WHAT IS...?

Employee Experience & XLAs

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In an ongoing poll, only 1.8% of respondents said they were happy with their Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Additionally, 94.5% responded their SLAs are internally focused and are not about the customer, the employee or the experience.

What is Employee Experience? And what are XLAs?

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Carl William Buehner

The realization and acceptance of this simple yet profound notion is more important to business success than we have ever faced. The business focus is necessarily moving from process to experience, outputs to outcomes, producer to consumer. A challenge remains in that there are many viewpoints and aspects of what is most important to know in this new world of experience.

Adding to that, organizations are exploring possibilities outside of their traditional boundaries whether this is an ecosystem, a coalition or a trading arrangement.

Businesses must include experience insights, design, delivery, and management or they will not thrive at best or will fail to the competition at worst.

We all know that you must measure to know, so we need a way to collect appropriate and meaningful data that accurately characterizes the many opinions, views and realities of a consumer or employee's experience.

Experience level agreements (XLAs) are the mechanism to do just that.

Our introductory course, **Essence of Experience**, explores the fundamental concepts considered a sound basis for transforming an operation or product or service to embrace and enable consumer and employee experience.

Continue reading to learn more....

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Essence of Experience provides an introduction to what experience is and why it matters. From that understanding, we learn about the Art & Science of Experience and how to apply both using the Experience Optimization Framework™ to create XLAs. We then compare and contrast XLAs with the more traditional key performance indicator (KPI)/service level agreement (SLA) approach, and show how they work together.

Why now?

Expectations of positive experiences continue to rise and simple customer satisfaction acceptance or rejection of a single business or product transaction no longer suffices. For years, we in service management have held out "people, process and technology" as the driving framework shaping all we do without serious focus on the consumer or employees using our products and services. In reality, the priorities have actually been process and technology. The people part has been about them as resources to get something done.

In the Industrial Age, people were seen as a resource, thus a cost to be cut and substituted for with capital. Whether it was the cotton gin or steam engine, people were a means to an end easily substituted. In the Information Age, we are now seeing real-world applications of robots and artificial intelligence (AI). Some fear the rise in these technologies will make employee happiness an interesting aside.

> *"Individuals are exercising their power at a level not witnessed before. Whether they are consumers or colleagues, every interaction with you is a chance for them to vote with their wallet or their feet. That vote is primarily emotional. They can choose to invest in you, tolerate you, or walk away."*
>
> Alan Nance, Digital Employee Experience Pioneer

Forward thinking organizations understand that people are the reason why a products or services exist, rather than people being the means to produce and deliver them. This notion puts a whole new and sorely needed perspective on the role of people, processes and technology. Essence of Experience provides the insights to turn the recognition that an experience problem and need exists, into what to do about it.

Why does this matter?

- Experience shapes people's opinions, decisions and actions
- Experience is cumulative
- Perception really IS reality
- Experience has consequences
- Every delivery action, no matter how small or buried in the organization, affects experience
- Experience is about outcomes, not steps in a process
- There is no choice or option to stay with the status quo if business is to survive and thrive

Experience Key Concepts

- **Experience** is a cumulative set of "moments over time" that form lasting feelings, happiness, frustration, opinions, decisions, actions, etc. **Moments over time** are a collection of interactions or transactions.

> Experience is how a customer feels or their opinion at a given time - but more importantly - over time.

- Moments over time cumulatively add up to shaping the customer experience such as a customer cannot do their job because something is not working. In that moment over time, there are many transactions like calling the service desk, actual issue determination, repair attempts, restore attempts, notification that the issue is resolved. Most of those transactions have no direct impact on customers but their experience will be a result of the moment over time that starts when they can't do their job and ends when they can.
- Experience is not about the time a person calls an IT service desk about some technical issue keeping them from doing their job; their experience is that call, plus all the ones that came before, plus the reliability of their equipment, plus the frustration with the usability of their business applications, plus the hassle they get from the IT bureaucracy plus, well, on and on.
- The **Art & Science of Experience** involves coupling the disciplines of analytical thought with emotional insights to gain actionable facts from feelings. The Art & Science of Experience includes methods to apply precision and discipline to inherently non-precise, non-disciplined experience sentiment data, by answering:
    ◦ What is the experience now?
    ◦ What do we want it to be?
    ◦ How do we measure it?
    ◦ So what? (Are the findings meaningful?)
    ◦ What now? (Should we do something with the meaningful findings?)
- A **service level agreement (SLA)** is contractual agreement between a service provider and a customer that identifies technical services required and the expected performance expectations of those services in the form of key performance indicators (KPIs). SLAs define: what to do and how well to do it. XLAs define: how did we do?
- An **experience level agreement (XLA)** represents a commitment to creating a defined experience, supported by empirical data points used to design, deliver and improve human-centric products and services. XLAs include both hard or quantitative data measures as well as soft or subjective data measures. The XLA experience data is collected through means such as surveys and interviews as well as physical instrumentation of hardware and software components. Since experience is made up of moments over time, it is vital that we define the factors (i.e., empirical data points) that make up the overall experience and measure each of those factors. These factors are referred to as experience indicators (XIs).
- **Experience indicators (XIs)** are the sub-questions that collectively answer the overarching XLA question asked about whether we are achieving the desired experience?

