

Decoding the  
eXperience Level Enigma

# TeXLA™

Tech Mahindra's eXperience  
Level Framework

WHITEPAPER

# Executive Summary

Organizations today are facing unique challenges in measuring end user experience while introducing digital transformation initiatives at a rapid pace, to retain competitive edge in the market.

eXperience Levels (XLs) have been acknowledged to be a radically different approach in measuring the same while providing granular insights and assisting organizations to be agile and successful.

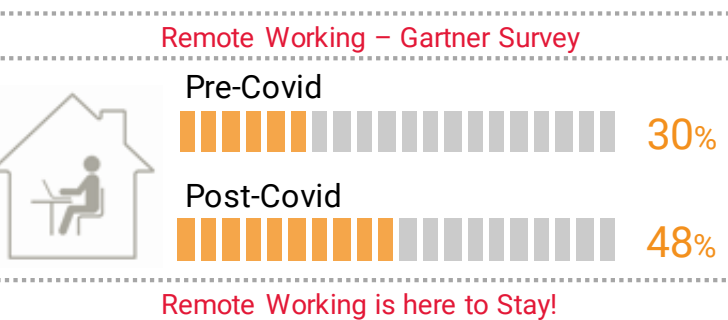
This paper aims to provide a balanced understanding for the need of XLs and how it is different from the traditional metrics measured under Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and its benefits. Various factors impacting digital workplace and user experience have been evaluated, especially with regards to digital literacy and digital dexterity of end users.

Finally, the possible outcomes of the XL based approach are explored to understand the future of XLs and its importance for IT leadership to make informed decisions with regards to digital transformation.

## Introduction

Since the beginning of year 2020, the world has been witnessing devastating effects of Covid-19 pandemic. But what has stood out in this period, is the extraordinary human resilience aided by technology, to fight the pandemic against overwhelming odds.

The entire working model changed overnight; remote working became a norm where possible; and is slated to continue even after the pandemic is over. Technology became a key enabler. Most organizations were forced to embark upon a rapid transformation in their business models to cope up with changing times. Bulk of the onus fell on IT, which is often a key but overlooked support function, to help leapfrog the existing workforce, by empowering their users with a seamless remote IT experience, keeping end user productivity intact.



Focus shifted from enabling selective users to almost entire workforce for remote work

Evolution of “Elastic” digital workplace with more focus on digitization, driving technology adoption, innovation and measuring employee experience

For CIOs, key questions staring at them were:

- How do I navigate the uncharted waters of digital transformation without impacting user experience?
- How do I address the business needs without compromising enterprise security?
- How do I balance user access and remote network access (VPN) on intranet vs public/hybrid cloud adoption?

*It meant IT no longer had the luxury of time to implement the planned digital transformation initiatives, for which months and years were earmarked. They had to implement the initiatives fast and succeed or fail fast enough to make in-flight corrections to achieve the desired outcomes and succeed.*

This called for newer ways and means to track and measure the success of digital transformation initiatives, spanning from speed of implementation, adoption, organizational change management to most importantly measuring end-to-end End-User Experience. Users are the most vocal change agents – both positive and negative. They constitute the “voice of customer” for any organization. Hence, it’s imperative that they are heard early on, to make required changes, as part of the agile transformation process and make it as smooth as possible, completing the feedback loop.

Traditional SLA based IT models are ill-suited to meet the full spectrum of the demands required to measure success for such rapid digital transformation.

**eXperience Levels (XL)** held the key to bridge the chasm. This was not a new concept. But it gained momentum when it became apparent that measuring every end-user touch point with IT was the key to success for digital transformation initiatives. At the same time, cloud adoption, artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data analytics, predictive analytics, end-point automation, API driven bot frameworks dovetailed as part of overall digital transformation that made it possible for “user experience” to be catapulted as the lynchpin for measurement of successful outcomes.

Human resource is a critical asset for any organization. As remote working becomes a norm and gives a further impetus to gig economy, for organizations to retain their crème de la crème – measuring XL will be an important determining factor for employee retention.

Consecutively, it won't be surprising if IT asset independence (BYOD) coupled with superior remote employee experience facilitated through XL as a part of managed workplace services, eventually becomes lucrative criteria for prospective employees to join organizations.

