



# IMPACT STORY

NOVA University

ExperiencePoint®



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## *How One Man's Life Change Inspires Change and Innovation in a Country in Transition*

### NOVA University

Established in 1973, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, or NOVA, is a Portuguese public university and is the youngest of the three public universities of Lisbon. Guilherme Victorino is an invited Professor of Marketing, Innovation and Knowledge Management at NOVA's Information Management School. Prior to becoming a full-time professor at NOVA, Guilherme built a successful 15-year career in senior marketing positions in telecommunications, media and healthcare organizations.

### Challenge

Portugal was one of the worst hit countries by the Eurozone crisis, and few industries have emerged unscathed. Companies across market sectors have faced a stark reality: if you want to survive, you have to reinvent yourself. At the same time, **the economic downturn has also spawned a new breed of startups and entrepreneurs, people who are focused on innovating markets and collaborating in new ways to solve tough problems.**

But while the areas of change management and innovation have become urgent priorities for the existing companies as well as the startups, many are discovering they don't have a clear understanding of how to do either well.

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**Guilherme Victorino**  
Marketing Executive

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As an experienced marketing executive, Guilherme Victorino is no stranger to the challenges of change and innovation. "These topics are integrated in the work," he says. "You're always dealing with these two ends of the problem. So I'm always looking for ways to help people understand how to address innovation and change issues and turn these into business opportunities."

In 2012 Guilherme had both professional and academic reasons to be looking for effective change and innovation approaches. In addition to his business career, he had begun teaching as an invited lecturer at NOVA University in Lisbon, where he'd created a health management program within the Information Management School aimed at healthcare managers and professionals. In addition to the overall economic conditions that all industries were grappling with, healthcare was dealing with its own set of challenges in terms of funding, the era of the "new consumer" and growing competition from private hospitals. Innovation was becoming a key necessity as healthcare professionals were shifting their emphasis to the patient experience and rethinking how they organized service and delivered care.

With this dual purpose in mind, Guilherme started looking in earnest for an innovative approach to teaching and discussing the topics—one that he could apply in his professional capacity as well as one that he could teach to his healthcare management students at NOVA.

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## Solution

**Guilherme first learned about ExperiencePoint's ExperienceChange™ change management simulation, and he felt strongly that it was the solution he was looking for because it offered an alternative, engaging way to teach change management to his students.**

**Guilherme calls the event and training in San Francisco, “completely life changing”**

“I knew the theoretical concepts behind the ExperienceChange™ model, but what was really different for me was both the interface and the learning process of the experience,” he says. “The other key piece was simply the people. After you have your first contact with ExperiencePoint, you’re immediately captivated by the people.”

The more he discussed his goals with ExperiencePoint, the more he learned about what other organizations were doing and how he might apply some of that experience to his own situation. It wasn’t long before Guilherme was on a plane to San Francisco to attend another of ExperiencePoint’s train-the-trainer workshops, this time for ExperienceInnovation™, the simulation that teaches IDEO’s *design thinking* methodology.

That journey to San Francisco took him further than he could have ever imagined.

The ExperienceInnovation™ Facilitator Certification offered Guilherme his first introduction to IDEO’s *design thinking* methodology. Through the process of becoming certified, he immediately realized that he needed to change the way he approached innovation and problem solving in his marketing executive role.

In fact, he was so passionate about *design thinking* that he decided to take a full-time professorship with the university so he could help a larger number of organizations solve their innovation and change challenges.

Guilherme calls the event and training in San Francisco, “completely life changing,” noting that, “I was a full-time head of marketing for a hospital group and part-time university lecturer at the time. When I came back from certification, I realized I was happier helping people tackle their challenges and see results. I changed my career from industry to academia and am now a full-time professor and part-time consultant. The certification session, the visit to IDEO and the connection with the ExperiencePoint facilitator community really pushed me to change my career.”

Back in Portugal, Guilherme got to work integrating the ExperienceChange™ simulation into the Innovation and Change Management in Healthcare course at NOVA, in addition to building his consulting work with ExperienceInnovation™. Together, these simulations would help organizations innovate their businesses in the midst of the economic crisis.

