

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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September's Guest: Daniel Breston

Daniel has spent many a year in IT, performing and managing a dizzying number of roles from technician and trainer to CIO. After an eye-opening experience in leadership, Daniel came face to face with the importance and impact of realising what people need from leaders, not just what's on a project list.

From there, he became a great advocate for experience management and has since worked as everything from consultant and coach to speaker and blogger. Daniel is now retired, but in his words, this means he has just 'stopped working the way I used, to start working the way I want'.

Daniel continues to support the technology industry via his posts on mental health called [#forafriend](#).

Let's talk!

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

I have spent fifty years in IT, performing or managing every role; trainer, consultant, and CIO. Along the way, I made (many) mistakes:

- I told people what to do
- I solved problems (Batman complex)
- I did not listen to my customers
- I did not know what was genuinely occurring (over-reliance on email, reports and meetings)

My career began 18 years before ITIL, 28 years before Agile, and a few more before DevOps. Our "best" technology practices came from mainframe manuals. Our leadership practices came from Schools of Business. I did what was expected (hey, I wanted a bonus). I was a brilliant technician and a poor leader. I was also guilty of technology attraction. I had a great team which I unfortunately micro-managed. We worked on the list of projects or issues. Customers were someone else's concern, as, after all, we were IT. No one wanted us with a customer. We also did not consider the rest of the organisation our customers. This was my style for the first 20 years.

One day my team took away my access privileges and left me with only email. They challenged me to be their LEADER. Eye-opening! Hey, why are you doing this? Well, because those were your instructions! Why do people hate us? We only do things on the project list, not what they need from us.

Experience Management is the practice of understanding how a stream of work occurs, the impact on people (doing it and receiving it) and constantly increasing the capability of the outcomes by improving the proficiency of the work, tools, and most importantly, the people involved. It's a daily Experience, not a programme or project. You must go thru the cycle of suffering, realising, trying and improving. You need to be able to reflect and accept that the experience offered is not the one desired, so let's work together to make it better. After another thirty years, I am still experimenting with how what I do delivers an experience and how to judge whether it was good, bad or great. You never mature in Experience Management. We are in a VUCA world, and you must constantly adopt and adapt. That in itself is an experience because what happens to you is what is then reflected upon others.

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

When I began my IT journey, my bank focused on customer experience, which unfortunately was not reflected by IT. My CEO was very good at understanding customers and what the bank needed to do to serve them. The rest of the organisation kept that focus as technology began to change rapidly, but IT was driven by the next shiny thing, not by customer or staff desires (read [Paul Wilkinson](#)). We looked at the magic. We were proud that we were ITIL, COBIT, Agile (all 42 flavours), DevOps, lean, and others. We created SLAs that had only one signature. We had issues impacting thousands of customers and staff and said hey, we were back up within SLA!! We missed the fact that no one congratulated us on our certificates or our SLA performance.

9/11, the 2008 financial crisis, London bombings, politics and other events gave IT a chance to be heroes, but we also came face-to-face with the reality of how people experience what we deliver. Staff (our PRIMARY customers) wanted more manageable ways to work. Customers wanted service, and if we had issues, they wanted us to be honest. Leadership wanted IT to help keep the business in business while trimming our budget. Do you count three or four different experiences from what I just mentioned?

IT had to learn how to create experiences that people wanted, and we also had to learn to create experiences and ways of working that benefited us mentally and physically. Those organisations that worked with technology as a team progressed while those that did not become front-page news.

Every time you see a company going out of business, not the little ones, the big ones, reflect on what probably happened and if this could occur to you. Would they still be viable if they had created experiences appreciated by staff and customers? Organisations must ask these questions daily. IT must help acquire the data that answers the questions and aligns the tactics and strategy required to remain in business, keep staff and attract customers. Your data must reflect the point of view of staff and customers. No one cares if you solved an incident in 2 minutes. They just want to know what you learned from their experience to make the next issue more acceptable.



How has the implementation of Experience Management improved your business?

As a consultant, coach, CIO, blogger or speaker, I had to learn how to ask and answer these questions from the perspective of others:

- What is happening today?
- What is the opportunity of tomorrow?
- What can we do to fulfil that opportunity?
- How will I know that staff, valued service partners and customers want what we create?
- How will I learn and observe the impact on my team and myself to adopt and adapt accordingly?

Sherlock Holmes told Watson: *You see, but you do not observe.* IT had to observe the impact on technology across the workstream (value streams). IT had to observe every point along that stream, not just the outcome. Consider news stories on sewage leakage. All we hear about is the output, not the why. IT now has the means to help organisations look at the why, how and what of outcomes (not just results) to ensure that experiences are at least good. Value Stream Mapping and Management is a great leadership technique in this regard. If you can map creation to experience with a focus on the customer, you can help your business stay in business.

