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Interview with Bamboo Product Manager Bruno Gabrielli

At the start of 2016, Bamboo® produced no less than three new releases: Knowledge Base, List Bulk Import, and Chart Plus.

In this interview, Product Manager Bruno Gabrielli discusses his thought processes behind the products, and how decisions about the potential to enhance and improve an existing product are reached by himself and the team.

Q. Let's pick out one of the recent releases. You have a popular product like Knowledge Base, which provides - quote - "a centralized, searchable and secure knowledge base, designed to be set up in minutes with seamless SharePoint integration."

BG. Good plug. Thanks.

Q. No problem. But it sounds great. It's popular. What was the thinking behind the new release, new features, etc?

BG. We don't release our products and then sit back, hoping they do well. We monitor them at every stage after release. We have various ways of doing that and we do it constantly.

Q. I imagine client feedback is a major influence?

BG. It certainly is, but it goes deeper. We have a very broad, international client-base, who see value in sticking with a company with such a large portfolio of products and world-leading support and services. These clients are on-board, in that respect, and they are happy to give feedback on any product or products they are using.

Q. Sounds easy, then. Your clients tell you what could be improved for them, and you fix it up?

BG. It's often more a case of inferring that, for example, a new feature could potentially be created to deal with certain issues that are being described. At other times, it can be more straightforward.

Q. Do you have a couple of examples of that?

BG. With Knowledge Base, some client feedback highlighted that the pop-up window for articles was too small and could be improved for everyday use. We tested, agreed, and created a full screen window for the new release. With Chart Plus, we made many great enhancements, but a very simple one was the addition of international currency symbols. A tiny detail, but a big difference for many.

Q. That makes sense, but *inferring* the need for features and enhancements based on feedback sounds much more complex. Is it?

BG. Yes, but it's a question of awareness. Just studying the different ways people work with a product can produce great ideas. On a simpler level, a fun analogy is that of the makers of baby-monitors. One product manager hears a report that actors in certain theaters are using the monitors in their dressing rooms, to pick up audience reaction and get their stage cue in advance. A cute story, but a Product Manager in that area would sit up, take notice, and look deeper into it.

Q. That sounds almost like seeking clues to new innovations. How deep does that go?

BG. As deep as the individual wants to take it. Here's a second analogy. There is a military conflict in which fighter planes, carrying damage from enemy fire, make it back to base. They are studied,

so that plans can be drawn up to strengthen areas on the planes showing common patterns of damage. Of course, somebody points out that only the non-returning planes hold the critical information, and research into that area has to be done, wherever and however it is possible to do it.

Q. You mean the people who don't communicate their issues are holding back crucial information?

BG. Exactly. Our on-board clients are a major asset to us, of course, in many ways, but the silent ones, the ones who haven't been brought on-board, hold key information. If they weren't satisfied, why not? If they looked at us and turned elsewhere for a solution, why? We are very confident in the quality of our products and our support and service abilities, so the answers to these questions are the ones we chase down in any way we can.

Q. It sounds like you don't accept limitations easily, but there must be some. What are they?

BG. At any given moment, resources can be limited. Then it becomes a case of resources against responses. This is where the hard decision making comes into play. Every factor has to be weighed against a competing factor until the best decision for the individual product and the range of products can be reached. It's hard, but we always find a way, and our recent releases are, I feel, an excellent example of that.

Q. I'd better let you get back to it, then, Bruno. Thanks for talking to us today.

BG. Thank you.

To see what Bruno and the Bamboo team's hard work ultimately produces, check out our full product range.

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About Pat Brien

I'm a British copywriter who spent over 10 years living and working in Paris, France, before moving to America, getting married, and joining the Bamboo team.

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