

thinkAbout Times

Pine & Gilmore's Annual Flagship Experience

If You're Setting Stages, Read These Pages

www.StrategicHorizons.com/thinkAbout

Cerritos, CA

September 29 + 30, 2004

We are very pleased to invite you to this, our seventh Strategic Horizons thinkAbout to be held September 29 + 30, 2004, in Cerritos, California!

This year we continue our ongoing exploration of the Experience Economy and examine the changes its maturation holds for businesses – with an added focus on consumers' increasing desire for Authenticity.

As you've come to expect from us, our latest thinkAbout will continue to challenge the boundaries for learning and intellectual discovery. We've designed the experience as a series of unique provocations to uncover practical, new ideas for your business.

We've peeled away many of the conventional – and, frankly, boring – aspects of traditional conferences, replacing them with a host of unorthodox – and, honestly, freewheeling – learning encounters. It's in this malleable intellectual space that, time after time, we see our participants unleash their creative energy, collaborate in rich and unexpected ways with fellow explorers, and generate new insights.

So it's with this in mind that we encourage you to read all about this very special thinkAbout in the pages of the enclosed *thinkAbout Times*. If you choose to join us, you'll engage in lively discussions with our eclectic and fascinating set of guest talent, and enjoy all the structured activities we've designed to help you make the most of the gathering. And of course you'll find yourself surrounded by a wonderful mix of bright, fun, and highly original participants who will energize you in ways that will endure long after the event.

Be advised: thinkAbout is an intense experience. Strongly held points of view and a deep sense of curiosity are the hallmarks of each event. Our only requirements: shed your expectations about what a "conference" should be, and come prepared to think, share, act, and create. We promise a genuinely challenging and rigorous two days.

Do join us.



Joe Pine
Strategic Horizon LLP



Jim Gilmore
Strategic Horizon LLP

P.S. The past two years, thinkAbout has sold out weeks in advance. At press time we are already well over half full, so register now to ensure your spot!

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www.StrategicHorizons.com/thinkAbout

Cerritos, CA

September 29 + 30, 2004

The 2004 Strategic Horizons thinkAbout

September 29 + 30, 2004 • The Cerritos Library

To Join:

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mail: P.O. Box 548, Aurora, OH 44202-0548 USA

Registration fee is US\$2450.00. Fee covers participation in thinkAbout, event materials, and meals.

Registrations cancelled by September 15, 2004 are entitled to a full refund. After that date, registration fees are non-refundable.

Registration

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postal code

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Payment

Registration fee is US\$2450.00.

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Visa/MasterCard

Check enclosed to Strategic Horizons LLP,
P.O. Box 548, Aurora, OH 44202-0548 USA

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signature

exp. date

Accommodations

We have reserved a room block and strongly recommend staying at the modern Sheraton Cerritos Hotel at Towne Center, just steps from the Cerritos Library. When reserving your room, be sure to request the Strategic Horizons thinkAbout room rate of US\$139.00 per night.

Sheraton Cerritos Hotel at Towne Center
12725 Center Court Drive, Cerritos, California 90703
Hotel Reservations: +1 (562) 809-1500

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Experience Stager of the Year to Host thinkAbout

Seventh Annual Event Heading to Cerritos, California

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore

Aurora, OH. Every year your intrepid reporters from Strategic Horizons LLP hold an annual event we call thinkAbout. It's an intimate gathering of like-minded professionals with great affinity for our ideas and frameworks around (purely in chronological order) Mass Customization, the Experience Economy, and — what will soon be the topic of our next book — Authenticity in business.

Last year's thinkAbout took us to perhaps the oldest experience hub in the U.S., New York's Times Square. It was an enlightening, peripatetic, and exhaustive event that included, among the many highlights, our Top 10 list of experiences that we recommended our participants take in during the coming year. Each example on the Top 10 holds a particularly vibrant learning point that all can immediately apply to their own businesses and use as a creative provocation for

future consideration. The countdown, of course ends, with our #1 experience which we honor with the Experience Stager of the Year award, affectionately known as the EXPY.

In the end, we awarded the 2003 EXPY to the new Cerritos Public Library in Cerritos, California, just outside of Los Angeles.

