

# *Business901* Podcast Transcription

*Implementing Lean Marketing Systems*



## Malouf on Interaction Design

Guest was Dave Malouf

*Business901*

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## Transcription of the Podcast

**Dave:** If you go to Europe, the government is hiring designers. I mean just look at the UK and their use of the Design Council and consultancies all over the UK and Scandinavia. So they're able to build a practice around this in really powerful ways that then tell stories to corporations and how they can use it. So I think that that's been part of it. I also think that in the US we confuse customer experience with service design a lot. And so a lot of people from customer experience are just kind of the marketing side. Take the perspective of if we just talk about the parts where the customer engages the company, then that's good enough. And then from the user experience side we often have interpreted in the United States that user experience is service design. And so I think that's also been a blocker for really going and digging in deeper into the nooks and crannies of service design and what co-creation of value, which is the heart of service design, is really all about.

**Joe:** *Well I find that, because when I talk service-dominant logic from Vargo and Lusch, people just don't relate to it here in the States like they do in Europe. It's a completely different conversation that you have.*

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**Dave:** Yup, totally. What they are trying to do at SCAD is to have that European side of things.

**Joe:** *I think that's a great reason for it is the government side and government influence in Europe on that particular subject. I think that's spot on. It is so prevalent there and you see that great material has been created for private industry to use from the Europeans. I enjoy your take on service design and I appreciate it very much. Is Savannah and Cornell the only places really to get a good foot into service design? Or where else in the States would I learn more about service design?*

**Dave:** I think CMU. They don't call it service design specifically but I think they're doing interesting work in it. I also think they're doing interesting work at California College of Arts both with their Interaction Design undergraduate program and in their MFA of Design program. You know the labels aren't always the same but I think that they are really close to that spirit of what service design is about. Those are the ones that jump to mind.

**Joe Dager:** *Welcome everyone! This is Joe Dager the host of the Business901 podcast. With me today is Dave Malouf. He is currently the Manager of Product Design at Rackspace, a co-founder of Peer Loft, and founder of the Interaction Design Association. Not sure how that all fits together in an elevator speech or if you can put it all in an elevator speech Dave, but can you kind of tell me the*

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*common theme that runs through them all?*

**Dave Malouf:** Well I guess one is interaction design that I'm committed to the practice of interaction design and the advancement of it, and in the case of Peer Loft, making tools for designers to make them better designers. So that's sort of the thread that goes across all of them.

**Joe:** *Well I found it interesting because I ran across your contribution to the UX Storyteller book and in that and in the bio there, I saw that you were at the Savannah College of Art and Design and you've made a transition from professor to industry. Can you tell me about that transition a little?*

**Dave:** Sure. Lots of personal reasons for that transition but I think one of the reasons is as a professor you often don't have time to do the things that you're asking your students to do. And I kind of got jealous and wanted to go back into industry and start doing stuff again. I love teaching and I actually miss the classroom quite a bit and I wish that there were better opportunities for people to really share their experience within a classroom and still be professionals. I wish there were ways to balance that, to be deep in both. It's difficult to find the right opportunities. But I really enjoy being back out in the industry and seeing the possibilities of making a company like Rackspace top-notch. So that's why I'm here.

**Joe:** *At Savannah College of Art and Design, I want to ask you a question about that because that's one of the schools that has service design as part of the*

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*curriculum and maybe the only school that does. How does service design fit in there and relate to that area? Why was it at Savannah?*

**Dave:** Well it's really all about the industrial design department which is where service design programs are owned, for lack of a better word. There's a real commitment within that program towards holistic, researched design and it just seemed to be a real natural fit that if we're going to be designing products in the 21 century that there needs to be a service layer surrounding those products and well understood and well-articulated. Other programs that are similar to the service design program in that same department...they have one of the best design management programs that I have seen as well as one of the best sustainability programs – designing for sustainability – all three of which really tie in well together in terms of research orientation and holistic design perspectives.

**Joe:** *I have to ask you about the service design just because it's such a big part of what I do and I talk about. One of the things is there always seems to be such a strong connection between architecture, and the word may be both online and offline. Is there similar thinking that is possessed in that architecture mind for service design or is it just coincidental?*

**Dave:** I think all design has a similar thinking around it. I know there's lots of conversations in various communities that I belong to about "Is architecture different from design, or isn't it?" And it kind of gets into semantics of what the

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words mean to different people. I think that part of the problems is, or part of the connectedness, which is kind of cool, is that because of the words meaning so many different things to so many people, it kind of draws us in to conversations that we wouldn't have had otherwise. So yeah, I get to talk about architecture now as an interaction designer or a service designer because people are making that connection from their experience. For example one of the first people who I got to help found IxDA with is Greg Petroff who is leader now at GE Design and doing incredible work there. But he was a trained architect. What made him an interaction designer and then a design manager and then a design leader is what he got from architecture that quite honestly I got from anthropology. And there's so much overlap there and I think you can say the same thing about service design, or interaction design, or information architecture, or customer experience, or any other of those words. There's so much great overlap and we need to cherish the overlap a lot. I think it is part of our value.

