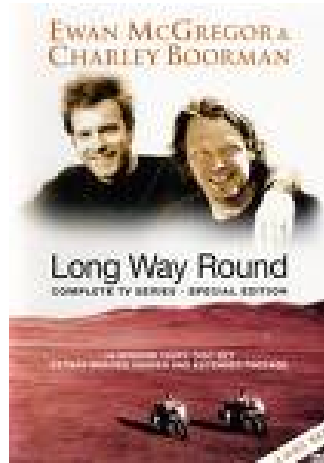


HOWTOEXPERIENCE

The Long way Round and Change management



A fresh look at an old subject

Opening

The Writer is leaning back from her desk, phone cradled to her neck. She is speaking to an editor while watching The Long Way Round, the documentary film of Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman's round the world motorbike challenge.

Writer

(Wearily) Look, I can write another rehash of change management practice or I can do something that people might read.

(Holds phone away from ear)

Is that a yes?



**By Alison Bolton and Iain Carruthers,
How to Experience**

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Handsome men take epic motor bike journey east around the world, from London to New York, with rapturous reception from Hollywood glitterati at the end. Not so glamorous project team thinks about re-engineering the customer experience. You wouldn't think there's a whole lot in common. And there you'd be wrong. For each of the following stages of The Long Way Round, you might want to think of the parallels between this film / adventure, and what you're embarking on, or are deep in.

Adventuring: you want to do what?

Ewan McGregor is gazing at a map of the world and it occurs to him that you can bike across it (with a little cheating over the Bering Strait). Over dinner with best friend Charley Boorman, he suggests that it might be fun to chase their shadows for 20,000 miles. They now had to work out how to get finance and a support team to make the adventure happen. Make it into a documentary.

Pitching: find, enthuse, sell

They find another biking enthusiast : independent film producer and financier, David Alexanian, co-founder of Elixir films, which specialises in 'pure passion' projects. Alexanian can't resist and became producer and creative director.

They congratulate themselves. But the more they learn, the more they realise just how much they're taking on. They secure backing from Big Earth, headed by friend Russ Maklin, experienced at complex multi-country filming and just finishing a series on every motorcycle maker in the world.

They sell their passion, they sell the picture of this film – and they sell the idea of the revenues. They sell hard.

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Planning: think about the Russian Embassy

Offices are rented, people recruited, favours called in. To put the planning in perspective consider one aspect – visas. If you want a multi-entry visa for Russia, they want to know the day you'll be entering and leaving the country, where you will be travelling.

Film making requires an extraordinary amount of forward planning, anticipation and professionalism. Equipment, transport, crew support, technical scenarios are strung out across geography and time. Then throw in the contingencies for breakdowns, injuries, reluctant border police, armed gangs, just to name a few.

Teaming: commitment and casting

Take a look at the Long Way Round [site](#) to see how 26 professionals came together to bring the adventure to fruition. You don't see the crew very often during the series but their commitment is palpable.

The chemistry between David Alexanian and Russ Malkin appears to be the pivot around which the film's success turns.

It took a long time to find the right cameraman – he had to be a great cameraman, a great bike rider and, as he would travel with Ewan and Charley everywhere, he had to be a good bloke. So it came as a shock to discover that Paolo's Swiss driving license wasn't internationally recognised. And the team certainly didn't plan for him to fail his UK test two days before departure (he flew on to meet them in Prague some ten days' later having passed on the second attempt).

Improvising: ride hard in Mongolia

What do you do when the roads are impassable? When the cameraman's bike breaks down? The boys did reach New York on schedule, but only by taking short cuts in Mongolia, which left them with two days of the toughest riding they'd experienced.

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Talking

State of the art satellite phones proved their worth time and time again, allowing the bikers and project team to stay in touch, like when one of the support vehicles had a serious accident. Even more importantly, they helped maintain morale, allowing everyone to keep in touch with much missed family members.

Digging deep

The pair weren't deterred from their quest by any number of accidents (including petrol splashing into Ewan's eye on two separate occasions) and incidents (like having guns pointed at them!). At one point, in western Mongolia, the pair were at a very low ebb and considered changing their route and get back into Russia quickly where the roads are better. But they dug deep, decided to stay the course and were rewarded by this becoming one of the best parts of the journey.

Getting there: what's the real prize?

Three and a half months after leaving London, the pair entered Manhattan, leading a convoy of motorbikes. They reached Battery Park and were given a hero's welcome by waiting family members and friends, news crews and photographers.

In their speech to thank all of the people and companies involved, the real prize for the pair became apparent. They declared that the trip had turned them from friends into brothers.

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Ending

Writer

What do you mean 'I'm not in the article?'

(Quiet for a moment, obviously thinking)

OK, two things really stood out for me.

One – get a great team together, right at the outset. It was more than incredible good luck they found David and Russ to lead the project. The pair had exactly the right balance of technical and interpersonal skills - without them the venture wouldn't have been the success that it was.

Two - how easy it is to lose sight of the vision. You know as a change manager that you might have to protect the vision from stakeholder interference, but I'd never thought about the challenge coming from within me. At one point Ewan is concerned that they won't reach New York on the date they've set and wants to rush ahead rather than spend some time exploring the area. David has to point out to him that it's making the journey that's important, not the arriving.

Oh – and one more thing....I'm thinking about getting a bike.

[Sighs...]

There's nothing more powerful than an experience with a purpose.

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We provide the experience to add value and build revenue. We think Big - but also think Real.

Our business creates relationships: relationships that build loyalty, increase profits and reduce churn.

H2X compares what your customers **expect** with what your employees actually **deliver**. Then, we help to make the practical and cultural changes needed to close the gap. We help you create a blueprint, pinpointing the changes that will deliver the most return.

By cascading and licensing our tools internally, organisations can change rapidly, without needing constant external help.

And, unlike some Experience consultancies, H2X only provides people who have actually delivered experience programmes in scale organisations.

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