On the surface, a library — any library — might seem a strange choice for such accolades, and in fact this was the first time we ever gave the award to a non-profit or, in this case, governmental entity. But this engaging facility — with even more engaging personnel — deserved the award for how well it manifests its theme of "traveling through time", for its architecture and design, for the rituals management put in place to engender community, and for its bottom-line results: on average, more than 7% of the city's population uses the library every single day!

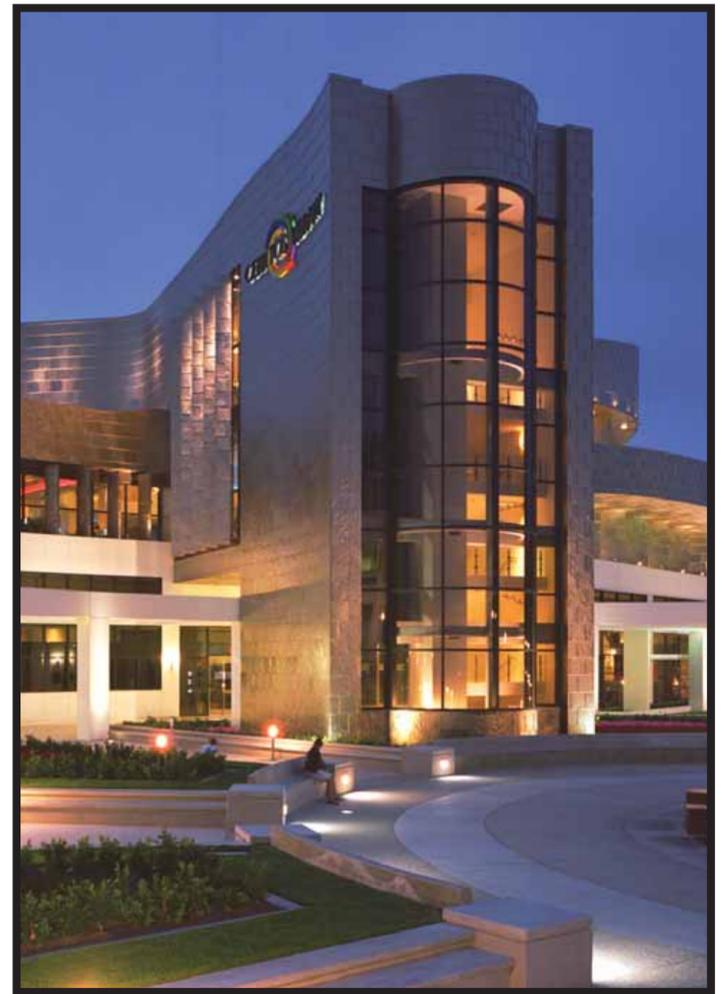
We won't go into the details of the Cerritos experience here — but do be sure to read the accompanying article by the man who conceived of the project and marshaled it through to completion, City Librarian Waynn Pearson. (Waynn along with his colleagues, Jackie Stetson and Stanley Strauss, took part in the 2003 thinkAbout and accepted the EXPY to the raucous applause of their fellow participants who had come to know them as the quiet, unassuming, and downright remarkable people they are.)

Rather, we're here to report on one fact that should be of interest to all who follow the Experience Economy, who have an interest in experience staging, or who just like to partake in experiences (did we leave anyone out?): the 2004 thinkAbout will held at the new Cerritos Public Library on September 29 + 30. Waynn graciously agreed to host the event so his newfound friends could experience the place for themselves (and thereby tick it off their Top 10 list).

Space is highly limited — though the exact number of participant slots is a secret known only to us. (Those who participated last year — you know who you are — will understand why this year's



The Strategic Horizons EXPY: Experience Stager of the Year Award.



The EXPY-winning Cerritos Library. Host of the 2004 thinkAbout and an extraordinary exemplar of the Experience Economy at work.

number, unlike those in the past, is our secret. The rest of you will have to surmise it, or ask someone in the know.)

Suffice it to say that over twenty people were on our waiting list last year and could not make it into the event. And as you read these words, far more than half the paid admission passes already have been procured.

