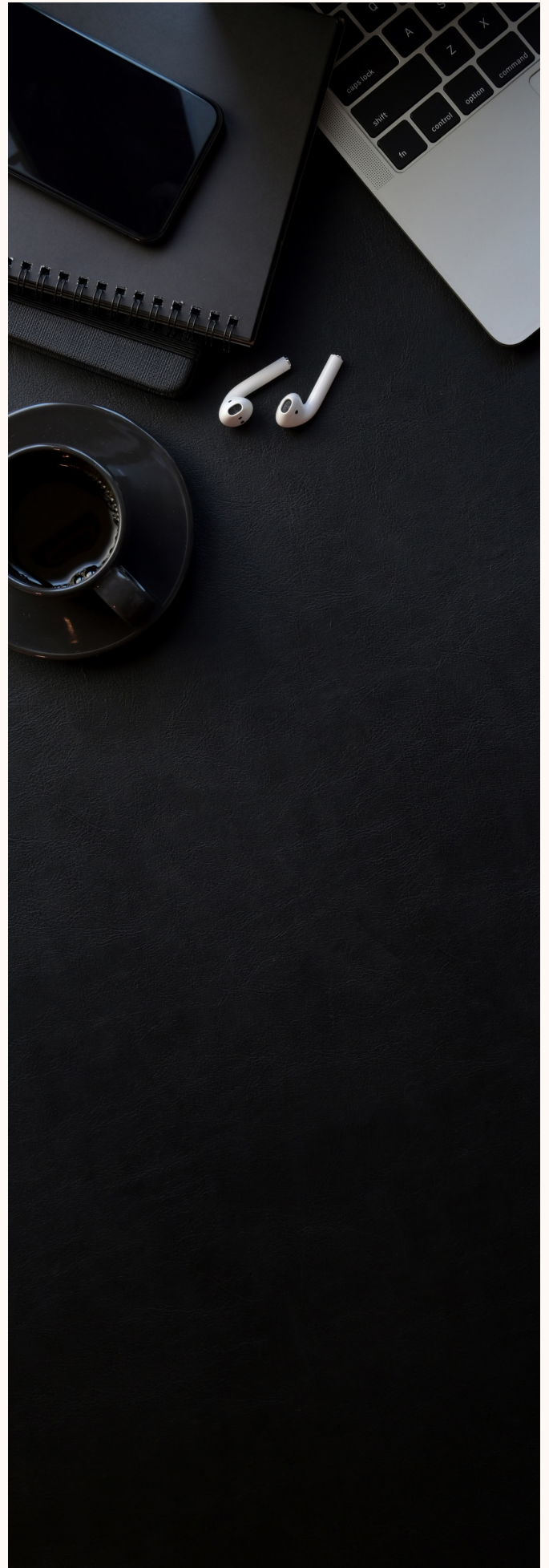


How would you define Experience/Digital Experience Management?

When I order a product online, it isn't just the ease of the search and ordering of products that is part of my experience. (A 'Please rate your experience' pop-up box appears as I place my order). It is also how quickly they deliver, whether they deliver as and when they say, or whether I stay at home all morning waiting for a promised delivery that doesn't come. I then find they tried delivering in the afternoon, I wasn't there so I will need to go to the post-office to pick it up! (Where is the pop-up experience feedback box when you need it!). Also if there is something wrong with the product, it is about how easy is it to find out the return policy and repayment, which is often so well hidden you need to phone up to ask questions in order to find it, but finding the phone number is another treasure hunt, and when you do find the number – for which you will pay an additional fee on top of your telephone providers fee - you get a recorded message saying that 'all of our call staff are busy at the moment please call back later!', with some poor quality tinned hissing music being pumped out. When you do finally get to talk to somebody to complain about the delivery you are told that that is an outsourced delivery company and you will have to contact them (not my problem), 'have a nice day Mr. Wilkinson, your service means a lot to us' and by the way would you rate this call please and be aware anything less than an 8 will result in further investigation and possible consequences. I can feel the stress rising from simply typing this. The stress caused by these 'experiences'.

However on the positive experience side. Here is an example related to a hotel chain. I stayed at one of their hotels in Brussels, Belgium, and ordered a strong dark, Belgian beer from room service. At check-out time when asked 'How was your stay Mr. Wilkinson' I said the beer was delicious, just what I needed after a long journey and canceled flight. Nine months later I stayed at the same hotel chain, this time in the USA. When I entered my room there on the coffee table was the same complimentary bottle of Belgian beer. With a note 'Hello Mr. Wilkinson we are delighted you are staying with us again, here is a complimentary beer for you after your long journey. Not only had they used the information systems to capture my experiences but these were used globally. Talk about the user journey! My experience 'feedback' journeyed from Belgium to the USA, and was used to trigger behaviors.

Here is an example of how the same experience can be perceived differently. I have a platinum level card from an airline company. Whenever I travel one of the cabin crew comes up to me in my seat and asks 'hello, Mr. Wilkinson how are you? Welcome aboard again' and sometimes even ask if I want a drink – in the economy – before cabin service has begun. I feel special and have a positive experience. If I am traveling with my wife, sitting next to me, my wife is totally ignored. Needless to say, she has a poor experience and an angry reaction. The airline doesn't check to see if I am traveling with anybody and doesn't use this to extend the courtesy.



What advice would you give companies who are starting out on their Experience Management Journey?

Go and sit down with the users or consumers of your products and services, and talk to them about their experiences. What do they like or value about your offering? What would they like to see improved? Watch them and see HOW they use your product and service. Make sure there is a simple, accessible feedback route so that users or consumers can provide you with feedback. But, more importantly, demonstrate that feedback is acted upon.

Share with us a time in your life where experience affected your decision

Each year my wife produces one or more family photo albums online, using software from a brand store. The albums are then printed in a glossy book form. She has become a wizard at layouts, backgrounds, cropping, rotating, and overlaying. Until that is, the Product Owner and development team thought it cool to roll out new features every couple of weeks – 'hey we are agile, we can deploy at will, multiple times a day! Eat that!' The development team proceeded to eagerly remove functionality and made what was an intuitive system into an escape-room type puzzle of searching for clues to find hidden functionality. There were no announcements of changes when my wife logged in, they came as a complete, unexpected, and unwanted surprise.

My wife was so frustrated and angry that she stopped using the software and at family gatherings with friends, she would complain and suggest to her friends they NOT use this software. Which 4 of them promptly did. They stopped using the software and indeed refused to print their photos in this store. The product owner, development team, and those responsible for customer services are blissfully unaware, or even caring it would seem, about user experiences.

And finally, what is something that recently made you smile?

This made me smile. It also made me think of a common term being thrown around. The 'co-Creation' of value. The client and the provider both have a role to play in the experience and the value realization. I have seen some atrocious behaviors of clients treating staff serving them as 'slaves'. People to be shouted at! People providing services also have a right to experience respect. Often poor client experiences can trigger anger and frustration. Experience management is also about how both parties deal with these moments of truth.