*To summarize, organizations are now looking forward to newer, comprehensive and innovative models of IT service delivery measurement, that beckons for a faster adoption of eXperience Levels going forward.*

## What is eXperience Level

*Tech Mahindra defines eXperience Level Agreements, as a set of metrics that aims to measure user experience across the board, for any IT services being consumed by users, almost real-time, through IT outcomes, as a function.*

There are a broad range of market definitions of XLs, but the common denominator for XLs to exist is the measurement of user experience for IT outcomes that IT delivers as a service.

Unlike SLAs, XLs have no set definitions of the metrics. They are dynamic in nature, that adapt to changing business and IT requirements, coupled with organizational appetite to map against digital dexterity vs digital literacy which has been touched upon separately.

Hence, it becomes a daunting challenge for any organization to adopt and implement the same without having the right knowledge and foresight, since the concept is still at its infancy. Having incorrect XL metrics defined poses a threat to the XL adoption right at the outset.

In addition, there are often questions about SLA vs XL, the relevance of replacing SLAs with XLs and conflict with respect to measurement methodologies.

Tech Mahindra's XL Framework, TeXLA™ brings about a balanced view of the right XL metrics that should be onboarded and measured, at the right end-user touch-points with the right visibility and governance framework in place.

## The need for XL...

Traditional Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are more geared towards measuring output of IT. SLAs often provide a false sense of comfort even when IT has enough scope for improvement. Discussions during pre-Covid days at water coolers often ranged from how IT failed to intimate users about an ongoing outage to how long it took to provision a simple mailbox and anything in between. The SLA metrics almost always reflect "Green/Met" against the defined KPIs, while the reality on the ground being, a set of disgruntled users always exist in every organization who are really unhappy at the IT service delivered, no matter how small a percentage they constitute. This increased exponentially when users started working remotely during the pandemic as IT seemed invisible to those used to visiting IT TechCafes at office locations.

The most common method to gather end user feedback has been to send out a targeted but optional customer satisfaction (CSAT) surveys after each incident ticket is resolved. Not only it has a very low response rate ranging anywhere between 5% to 15%, the responses usually skew towards negative experiences, since the human psyche is conditioned to raise negative experiences more often as compared to positive ones. Therefore, not only perception plays a key role in CSAT surveys involving human emotions, it doesn't consider hard facts responsible for the negative outcome. Still, if CSAT KPI achieves 98% SLA (let's assume it's Green), organization usually seems to be fine with 2% of disgruntled users unless they belong to a VIP/Exec group.

Low response rate and end-user perception are two of the biggest challenges for traditional methods of user experience measurement. 2 key points to note in the above scenario:

- SLAs are almost always reactive in nature, especially the lag indicators
- SLAs often lead to watermelon effect > Green on the outside, Red inside = disgruntled employees

XLs aim to precisely address the above gaps. Depending on the way XLs are defined and the methodology implemented to interpret the same, it is now possible to capture, analyze and visualize the status of user experience real-time and be proactive rather than being reactive.

Since XLs provide a real-time input, it turns the table for the IT Operations to proactively cater to the gaps in IT Service Delivery, which otherwise was almost always end user feedback dependent. Thereby it impacts the water-cooler conversations to be more positive by putting every user first, rather than considering a small population of users expendable to their IT needs, as long as SLAs are green.

XLs, if defined correctly, does the job of improving user experience, without user being aware in many of the circumstances. But it doesn't negate the need to collect the feedback from user occasionally. Thus, XL also calls for a revamp of the traditional IT support model we are used to. A dedicated User Experience (UX) function is required to proactively monitor and address XLs as per SOPs defined, and they act as the focal point for IT end user experience management around which all other teams rally about.

The success of XL adoption and implementation is directly proportional to organizational flexibility in adopting new ways of working including agile service delivery.

## How is XL different from SLA?

One of the questions raised most often is, will XL replace SLA?

The short answer is “No”.

Both SLAs and XLs will co-exist.