Experience Management forces an organisation to consider staff as well as customers. Ongoing management of experiences along the value stream should slow down the #GreatResignation or the #QuietQuitting because staff are involved in generating good. Experience Management also helps customers consider their relationship with you. They do not expect perfection, and sometimes saying no or we don't know is an honest response that they love!

Experience Management; reflecting and asking, and facing up to what is really happening is how you will remain as a business, well-regarded public service or even a freelance consultant-blogger-speaker.

How would you define Experience/Digital Experience Management?

These terms are nonsense. I have taught or used practices from ITIL, ITSM, DevOps, Scrum, Agile, LeanIT and others. From a business, staff, or customer viewpoint, they don't give a toss about your framework. Digital is half the job done because Digital is simply technology over a network. Saying you are digital is not a big deal! Digital or framework certificates do not help you answer the So What question.

Experience Management embodies the SO WHAT question! We did this, So What? I constantly observe that the answer is from the view of the organisation. You need the view from staff and customers to fully understand the experience (impact, benefit or issue) of what you have created and delivered.

Think about this: several developers went to a ski lodge for three days to compare how they could create software that mattered. Their outcome was 16 statements, better known as Agile. The world seems to want to introduce what these developers created into every aspect of their organisation. Do you think that saying you are Agile addresses the So What question?

I think XLAs that do not DAILY help an organisation to answer the So What questions are meaningless. The UK has a new Prime Minister who will change the tax rules or how companies will pay for energy services or have to react to be deemed a good company. Is your XLA that flexible and agile? Does it help you answer So What?

Experience Management is the ability to answer So What daily at every level in your business. It is the capability of monitoring strategy to tactics and adjusting as needed. Hey, we are about to hit an iceberg. So What? If only they had answered that question differently! No matter their size or occupation, organisations must allow technology to help them be more effective and efficient. That is all tech does; the rest is up to leaders and staff to help manage experiences that matter.



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

You started your Experience Management Journey when you began to think about opening your business every day since. If you have not considered people's experiences, how else would you define what you will do? How will you respond to events? How will you know you are performing good, bad or great?

Isn't that management of experiences with the So What aspect?

Pretend you are a sailor plotting a course. You want a smooth ride with few issues or course corrections, but you also need to be able to adjust if an obstacle or unavoidable event challenges your journey.

You are never alone in your business journey. Everyone relies upon someone, and you must consider how you will manage staff and partners to help you on your journey. Every organisation, even freelance, has an incident management process. Do you look at it daily and reflect on what you could have done differently to achieve a different outcome? Do you ask if we had responded this way or deployed that feature like this, would they have received a better experience? A better So What! Learning from staff and customers underpins Experience Management.

Never introduce Experience Management as a programme. Organisations that create EM programmes are a heartbeat away from going out of business. They have missed the point of why they are an organisation and how to manage themselves. It is like a patient who has been told what they must do to stay alive and wants to change their lifestyle at the last minute. In many cases, it is too late! Instead, look at your value streams from the view of staff and customers, adding an experience metric to each activity to enhance your capability and sustainability.

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

My dog Fidget understands Experience Management. If you appreciate my response, you are also on the journey to observe and manage the experiences you receive and deliver. And you know why I smile!

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

My first CEO walked the bank asking everyone: will you be able to help a customer or a bank member tomorrow? If not, why not? What do you need? My CEO understood Experience Management. It is a shame that as we acquired technology, the goal of IT was to be the best in that technology instead of being the best enabler for our bank.

Another story: the most incredible technological event of the 20th century was sending man to the moon and returning them to Earth. There is a fable that President Kennedy, on a visit to Cape Canaveral, met a janitor and asked him his role. The janitor, holding a broom, gave this brilliant response: Sir! I keep this place clean. Because it is clean, nothing here will hurt the chances of those boys returning safely. The janitor understood Experience Management and his place in it.

When my team changed my role to be a leader, I understood that the experience I had been providing was not the experience they wanted. It may have been what I wanted, but So What? I altered my perspective and now try to consider the impact of what I do daily. I gave them a certificate (So what). I helped them map their process (So What). I gave a speech or wrote a blog (So What).

Looking at it this way means I can ask: how can I improve? If you look at my answers on social media, I usually seek guidance on how to improve. If I improve, I can better do So What. Fifty years in IT and experiences impacted my journey, not technology.