**“I’ve used ExperienceInnovation™ with companies in several different industries, including media, banking and fleet management,” he says. “They’re trying to figure out how to address new products, new service development, external markets, and they’re looking at how to get people to collaborate in new ways. ExperienceInnovation™ is an important part of helping them navigate this learning curve.”**

Guilherme also began implementing a two-day ExperienceInnovation™ course at NOVA for PhD students who were participating in a program that allows them to collaborate with different faculty members to learn transferrable skills. After more than 100 PhD candidates had participated in the program, interest in the topic of *design thinking* began to spread throughout the school.

Guilherme had an idea. Build a conference of like-minded individuals to discuss *design thinking* and together tackle the challenge: “How Might We Create a Culture of Innovation.”

In partnership with Peter Coughlan, formerly from IDEO, the 1st Design Thinking Conference Portugal was held in April 2014, with nearly 600 attendees. The diverse audience included startups; professors from most of the universities in Portugal; students from design, architecture and information management; and senior executives in charge of innovation at major companies across healthcare, media, services, consumer goods and other industries.

In addition to the keynote by Coughlan, the morning of the conference was devoted to inspirational “TED Talk”-style presentations. Innovation executives spoke about their experiences managing the challenge of innovation and applying *design thinking* concepts. Two designers from the Hasso-Plattner-Institut in Berlin who have startups in Portugal spoke about their work, and several presenters spoke about social entrepreneurship.

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In all, it was a packed morning and the perfect setup for an afternoon ExperienceInnovation™ workshop, which 55 of the attendees participated in.

“We felt that people weren’t aware of the potential for *design thinking*, so we created an afternoon workshop that Peter and I facilitated,” Guilherme says. “For those who were really interested in implementing *design thinking* but didn’t know how or what its potential could be, we knew ExperienceInnovation™ was a great way to help them understand.”

## Results

For Guilherme, the impact of these programs isn’t just business; it’s personal.

“This has had a huge impact on my life—the training and the opportunity to share it,” he says. “It actually made me quit my executive job and change careers!”

It’s also having a profound impact on his students. He points out that, between the data science fields and the PhD programs, it’s a unique application of the courses that he hasn’t seen anywhere else.

“We train data scientists—they’re very analytical people. The *design thinking* approach is more about the ethnographic, creative and observational side. They learn that we get credibility with the data, but we also need to create the insights.”

**And for those companies that are battling the economic downturn and looking for new ways to do business, Guilherme says this is the right solution for the right time.**

“I’ve worked with a variety of different companies, but at the end of the day, the problems are pretty much the same, especially when you look at what ExperienceChange™ and ExperienceInnovation™ can help them unlock in terms of collaboration and how you define your challenge,” he says. “Even

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when you’re working with a group of specialists with a very narrow interest, they may have a hard time initially being creative, but by the end of the process they see the potential.”

Looking to the future, Guilherme is focused on building a community around the discipline and methodology of *design thinking* and exploring ways to integrate it into a company’s culture. While the *design thinking* concept has taken off in Portugal, he’s concerned that people are selling so-called *design thinking* projects but aren’t really applying the methodology properly.

“The ExperienceInnovation™ experience,” he says, “is the best way to help you understand how to apply the methodology.”

**And he’s a believer that *design thinking*, done right, will create a positive ripple effect across the country.**

“We have so many constraints in terms of economic conditions that companies don’t have any other option,” he says. “They either innovate, go into new markets, become more relevant and help our country grow, or they will die. I think this could have an impact in helping most of the Portuguese companies reinvent themselves.”

As for another ExperienceInnovation™ Conference? Well, Guilherme says he’s still recovering from this one, but he’s sure there will be another one on the horizon for next year, especially because the feedback made it clear: the people will be asking for it.

## About ExperienceInnovation™

ExperienceInnovation™ is an energizing workshop that challenges teams to flex their creativity to solve a realistic and complex design challenge. In so doing, they engage with the terms, techniques, and thought patterns of successful innovators.

ExperienceInnovation™ was created in collaboration with IDEO, an award-winning global design firm that takes a human-centered design approach to helping organizations in the public and private sectors innovate and grow.

## About ExperiencePoint

At ExperiencePoint, we're passionate about how people work together to get stuff done. We're an award winning training company that develops business simulations for leadership development in the areas of change and innovation. We're known for realistic simulation experiences that challenge people to roll up their sleeves and learn the Whats, Whys and Hows of leading change and innovation. We work with the Fortune 100 and the world's leading business schools.