### *Raison d'etre*

The answer lies in their genesis and therefore their *raison d'etre*. SLAs have evolved over time to measure IT service delivery performance and has been benchmarked against the output IT delivers without considering how IT is directly achieving business goals putting users first.

XL on the other hand puts the user at the core of any IT service operations and transformation initiatives. It strives to measure the true outcome of such initiatives, by measuring user experience against each touchpoint through user productivity, engagement and happiness metrics.

### *Reward vs Penalty*

Another important differentiating factor is reward vs penalty mechanism of XL vs SLA implementation.

SLAs are often tied with financial obligations and penalties. Innovative pricing models like gain-share model have tried to incentivize service improvements within the ambit of SLA based performance measurement, but still doesn't aim to position users at the center of the universe in practice.

We believe XLs have the opposite mechanism for success, wherein addressing each negative user experience (either proactively or reactively) helps drive a positive change in the way end user perceives IT service being delivered. This in turn converts to a virtuous cycle of self-reinforcing loop which keeps improving the XLs. Therefore, it's vital that the right incentives and rewards are in place for the UX function and SOPs to work along and bring about a visible change. Visual feedback is also important, and we will also touch upon digital signage later in this paper.

### *Fixed vs Variable thresholds*

SLAs for KPIs are revised occasionally as per most contracts. In reality, it varies from every 6 months to every 5 years, even as part of contract duration. There are enough caveats in place for the managed service providers (MSPs) to ensure that SLAs aren't stringent enough for penalties to be levied. This works against the very objective of improving user experience. When the exercise does take place for SLA review, more often than not, it becomes a strenuous activity to arrive at an agreed target level, to be implemented again after a period of observation, often referred to as Service Level Observance (SLO). There is a gap between actual agreement and actual implementation of SLAs, where user experience generally takes a hit.

XL targets on the other hand are usually dynamic in nature. It can vary depending on a host of factors like transformation initiatives being rolled out, digital dexterity vs digital literacy mapping of the users, end-user communication and engagement, etc. As part of best practices defined under Tech Mahindra's XL Framework, TeXLA™, UX board (part of the governance) makes an informed decision and decides on the experience levers important for them and accordingly the thresholds for the XL metrics are fed to be monitored against.

### *Lead vs Lag indicators*

The traditional CSAT measurement as part of the existing KPI, is usually a lag indicator reported weekly or monthly at governance reviews on which Service Improvement teams as per ITIL framework, work upon to address the issues.

*The key challenge here being, the time-gap between the user feedback received to acknowledging the issue till corrective action is implemented. Also, if user feedback comes in bulk, it becomes challenging to analyze all of them properly in a standardized manner, leaving room for evaluator bias to creep in.*

One of the key aspects of XLs is to gain as much real-time visibility as possible so that issues can be addressed proactively.

There is always a possibility that some (not all) of the SLAs can also be a part of XL; as long as a specific user experience scenario is addressed. An example being, FCR (First Call/Contact Resolution) can be a lead indicator of tickets resolved real-time in ITSM solution, as part of existing KPI definition under SLA, which can also be classified as a lead indicator under XL.

Tech Mahindra's XL Framework, TeXLA™ groups XLs into multiple buckets (referred as Buckets of Gratification), one of which is "Operational" under which this KPI can be embedded.

Lag indicators usually are not recommended to be part of the XL framework due to their very nature of being unable to provide the metric real-time for UX team to take any meaningful actions.

## XL & Digital Workplace

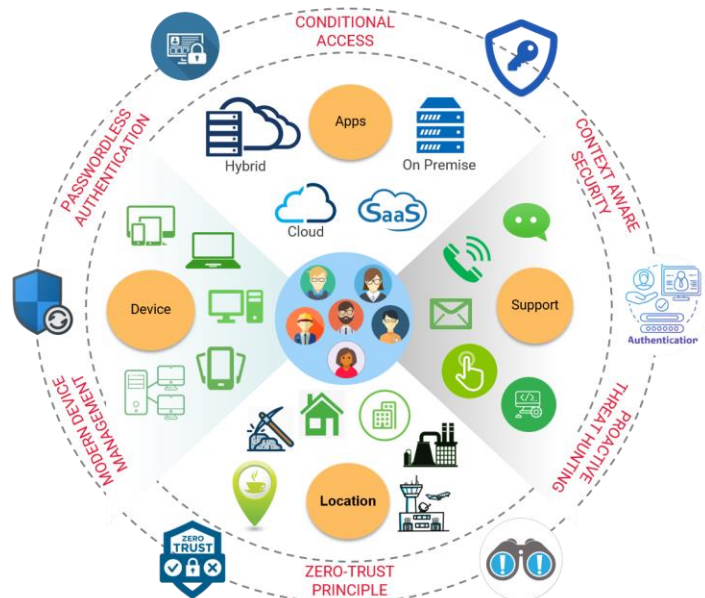
### *Rapid pace of Digital Transformation | The new reality*

