

lean marketing lab

sales and marketing learning community dedicated to the user experience.

[main](#) [media](#) [lean marketing system](#) [lean engagement team](#) [tools](#)

We are **CONNECTING!**



Live|Works On Service Design

Guest was Ben Reason

[Optimizing Customer Experiences](#)

[Copyright Business901](#)

Live|Works on Service Design

Note: This is a transcription of an interview. It has not gone through a professional editing process and may contain grammatical errors or incorrect formatting.

Transcription of Interview

Joe: *Welcome everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 Podcast. With me today is Ben Reason. Ben is the co-founder of live|work, one of the leading Service Design agencies in the UK and the author of Service Design: From Insight to Implementation, and his most recent publication Service Design for Business. Ben, I would like to welcome you, and I might have short-changed your work limiting the scope to the Service Design in the UK, but can you expand on that for me and tell me the scope of live|work and your work more?*

Ben: *Sure! Well, thanks for having me Joe. It's very nice to join you. Yes, you short-changed us geographically because we're also working in Norway, and Holland, and Brazil at the moment; with live|work studios in the different places, but we are definitely Service Design and proudly focused on that as our core offer.*

Joe: *In the name live|work, is that particularly symbolic of anything? How did you come up with the name?*

Ben: I'm very fond of talking about it as being we like to have an impact on how people live and work, so this is about people's lives and we do quite a lot of work which also has an impact on the experience of people in their jobs as well as consumers. That's what it means to me these days, but the honest story is that we also wanted to have a good live-work balance as people when we started the company. It had that meaning for us as well.

Joe: *So that slash up and down could just as well be an equal sign between the two, right?*

Ben: It could have been, yes.

Joe: *Your first book Service Design wasn't necessarily the first book, but it was done in the early stages when everybody was first talking about Service Design and what it was all about. But, just to revisit it a bit, I haven't done a podcast in Service Design awhile actually, but what makes Service Design a separate discipline?*

Ben: I think it's the design object. I think designers hadn't specifically identified service as a kind of a thing that you could design for in the way that they do with products or graphics or something specific like vehicle design. And I think there are specific qualities that services have that mean you need to approach applying design or using design to help to create and improve services. Specifically, that services are things that are experienced through time. You can't just pick them up and have a look at them. You have to experience them. And they're delivered in the kind of academic term is 'heterogeneously.' They combat you in different ways through digital, or human, or environmental channels, so Service Design

requires almost an orchestration of a number of different moving parts.

Joe: *Service Design just isn't this digital thing like UX is then?*

Ben: I think one of the reasons we started the firm, the three of us who founded live|work, had worked for what we called Web agencies at the time. We'd worked on a lot of services delivering the digital components of it, and we thought there was a bigger picture out there. We'd also seen some of our projects fail because the digital and the offline elements of the service weren't well-integrated. And I think recently, Service Design has got a lot of airtime in the digital space, but for live|work it's very much a multichannel thing, and we have worked that we've done which is being purely the human beings delivering a service and how they do their jobs.

Joe: *Your new book, Service Design for Business, I've actually been having a lot of fun with it and maybe it should be read from cover to cover, but I've just been all over it picking points out and reading it and such. Am I doing it wrong?*

Ben: No, that's really great to hear. I'm really happy because we wanted that. We almost thought of having an instruction that you could do that because it's definitely quite modular. Each of the challenge areas we've addressed should be something that you could say, hey that's relevant to me or my project, and I will suggest looking at that piece. So, that's great.

Joe: *I think I've read it all, but I'm not really sure.*

Ben: We need a checklist on the content's page.

Joe: *Maybe that's what I should have done. Let me dive into a couple areas of it and get into the meat of it a little, but one of my problems with Service Design in the past is the idea of this customer journey mapping. We put so much emphasis on it. I've also seen people or a few people arrive at a given point in their service experience from a multiple of ways and am I wrong in my thinking or do I need a makeup path for each of them or do we just try to push someone down a certain path?*

Ben: I think that's a great question. I'm not sure if I have all the answers. I agree that it's dangerous to start mapping a customer journey as if there's only one, and it's also probably too much to ask that we map every journey. It just sprung to mind, we've been doing some work with an electricity and gas company where we were talking about one particular journey, when people move home and how they transition their account, which should be really simple but they have 300 different permutations of how that might actually occur depending on what tariff when you've told them what kind of credit rating you've got.