What is an XLA?

Experience Matters Now More Than Ever

The traditional model of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has evolved. Successful organizations are building on prior engagements and focusing on Experience Level Agreements or XLAs to improve outcomes.
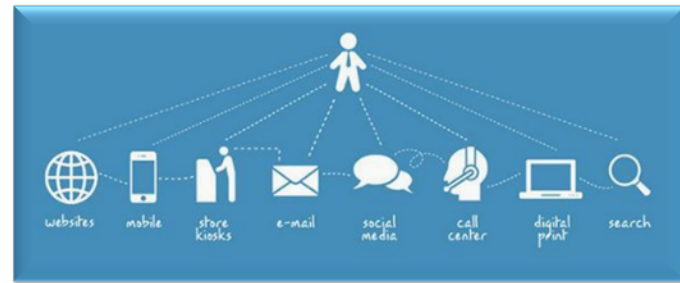
Measure Use + Measure Things = XLA

Cumulative Moments Over Time

The XLA enables organizations to deliver an experience that changes and evolves over time. XLAs are dynamic. Unlike SLAs, experience level agreements use XIs (Experience Indicators) to measure reactions to outcomes rather than steps in a process. By doing so, businesses are able to understand which experience matters and make significant improvements to their process.

What does good look like in the XLA environment?

- A good experience is always what the business consumer values, seldom what we think it is or should be.
- An experience level agreement (XLA) is so much more than a survey. It is a fit for purpose design.
- A meaningful experience is not a transaction, but a cumulative dynamic sentiment established over time.
- The traditional practice of building standard capabilities to manage a service, give way to an experience architecture catering to people as they adopt different personas and perform different roles.
- Experience isn't about the psychology of the individual but how you make people feel at scale in a way that matters to your business.

An evolutionary approach: Play to strengths

XLAs do NOT replace SLAs

SLAs remain a prerequisite for XLAs, we just do not need as many KPIs or all the technical reporting.
We need to combine sentiment data from XLAs with operation.

The Experience Optimization Framework™

The Experience Collab's Experience Optimization Framework™ can be applied for employee, customer and/or brand experience. The framework presents a practical and proven approach to experience management. It outlines methods to **Evangalize**, mobilize and strategize your experience ambitions **(Explore, Envision)**, create your XLAs and put those XLAs into your business operation **(Enable, Execute)**, and to manage the experience delivered **(Embrace)**.
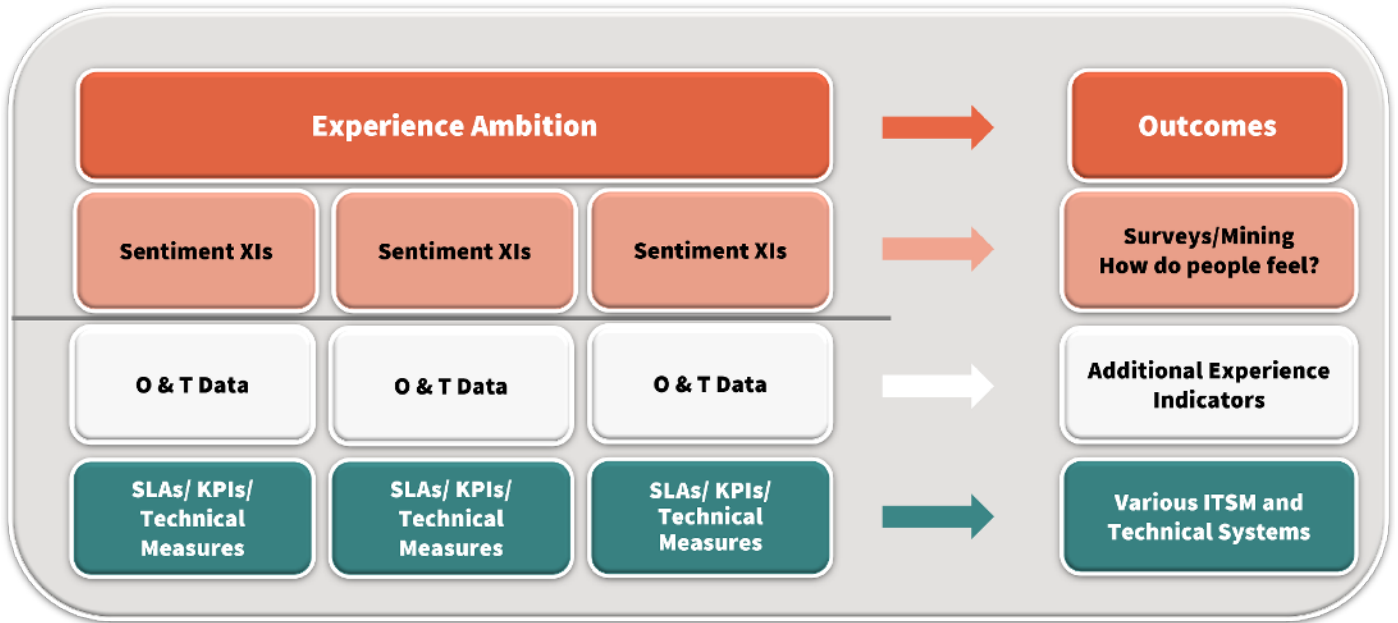

Experience Optimization Framework is a trademark of Experience Collab.