As discussed in the Introduction, workplace is undergoing a rapid phase of digital transformation. As part of the transformation journey, organizations are spending millions of dollars on self-service, automation leveraging AI/ML, cloud first vision and enterprise security solutions. Key objective is to make users self-sufficient, productive and most importantly satisfied with their day to day IT needs and become proactive in the process. User persona mapping also plays a key role here, in ensuring that the right tools and solutions are made accessible to the right user groups that translates into a contextualized workplace.

### *End User Engagement & Adoption*

*An important fall out of this situation is, a plethora of end-user facing solutions getting deployed simultaneously, often independent of one another, giving rise to a mix of solutions, which is a nightmare for users falling in the negative quadrant of digital dexterity vs digital literacy map.*

While IT has all the right intentions at play, we often forget how challenging it is for users at times to adapt to change or get accustomed to the newly introduced solutions in the environment. Organizational change management needs to dovetail with user experience needs and make the adoption journey a successful one. Often it is observed, the enterprise cognitive chat bot is underutilized due to its inability to address common issues appropriately, raising frustrations in the end user community and thereby contributing to decline in the adoption. New age Digital KPIs as part of TeXLA™ Framework can help alleviate such issues.



## *Physical workspace has blurred*

As organizations gear towards hybrid model of working, it provides impetus to the concept of work from anywhere (WFX). Which means. a user in the office on Monday, can be at a production/plant location on Tuesday, meet a prospective customer at a café on Wednesday, work on move on Thursday and connect from home on Friday. This now brings about a whole new dimension for Digital Workplace architects to ensure that user experience remains steady irrespective of which location user is logging in from, across any device / form factor, accessing any applications – be it on-premise or SaaS based and collaborate across any channel over any network (intranet/internet).

Tech Mahindra's future-proof platform Workspace NXT provides an Unified Digital Workspace Platform for enterprises enabling personalized, seamless and secure environment for your employees anywhere, anytime, on any device delivering best end-user experience in an economical way.

## *Zero Trust Principle*

Establishing end-user identity without impacting end user experience becomes paramount for organizations to protect their data, devices and application access falling into wrong hands in this new reality. Organizations are rapidly embracing zero trust principle of establishing identity in conjunction with conditional access and context aware security for granting users access to organizational assets. Too many restrictive security policies may also inadvertently impact user productivity and user experience. Therefore, a fine balance needs to be maintained without being too restrictive or jeopardizing security.

Tech Mahindra's XL Framework, TeXLA™ recommends XLs which measure UX from the security perspective as well.

## **Benefits of XLs**

### ***XL addresses watermelon effect***

As already highlighted in the earlier chapter on the need for XLs, it was evident that SLAs are unable to cater to the changing needs of digital transformation demands which depict the true picture of end-user experience.

XLs ensure that each end-user touch point is measured and reported real-time, for UX functions to take corrective actions. XLs mainly comprising of lead indicators play a key role in this regard, which safeguards end-user interest and experiences, thereby avoid watermelon effect. Such protocols ensure that XLs are proactively addressing faltering user experiences and simultaneously avoid watermelon effect.

TeXLA™ Framework provides a 360° holistic approach for implementation & operationalizing of XLs.

### ***XL always places user at the center of IT universe***

Each XL metric is designed around each end-user interaction with IT, including both overt and covert touchpoints. TeXLA™ Framework ensures a balanced view of the right XL metrics that should be onboarded and measured, at the right end-user touchpoints with the right visibility and governance framework in place.