It gets very complicated. You were interested in talking about the life cycles as well; I think what we're trying to get across in the book is that there are these phases that people need to go through with the service. You need to move from awareness to consideration, to uptake, to being a new user. There are these predictable phases that people move through, but how they get from point to point can be very different. I think designing the specific

touch points in the service to be flexible enough to cope with different groups.

The other thing is I think it varies. I think you can apply a customer journey mapping to something like air travel and be fairly confident because it's a journey and it's quite set in its structure. But if you're talking about something less linear, then you're in danger.

Joe: Well, jumping to that life cycle thing and I'm jumping to another point we talked about in the book, I look at the customer journey map that we have these blobs, these oblong, these ugly looking circles and stuff that are kind of a scenario in it and those things are along the journey, and it's easier to explain maybe something in a scenario than it is this linear process of what someone's doing. Do you agree with that and do you talk about that in the book at all?

Ben: Starting with the life cycles, I think one thing, because this book is very deliberately Service Design for business, and one thing that's very important for large businesses or any business that wants to grow is to be efficient with its customers, plural, and have an impact on the top and the bottom line in the way that they interact with customers having a role to play in how successful they are, and that's to do with your loyal customers, your instilled base of customers, and it's thousands or millions of people. We've worked a lot with public transport, and they're geared up to deal with mass customers moving through stations and all the stresses that that poses, and that's where the life cycle really comes in because it talks to that level.

Whereas I think the journey can be too much to do with a story about a particular individual and how they get on. Does that make sense? I think there's a tension between design's focus on the individual experience and a kind of big operation or business focused on how do we serve this large number of people. So we're trying to reconcile those two things and make the design more relevant to the business audience.

Joe: *Let's touch upon scenarios in there a little bit. How do scenarios play a role in this?*

Ben: I think again, scenarios are often a business issue. A business will have a number of different options for how they go about something and we can look at those options and what they will mean for the customer and their experience. We can help to assess different business scenarios through the customers' eyes and make good decisions about which would be most successful for both parties.

We did a piece of work for a payment company where they had a number of different business scenarios for how they setup the service technically and we were able to look at what that would be like a customer experience and which one would be most likely to be adopted.

Joe: *This book is Service Design for Business; what separates that from your other book Service Design? I mean why did you specifically put business in there?*

Ben: The other book as you mentioned earlier was kind of earlier, as people were still

figuring out what this thing was and was very definitely a book for us practitioners. We use it live|work. Every new person gets a copy, and it's kind of got the how-to in there. And we've seen more and more, there are people who are less concerned with 'how do I do it' and more concerned with the 'how do I employ it in my organization?' We're looking at a different reader ideally who is someone interested in a new way of approaching a business challenge and wanting to understand what this tool could do for them.

Joe: *I'm a firm believer and I've mentioned that to you before is that the employee experience mimics the customer experience. Should our Service Design, should part of that be about creating an experience for our own employees or is that too far-fetched?*

Ben: It's funny you should say that; we're a little bit late with our 206 Service Design Trends article but that's one of them is more and more I think you're going to see Service Design employed for the experience for employees or frontline staff. We've definitely had a number of projects recently where that's the case.

I think people like Coca-Cola are looking into that. I chatted with somebody from the Coca-Cola Company who were looking at it in terms of as part of their HR approach; looking at new starters, or retaining employees. We did a project for a call center which was all focused on how do we make this job better so that people don't leave because it costs us so much every time we have to bring someone new on.

The other thing is that designing that employee experience then has an impact on the

customer experience; so you almost need to do two in parallel. We've done a lot of work with frontline staff, sales people who are part of the service. It's hard to separate.

Joe: *We kind of separated that in that idea of frontstage/backstage a little bit in Service Design, correct?*

Ben: Yes, then we've been using a term which is 'on stage' for the staff who are the actors who are actually on the stage, interacting with customers and delivering the experience.

Joe: *I think that's an excellent way to do it because you have the supporting cast backstage and on stage. One of those things, when I think of Service Design is that it's not a constrictive thing that we're handling a customer and service them this way. We're trying to build some type of rapport and some type of experience that our employees can give a customer, right? I mean that's what it's all about.*

Ben: I think with this book, we're also trying to move away a bit from like you say, from the toolkit, the customer journey mapping, the sort of processes that designers like to use and the things that businesses care about. So there's a challenge around how do I become more customer centric and that's not by doing lots of journey mapping; that's by thinking differently, opening people up to hear customer feedback, getting them involved in thinking about how things could be better. It's doing design with those people.

