

# 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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## October's Guest: Barclay Rae

A lead architect of the ITIL4 team and former director of itSMF in the UK, Barclay Rae has experience of over 500 service improvement projects across large companies, universities and governing bodies, with extensive experience of incorporating user feedback, good and bad, into service improvement.

Barclay runs his own independent service management consultancy, offering 'Off the shelf' workshops and bespoke services. You can learn more about Barclay Rae's management consultancy services at [barclayrae.com/](http://barclayrae.com/)

# Let's talk!

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

When I was a Service Desk Manager I would go out and talk to our users and bring back their thoughts and comments (warts and all) to the IT department. I can still see the tech team managers rolling their eyes at management meetings when I'd bring up these points - thankfully I was generally listened to by the senior leadership.

When I became a consultant (in 1994, yes...), it was entirely natural for me to go and talk to my client's users - sometimes this took some bargaining and 'discussions' to actually happen, but it was effective. Often, I would be presented by the IT teams with lots of process documents and workflow diagrams which they were wanting to show off, having spent time working on themselves.

However I'd always bring back the user/customer direct feedback into my report, and it usually had a powerful effect - I still do this 25 years on. On many occasions it has been necessary but painful to report back 'atrocious, awful, shocking, tone-deaf, don't understand the business' etc to my clients, although it's usually a constructive wake-up call.

So, capturing experience feedback as a driver for improvement has always made sense to me. It's also a key element in e.g. the SDI global standard, which I've been involved in as a contributor and auditor. Both user and employee feedback and experience management have been core elements in this from day 1 as part of the EFQM approach. I'm also proud to have brought these elements into the ITIL 4 Create, Deliver and Support book as lead editor.

For me the approach to and execution of SLAs has mainly been flawed and misunderstood. There has been too much reliance on fixing failure, assuming the any user is interested in that, as well as the expectation that achieving these SLAs as green\* metrics means that we are doing a great job - it simply doesn't. How could it be if we are only mearing what we in IT think is important and not paying attention to the actual experience of the users of the service?

(I've written extensively on this via 'Watermelon SLAs' etc - <https://www.barclayrae.com/watertight-not-watermelon-slus/>)

There is also the question of context - SLAs and 'best practice' are fine in a known and predictable environments, but can be completely inappropriate in new or complex or chaotic situations. (see Cynefin). The real test for me of good service management people is how they are able to react in difficult and non-standard situations. Old IT SLAs generally do not account for that.

To be clear, the basic premise of service level management is good and should be followed where possible - good SLAs can include experience management data too.

This last point is where I have been, when working with clients over the last 10-15 years or so - building up a bundle of different types of measures and data, including business outcomes and experience data, to provide a balanced view of the whole service and experience, not just some bits of it.

I'm delighted that the industry has really now embraced the 'experience management' mantra. There are now many tools and models on the market to help to deliver and drive this as a key business enabler, not just paying lip service to identifying 'CSAT'. There are useful and innovative tools around for technical measurement as well as capturing emotion and experience - from 1e and Nextthink to Happy Signals and Customer Thermometer and many more...



These tools and the increasing awareness and use of experience management is driving our industry much more towards real innovation and alignment for the future – our focus can be more on positive integration, interaction and support, and not just on arms-length ‘contractual’ delivery.

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

There are a number of drivers for this. We’ve heard of ‘outside-in’ and customer journeys for many years in other area of business and service management – it was e.g. a key element in the USMBok approach. We saw the ‘experience’ term coming into use more around 2014/15 in our industry, generally relating to user/customer experience.

As I’ve mentioned there have been pockets of use of experience management (XM) in use for many years across the industry, however this has come together more with the introduction of XM tools and more best practice focus. ITIL 4 includes a whole book and course now on ‘driving stakeholder value’ which covers engagement, experience management and customer journey mapping.

Also, the focus on ‘co-creation of value’ – which is present in ITIL 4 and several models for ITSM and DevOps – has also highlighted the importance of the need to measure usage, impact and outcome of services, not simply technical delivery – to identify **value**...

In addition, the focus on people, employee well-being and the experience of working for an organisation has also moved the dial significantly towards XM. This has focussed on the value of creating positive experience for users and also for people working in an organisation.

### **How has the implementation of Experience Management improved your business?**

I have always had a strong focus on good SLM, service definition and experience management, and am always busy with that. The interesting point for me more recently is the interest and uplift in some more core and supporting functions – like problem, catalogue, portfolio, CMDB and knowledge management. All of these are vital to improve end-to-end management and service delivery. It’s also essential to get these basic functions working well before automating, outsourcing and migrating ITSM functions.

### **How would you define Experience/Digital Experience Management?**

In the past we built stuff and that was felt to be enough – users would come and use it, mostly because that’s all they could do or choose.

Experience Management is now about re-thinking our whole approach to work and service delivery – not just creating good or great experiences (although that’s a good start) but also being able to understand in real and detailed terms what our users and colleagues are doing and need to do.

XM ultimately should be there to predict and pre-empt the need for ‘support’, ‘break-fix’ or even ‘requests’, as we already understand that is needed and what will work, and have put these things in place. IT will have fixed or ordered or suggested solutions before anyone realises they have an issue or a need...

Well, that’s the theory, for most organisations it’s still mostly about getting good realistic feedback and using that to improve and deliver against proper expectations. For me the XLA concept is still evolving – I think we can deliver good value by producing good data and analysis, although getting up-front agreement on these is still challenging for most relationships – whether for internal IT, or between companies and managed services providers.

I’m looking forward to seeing this develop and mature across the industry, aided by some good early adopter stories, as well as various solutions and services providers.



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

- Be curious. Listen. Listen to your customers (don't just go and talk 'to' them)
- Find out what they think and feel and need, and work to that, before anything else
- Also listen to your own people and think about how you can support them to be successful in their work
- Measure your ability to deliver all of the above activities

Keep doing all of this.

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

I recently bought a car entirely online. I had had enough of going to showrooms and being bothered by salespeople. Every time I've been to a showroom the process is on their terms, not mine - I have to sit down with them and in my time and they then get paperwork out and I must wait for them to see if they can help me etc. Also, you are not really in control of searching and looking at options...

Yes, I took a chance on the car but there was enough safety built into the transaction that I could have existed without loss. I don't know much about cars so going and looking at a car wouldn't really help me in my decision making.

I was able to select and choose the best option based on an entirely data driven approach (and yes, I had looked at the kind of car I wanted in a showroom previously).

The online experience was really excellent - focussed and clearly well thought through. And then finally when there was a human interaction - i.e. the person who actually delivered the car to me - that was positive, engaging and helpful. Also, the car is great...

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

I've been at a few events that have been about 'digital transformation', where the process of signing up and taking part have been wholly manual - and made the point entirely and ironically of the need for transformation...