### ***XL assists in agile workplace transformation***

Real-time insights means faster mid-flight course corrections as required. It helps gather “voice of customer” throughout the course of the journey to ensure a faster and agile digital transformation initiative execution with minimal disruptions.

### ***XLA overhauls traditional support model***

XLA demands creation of a dedicated UX function, separate from existing Service Desk or traditional Service Improvement teams, empowered to proactively address user issues rather than waiting for users to reach out. Setting up right protocols along with benevolent employee change management initiatives are the first steps in that direction. XLs measures the success of the same and provides pointers where improvements are required, generating a virtuous cycle of self-reinforcing feedback loop.

# Tech Mahindra's view on XLs and way forward...

## *Dovetailing of Cloud, AI/ML & Big Data Analytics*

We live in exciting times where astronomical compute power is available to organizations at economical rates due to economies of scale leveraged by hyperscalers. At the same time, rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning has made quick inroads in the digital transformation roadmaps of most organizations. To top it up, over the last few years, proactive end-point monitoring solutions working on big data analytics has made it far easier to visualize information around user experience that would have been otherwise impossible to capture.

Another interesting development in this area is semantic analytics. It is now possible to train algorithms through machine learning to analyze the pulse of user sentiment – whether the feedback provided is positive, neutral or negative, and flag in case of latter. This also helps remove any human bias, that otherwise creeps in when a large set of end-user feedback is manually analyzed.

Thus, all of these technologies have acted as a key enabler for XLs to be more realistically deployed.

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## *Covid-19, Work from Anywhere (WFX) & Rapid Digital Transformation*

As highlighted in the introduction, Covid-19 has had a tremendous impact on the working model and fast implementation of digital transformation initiatives across the board. This has given rise to certain challenges for CIOs and their IT teams to rapidly respond to transformed business requirements without impacting end-user productivity and experience. This in turn calls for an innovative model of user-experience measurement that allows organization to feel the pulse of the user sentiment real-time and make mid-flight course corrections as required, in order to be agile. XL holds the key to this riddle.

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## *XL & Digital Twin for IT Transformation*

Digital twin as a concept is now new. It is already in use in manufacturing industry that help study and predict future behavior based on data models fed in from existing sources like IoT.

Digital Twin is generally defined as a virtual representation of an object or system that spans its lifecycle, gets updated from real-time data, and uses simulation, machine learning and reasoning to help decision-making. An important application of digital twin is to create real world scenarios, virtually. As more real-time information gathered through XL is fed into the analytics system, it would be possible in future to run a computer simulation to understand how the processes and user experience would be impacted in various real-world scenarios when any digital transformation initiatives are introduced. Nascent advances have been made around cognitive digital twin that processes user feedback in the manufacturing vertical and provides recommendations based on end-user preferences. We at Tech Mahindra envisage it to be a perfect use-case, given the outcome of any digital transformation initiative is to listen to end-user feedback and preferences, in order to make the end user productive and thereby providing an edge to business, to stay ahead of the competition.



# Underpinning Tech Mahindra Propositions delivering TeXLA™

## *Hubble*

Hubble is Tech Mahindra's proactive user experience management service offering for endpoints, aimed at identifying end user issues proactively and resolve the same. Customized Digital Experience Scores (DeX) developed is platform agnostic and forms a key lever for Tech Mahindra's XL Framework, TeXLA™.

## *GAiA™ Automation Platform*

GAiA™ is the enterprise AI/ML platform offering from Tech Mahindra built upon the open-source Acumos™ platform for an enhanced end-to-end CX. Acumos™ is an open source AI lifecycle management platform, Co-created by Tech Mahindra & AT&T in collaboration with Linux Foundation. It offers a ready-made framework for building cognitive applications widely applicable across IT operations. In-built capabilities such as NLP, Machine Learning, Advanced Data Analysis and Visualization, GAiA™ enables the use of AI and cognitive computing to provide actionable intelligence and insights from operations data.