Joe: *I'm in a Lean guy, and so I believe in standard work, and I've had some conflict with*

some of the design and service designers in the world when we get with Lean being kind of taking into the Six Sigma world, which is really not. Lean is a little different. I always think that standard work is what creates the wow in a customer experience because the employee knows exactly what he can, can't do, knows his limits, knows when he need to go for help. He has that freedom to act within a space, and that's what standard work is really about in Lean. I wonder, can you comment on that? Does that make sense that we still need boundaries for employees when we're trying to create a good service design?

Ben: I mean those things that make the job simpler, and if I understand Lean rightly also, focuses on where the value is being created and not on the waste elements. I think there's a lot of cases where probably you need Lean practitioner sand service designers to work alongside each other. I've had too few opportunities to do so. My feeling is that we've got something to offer in terms of stepping outside of the current model and asking a few more questions.

Joe: *Service Design is practiced worldwide now, but it still has this little connotation of a European thing, I think anyway. And design thinking, DevOps, Lean Startup is really popular in the United States, but it seems service design is far back in the path of them. I mean what's your take on that and why hasn't it been maybe more popular within the United States?*

Ben: I don't know why. I know why... a thing that we were discussing today, there's different levels that take up in Europe. In the Northern countries, they're very out there, and I don't

think it might have something to do with their social model. It's funny you go to Norway, and you talk to people about service design, and it makes sense to them. They really love the whole user centricity and things like that. I think in the UK we've got quite an unusually empowered consumer, and the government is really interested in competition, so people will actually vote with their wallets and move. There's a lot of switching between services, so there's that level of competition which I feel creates some demand for us. We have customers in the US we don't actively go after because it's hard work but we have to do firms in the US. And interestingly, we're generally doing quite different work than the US firms. We're doing probably more customer-centric strategy stuff for marketing clients often. The other thing I think is a really major factor, digital is such a massive thing. The toolkit that you talk about is very implementing, digital transformations which are a very, very high priority for a lot of firms. You need to get those things in place and maybe the more holistic service design is to slow down the process.

Joe: *Service Design, I think one of the reasons maybe just because we're more product type thinking and kind of that product dominant thinking versus service dominant logic type is much more prevalent. But everybody should have a certain portion of Service Design in their bag, in their toolkit. I mean because products are really defined by their services anymore, aren't they?*

Ben: Interestingly, thinking about some of the US-oriented work we've been done, it's been generally B to B, where there's a higher ticket price on the products or service than there's more of a human element involved in that or it's a kind of complex space like a farmer or

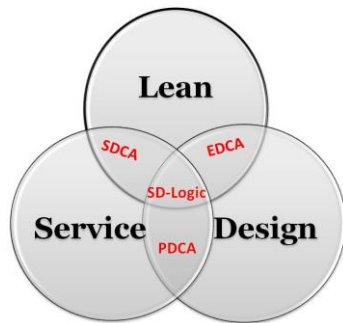
something where you've got multiple different types of customers, patients, and insurance, and HTP and things. But I think you're probably right with that product centricity. Yes, of course, I would agree everyone needs a bit of Service Design in there; absolutely.

Joe: *What is in the future for live|work and Ben Reason? I mean are you expanding more into the Service Design area and concentrating more and more in that area?*

Ben: We've spent the last three years on the business focus, and we got to 10 years old, and we thought we want to have a higher impact. We want projects that have a higher hit rate and larger scale impact and serious change for our clients. So we've just come out of the transition phase and the investment in the new thinking, so we're really excited. Last year was I think our best year ever, so we're really excited about growing the business and having more impact for clients and putting a lot of this work into practice.

Joe: *That's great. What's the best way to contact you and for someone to learn more about the book?*

Ben: There is a Website for the book. It's liveworkstudio.com/sd4b I think. But yes, have a search for Service Design. There's a Twitter account for the book as well. Those are two good channels for live|work.



Joseph T. Dager

Business901

Phone: 260-918-0438

Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: 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.

[Visit the Lean Marketing Lab](#): Being part of this community will allow you to interact with like-minded individuals and organizations, purchase related tools, use some free ones and receive feedback from your peers.

Live|Works On Service Design

Guest was Ben Reason

[Optimizing Customer Experiences](#)

[Copyright Business901](#)