The XLA Stack
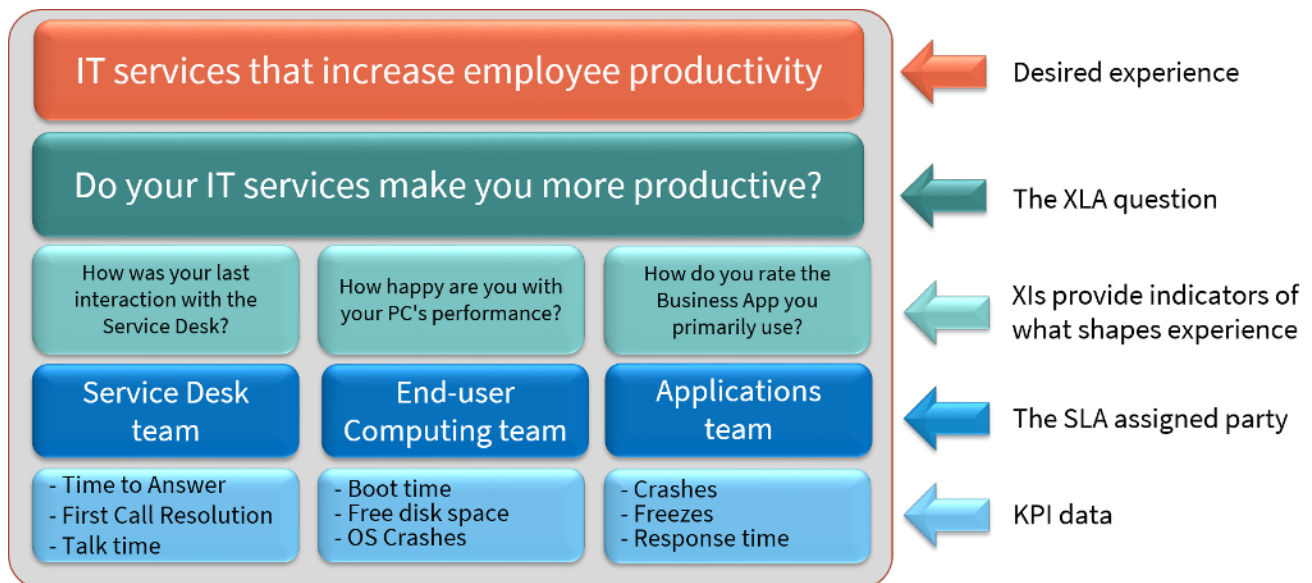

Experience Ambition			→	Outcomes
Sentiment XIs	Sentiment XIs	Sentiment XIs	→	Surveys/Mining How do people feel?
O & T Data	O & T Data	O & T Data	→	Additional Experience Indicators
SLAs/ KPIs/ Technical Measures	SLAs/ KPIs/ Technical Measures	SLAs/ KPIs/ Technical Measures	→	Various ITSM and Technical Systems

The XLA Stack - An ITSM Example

IT services that increase employee productivity			← Desired experience
Do your IT services make you more productive?			← The XLA question
How was your last interaction with the Service Desk?	How happy are you with your PC's performance?	How do you rate the Business App you primarily use?	← XIs provide indicators of what shapes experience
Service Desk team	End-user Computing team	Applications team	← The SLA assigned party
- Time to Answer - First Call Resolution - Talk time	- Boot time - Free disk space - OS Crashes	- Crashes - Freezes - Response time	← KPI data

Make a Difference!

How do you (want to) make people feel about your service or, product, or you? How can you apply what you have learned here to improve upon what you do every day? *Take action!* Contribute to your organization's customer experience strategy by expanding your knowledge of XLA concepts and by using the Art & Science of Experience to create meaningful XLAs and improved SLAs. Be a change champion!

Want to Learn More?

Training helps individuals and organizations build and maintain their capabilities. Training also provides individuals the knowledge, skills and information needed to fill their role in the organization or achieve their career goals, along with a place to test and develop the confidence to use these skills in the workplace.

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ITSM Academy

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...educate and inspire is not just our corporate slogan, it speaks to our core mission and goal.

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The Story of the Academy

Today, ITSM Academy is widely recognized for its expertise in multiple IT frameworks (ITSM, ITIL, Process Engineering (CPDE), DevOps, Agile Service Management, Lean) and, more importantly, how they work together. But that's not where we started.