

How Experience Haus fuels curiosity, innovation and creativity

You can read as much as you like, and study for hours on end, but nothing can match the learnings and expertise gained from actually carrying out a task or project. We were fortunate enough to spend some time chatting with Amit Patel, Creative Director at Experience Haus, to pick his brains on the importance of real-world learning, and how both startups and students can benefit.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The belief that learning by doing is the best way to learn makes up the core foundations of Experience Haus - a London-based digital skills training provider that offers training programmes, workshops, courses and events for both companies and individuals in design, innovation, creativity and tech strategy.

From product design and user experience, to management, Experience Haus focuses on real-world learning by pairing its students with real startups. The process sees them problem solving and coming up with solutions on real briefs, allowing them to put what they've learned to the test, in a way that makes an actual, visible impact.

"Experience is the teacher of all things" - Julius Caesar

How hands-on are Experience Haus courses?

Very. In our service design course, for example, we could ask everyone to come in and wear an artificial pregnancy bump and get them to go out and try to accomplish various tasks to help them gain some empathy. We cover lots of real-world skills that are often missing, as well as academic and hypothetical learning.

What do your students look like?

We train individuals who are looking to upskill or pivot in their careers with intensive part-time courses or workshops and masterclasses. Some will be looking for career changes, while others want to refresh or learn skills relevant to their work. We also focus on bespoke company training programs, for organisations like PwC, the World Food Programme and the United Nations. A lot of it is focused on design, innovation and delivering products - all based on real-world learning.



What's the mix of individual students versus larger company training programmes?

We started Experience Haus with courses tailored to individuals, but we also run all the training setups for various accelerators. We'll go and deliver workshops every week at the London Sport Tech Hub, for example, which has ten startups going through the programme. If you look at why we started, we wanted to provide real-world design education to anyone.

How is Experience Haus different from online courses?

There's a big difference between watching a video and interacting with people in person. A lot of design is about having empathy and being able to step into someone's shoes. There's a lot of value in a real-world course that a video can't provide. There's still value in using online resources to learn or refresh terminology, processes etc. I believe that a lot of what we're trying to teach is very tangible. It needs to be. Online learning is great for understanding a process, but perhaps not so great at teaching you how to apply it. I don't think online learning is going to disappear, it's just another method. A blend of online and real-world learning can be quite powerful.



Are new perspectives important?

Absolutely. We try to make sure we bring that to the table and that people are using the right methods in the right way. We get them to talk us through their projects and how they've applied their skills. We bring

different case studies and examples to challenge people, to unlock their creativity and fuel their curiosity.

How do students get paired with startups?

We have small classes of just eight students for maximum learning impact. We pair each person with local startups that have a real design challenge or task that they're looking to address and build in the near future. On day one of the course, the student will get their brief, and we essentially guide them through the design process, teaching them everything they need to know. In class, we'll run through hypothetical learnings or workshops, so that they can apply what they've learned in the brief they've been given. It can be quite intense, with usually 10-12 hours of work per week, but over time, they're building up a huge amount of knowledge and applicable skills, based on the real brief. They're actually interacting with the startup to understand constraints, which is a big deal as well. It's one thing to understand processes, but in the real world, there's budgets, deadlines and finite resources. We teach people how to present their ideas too, and in some cases, students have gone on to either do freelance work for their paired startup or be hired by them or another company.

Where does your expertise come from?

The majority of our instructors are working in the industry, so they bring their very current knowledge into what they're teaching. We want our instructors to be at the top of their game, bringing the very latest trends into their lessons. We provide a framework of modules that we want to be covered, and each instructor can then add their own case studies to that.



Can you share an example of a recent project?

We're kicking off a project with Croydon Council in April. They've identified a digital skills gap in the area, so we're partnering up with them to offer courses to local residents. Local businesses will then have the chance to provide scholarships or support events where new skills can be showcased. We also work with universities like Westminster, Greenwich and the London Met, where we run accelerator programmes and innovation hacks.

What kind of startups do you work with?

It depends. We have conversations with each student to see what they're

interested in working on, as we don't want them to be bored, so we match them with startups carefully. Some will join an early-stage startup which has a great idea but the concept needs developing. Some startups will be further along the process, with an exciting new potential revenue stream, that needs design work to be done. We pay close attention to the team behind the startup and their willingness to listen to a student's input. We don't charge the startups for their participation either, which is why we look for startups that generally don't have the resources to do these things on their own.

Are there any other skills that you think are important?

I think the ability to promote and collaborate, while being curious and encouraging a creative culture open to change, is key. I think those things are essential for any business. In particular, if you're a young startup looking to really push the envelope, embedding that continuous learning and culture of change is really important

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