**Joe:** *Your specialty seems to be interaction design, how did you get into that? What grabs you about that particular field?*

**Dave:** I'm a dotcom baby. Sometime around 1994 I was studying Anthropology in grad school and got bored and started making websites at a time when if you knew how to make a bold tag you started getting paid \$50 an hour. That was my entry and I used web design as this entry mainly because I was interested in digital technologies for people. I'm not a visual designer and I'm not a programmer but

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I constantly went back and forth between those two fields. And in the process sometime around 1998 discovered information architecture. And that was sort of my in into the user experience world regardless of label. The reason I honed in on interaction design is the anthropology. I'm really interested in the observation of people's behaviors, how that fits within holistic systems like cultures and societies and systems, and then figuring out applying that information, synthesizing solutions or artifacts that can then change those systems for better. That sort of was my in, my path.

**Joe:** *How did storytelling relate to that, because that's how I ran across you is in the storytelling book? How do you use user stories and maybe expand into how storytelling relates to the two?*

**Dave:** User stories are very functionally focused. They are very Hemingway-like in a way. They don't add a lot to the perspective, to the emotion around the impact of the things that we do. And so when I think of narratives and storytelling, it's really about communicating impact or expected impact. And that's not just on the RLI level, it's also on the level of the true emotional connections and emotional pieces that come together because of what we design.

**Joe:** *When you are looking at storytelling you're looking to put, as you said, more of a narrative than just kind of this explanation of data?*

**Dave:** If we look at what we're trying to achieve through building systems – I'm trying

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to use as generic terms as possible – we’re trying to create a story. We are assuming that people or types of people, personas if you will, are passing through a chapter by chapter story. And as they go through that they’re experiencing something at a visceral, cognitive, perceptive level, but also at an emotional level, an aesthetic level of understanding and they have purpose and goals that are driving them through the system. Sometimes those purpose and goals are in reaction or in dialogue with that system and thus they come through it and sometimes never leave it, because they’re embedded in it. Like do you ever really leave Facebook if you’re truly engaged in it? It’s something that as a touch point you go to and then leave. But it’s always kind of omnipresent for those people who are engaged in it. And there are similar tools like that whether that’s social tools or email, but also the tools like my timesheet. You know it’s sort of like I make decisions about what I do based on how I’m going to need to log it. It’s easier for me for example, to make sure that my activities are in longer chunks of time as opposed to shorter chunks of time which then impact how I decide “what am I going to do?” because of my timesheet software.

It’s like this system that’s created just by a single touch point that I don’t even use most of the time. But there’s a story around how that touch point impacts my total life around that system. And a user story won’t think about that. A user story will come in and say “User will add project. User will then declare time for project.” That’s not really what the user thinks about. That is how the system needs to be written from a functional perspective. But that’s not what the user is thinking. That’s not their context. That’s not their world. It’s very much from the



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developer or from the architect's perspective.

**Joe:** *I think that's great, great input. I guess one of the things when I think about interaction design and the interactivity that you're trying to create for the person, are we trying to be manipulative? What's the difference in what we're designing versus that evil word of manipulation?*

**Dave:** I don't know. Whenever someone asks this question, it's like the same thing. How do I know what porn is? I know it when I see it.

It's in the eye of the beholder on so many levels. And it's when we hit a critical mass of beholders agreeing, some line in the sand, then it exists. It really depends on what you're trying to do. Like is something like a Fitbit manipulative? Not really in so far as the person wearing it is agreeing to the goal that's being set by the system. So like a Fitbit, there's an agreement there. And I'm a couch potato – it doesn't make sense for me to wear that. But for people who have made that decision towards health and towards that lifestyle, they're agreeing to the help that the manipulation of the interaction design is aiding towards them. I think that that's a great system, not manipulative at all.

**Joe:** *When we look at our website for an example, should we look at it as kind of a story building upon itself to take people through the process? Is that how interaction design should work?*

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**Dave:** I think so. I've been travelling the world literally this last quarter and teaching a workshop to do just that. I've been looking at storytelling as a direct framework for doing interaction design, not just describing the experience, both current and future, but using that description of the future as the basis for design decisions from macro to micro.

**Joe:** *When you have these storytelling in the classes that you put on, is there like a plot to them? I mean how do you build a story for a website?*

**Dave:** I think it goes back to the fundamental question not only interaction design but a lot of systems like interaction design and service design and in information architecture are founded on which is "Why? Why are you here? Why are you creating this website? Why does somebody care about this website?" You answer that through the creation of a persona and then guiding a persona through some future experience which is a story. Stories come out of the experiences that we have, that we attain through research and just general life experience. And they're also the experience that we create. This is a created activity of generating a story that lets people know why you exist as a tool in the world, whether that's a website, or an application, or mobile, or an in-dash system. Why do you exist and why do you matter to me? Have me have empathy for your tool through the personas that you show me and whether I can resonate with them.