## *Workspace NXT*

Workspace NXT from Tech Mahindra is a unified Digital Workspace Platform that enables a personalized, seamless and secure environment for your employees anywhere, anytime, on any device. The future-proof platform offers an open architecture that is feature rich, extensible and scalable. With a secure working environment at the heart of the platform, is developed to deliver best end-user experience in an economical way.

## *Sayint*

Sayint is a conversational analytics solution that helps companies make sense out of the enormous repositories of customer interaction data across various channels. This enables key stakeholders better understand and serve their customers and make decisions based on objectively scored data. From optimizing resource utilization to helping customers get faster and efficient support using RPA and bots, Sayint aims to be the foremost SaaS platform for Conversational Analytics.

## *HappySignals*

Tech Mahindra has partnered with HappySignals to explore and measure happiness quotient of users in real-time, leveraging the power of semantic analytics and AI. This forms an important pillar to understand how user feedback is being received through traditional channels and help convert CSAT KPI from a lag to a lead indicator.

## *Visualytx™*

Realtime visualization of XLs is the key. Tech Mahindra has invested in developing an integrated API driven visualization platform, Visualytx™ which provides a single pane for the UX and operations team to gain meaningful actionable insights based on the customized algorithms developed in-house. This forms a cornerstone for Tech Mahindra's TeXLA™ offering.

# TeXLA™ Case-Study | Ahlstrom-Munksjö

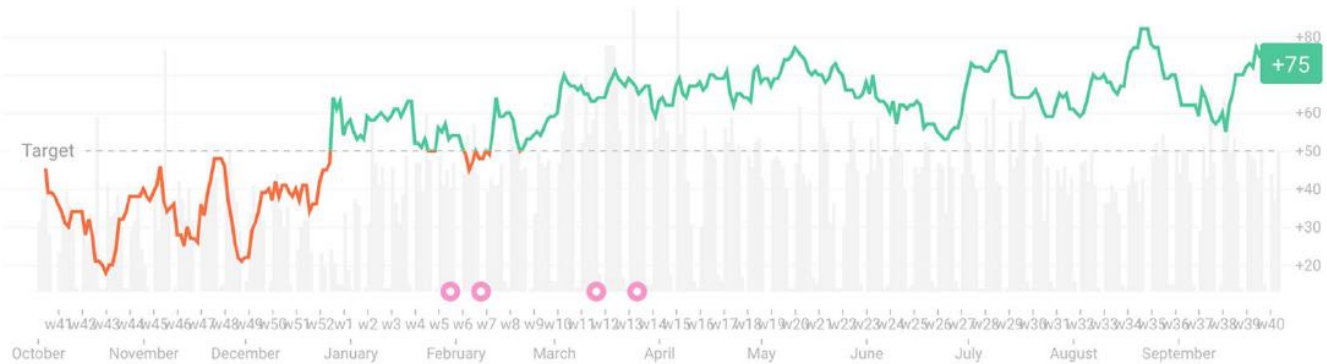
## 112% improvement in End-User Happiness

Ahlstrom-Munksjö is an existing marquee logo for Tech Mahindra. In 2017, Ahlstrom merged with Munksjö. They had a pointed use-case to measure XL and consume end user feedback. As part of Tech Mahindra's XL framework, TeXLA™, we partnered with HappySignals to get feedback from their end-users. It was quickly found that they were in fact experiencing the Watermelon effect, where their SLA metrics reported positive and green results, while their end-users were not happy with IT services and seeing red.

Previously, Ahlstrom Munksjö had been conducting annual surveys, however combining this information with HappySignals experience data, Ahlstrom- Munksjö were able to work closely with our team in order to create an action plan to solve end-user satisfaction problems, through a continuous improvement program called 'Project Happy'..

Tech Mahinda leveraged HappySignals as part of TeXLA™ framework and enabled Ahlstrom Munksjö to immediately see results. The data is made transparent and accessible to all management and service owners. This has led to an increase in motivation for TechM's Service desk agents to deliver a high-quality service.

Happiness for Oct 2019 - Sep 2020 is +59 based on 9155 feedback.



From October 2019 to 2020, Ahlstrom Munksjo have seen a 120% increase in end-user happiness, as well as a 68% decrease in lost time for their end-users.

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