**Joe:** *We're seeing a lot more of visual storytelling, are you planning that into the work*

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*you're doing? Is it becoming more of a visual world?*

**Dave:** I think the video prototype for example is a really powerful tool at various stages of development, not just video as in live action, but video as in animation. Other visual tools like comics are much lower and can be done much more rapidly in lower fidelity and are great tools for telling those stories quickly, as well as for having the stories be created collaboratively.

**Joe:** *Where do see interaction design going?*

**Dave:** It's interesting. To me that's not a question of where interaction design is going, that to me is a question of what are the next solutions in the world going to be. Is it wearable? Is it augmented reality? Is it both - one lens to the other in many ways? I don't really look at the world that way especially through the lens of interaction design. I think interaction design just needs to be better at doing what we do. And by better I mean a more powerful voice which is we take direct observation of the context in which we work in and apply our new understandings based on those observations towards designing amazing solutions. Maybe that's augmented reality. Maybe that's wearable. Maybe that's holograms. I don't know. What I do know is that interaction designers are going to be at the center of making those things successful, just as much as engineers, just as much as business and marketing people are going to be required to make that happen as well. And most importantly people, the people who will be using them.

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**Joe:** *Where do you see Dave going in the future?*

**Dave:** Well I think there's a few things going on for me right now. One is just my most direct work life, figuring out how to make design a part of a technology in customer support organization like Rackspace. They're hungry for it and the question is how to make it work and make it successful and make the company successful, most importantly, because of it. There's a lot of challenges. They're in cultural change – hopefully using tools like storytelling to make that happen. So that's one big thing. And the other real love of my life is education. And through the IxDA I am helping to really kick off a true education initiative through the interaction design association. We've had two education summits as part of the Interaction Conference the last two years. That's going to continue in 2015 in San Francisco. Making that happen is the other side of the coin for me. That's where my passions are right now.

**Joe:** *One of the things that a lot of people especially designers like is the world of standards and having a standard for this. How is that interpreted let's say in interaction design and by you particularly? Should we develop and follow standards?*

**Dave:** I think we have to have not standards of solutions per se. I am a fan of patterns. I think we need to be better as interaction designers understanding the science behind what it is we do. And there's a lot of knowledge out there. Sometimes we

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not ignore it, but we're a little too complacent in our ignorance. And there's so much we know about the human mind and about people together and individually, and that information to me is our standards if you will. The easiest example is Fitts' Law. There are so many examples of that that just gets ignored or it wasn't even thought about when we do design, and that's just UI design if you will. I think we just need to be more rigorous with the tool of science as we also continue to be artists within that.

**Joe:** *Is there anything that you would like to maybe mention about interaction design that maybe I didn't ask?*

**Dave:** There's a large conversation within our community about "What is the material of interaction design?" If it is a design discipline, it must have the material. I'm sometimes dragged into conversations about "Is it code? Is it pixel? Is it behavior?" and I come back to, it's people and purpose are really the material. And that's really fuzzy and that doesn't give us a lot to manipulate with our hands the way we think of material. But it is though the water that we swim in and we just need to embrace that water a bit more instead of looking for other things like code or more tangible things that our partners can understand. It's really more like water than it is like other types of material.

**Joe:** *What is the best way for someone to learn more about interaction design and then to contact you specifically?*

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**Dave:** If you're interested in interaction design and just getting started, the two best primers I can think of – one is by Dan Saffer. It's called Designing for Interaction. And the other one is by Kim Goodwin, and it's called Designing in the Digital Age. Those are for reading purposes. If you want to join the conversation of interaction design, [ixda.org](http://ixda.org) or the LinkedIn group for IxDA are both pretty good. If you live in a city with a local group, go and see who's there and chat it up – buy somebody a beer – is the other thing to do. Those probably would be the first frontline things I would think of. In terms of getting in touch with me, I'm pretty active on Twitter. So it's [@daveixd](https://twitter.com/daveixd). And if you just want to generally see my social network – [about.me/daveixd](http://about.me/daveixd).

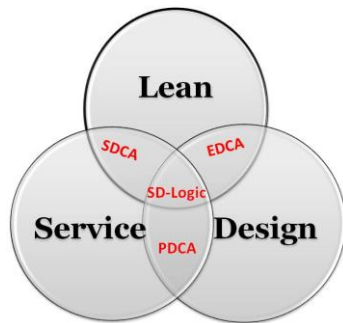
**Joe:** *I would like to thank you very much Dave for your time. This podcast will be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 blog site. So thanks Dave.*

**Dave:** Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

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Joseph T. Dager

Business901

Phone: 260-918-0438

Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: [jtdager@business901.com](mailto:jtdager@business901.com)

Website: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)

Joe Dager is president of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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