If you're quick enough on the draw to fill out and fax in the enclosed registration form, sign up at www.StrategicHorizons.com/thinkAbout, or call our partner, thinkAbout Director Scott Lash, at +1 (330) 405-2886, then

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In Pursuit of Wow!

Experiencing the Cerritos Library

by Waynn Pearson

Cerritos, CA. The Wow experienced here at the Cerritos Library is exceeding all our expectations and causing both the library profession and the public to rethink what a library can and should be. There's no such thing as not having controversy when you do something very different. At Cerritos, the difference began when we decided that our "product" was really the user's experience.

We've built a learning destination, and put in a lot of effort to create learning experiences for our users. Libraries have always been about learning, but here it is right up front. Through the creation of a fully integrated collaborative learning destination, the experience library model generates unique experiences that spark users' imaginations in ways that are both memorable and transforming.

The Wow factor has also proven to be an economic benefit to our community. Corporations with offices located here in Cerritos use the library as a staff-recruiting tool to show off the quality of life in the area. Moreover, the Chamber of Commerce cites the library as a significant contributor to the business-friendly environment here in Cerritos.

Most important of all, the children and families of Cerritos have the chance to let their imaginations soar, and to use the

resources of their library to celebrate education, books, and reading.

Why Wow? Convergence in Cerritos.

Let's set the scene. The year is 1996; Cerritos is a small southern California city, serving a population of immigrant families. Since its opening in 1973 the library has been a cherished city service and consistently ranked tops in independent surveys of customer satisfaction. Steadily increasing library use has already prompted one library expansion (1987) and the demand for more resources has created pressure for further enlargement of the facilities.

We've reached a decision point. Should the library extend what it has been doing, offering more of the same collections, programs, and services that have proven successful? Or, in response to predictions that the Internet will soon be the only information source that matters, should we shift the emphasis to new technology, adding workstations and beefing up the library's online presence? Or should we try an entirely new approach, something that will make people sit up and say "Wow!"?

In fact, the new Cerritos Library did evolve from the City Council's desire in 1997 to provide residents with increased access to electronic resources. Rather than simply filling a room with workstations, however, we pondered what a library of the future should offer. Our staff did what librarians do best — researched, for one year, the work of futurists, observed trends in marketing, gathered

Continued on page 3

The Frontier of Fake

How to Think About Authenticity in Business

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore

Aurora, OH. No tourism destination is completely natural, having been manufactured to create a certain effect that increases the chances tourists will love the place and want to spend time there. A comparison of The Venetian (the hotel and casino artificially placed in Las Vegas) vs. Venice (the city artificially maintained in the Adriatic Sea) illustrates the point well.

Venice

Venice has sunk over five inches in the past one hundred years while the sea has risen over four inches, leading to troublesome flooding during high tides. The local government has started to install a system of over seventy sea gates to control the water levels from the Venice Lagoon into the city's famous network of (artificial) canals. One potential casualty: the local supply of fish unique to the brackish environment where the salt water meets the fresh. It's already become customary at some of the lesser fishmongers to slap *nostrano* labels, falsely indicating "ours", on seafood from other locales as far-flung as Morocco or Spain. Tuna comes from Indonesia and turbot from fish farms in the Netherlands.

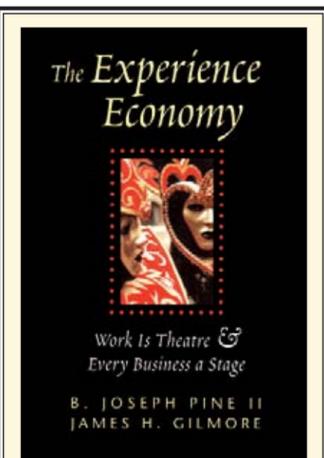
Cesare Benelli, proprietor of one of the better restaurants, Al Covo, and organizer of an alliance "dedicated to the preservation of local culinary tradi-

tions" using "authentic local ingredients", laments in *The New York Times*: "It's a war, finding fresh, local fish. Only 53,000 of us are left here, and I worry that we're losing our identity as Venetians. Much more than our fish — our collective memories, our dialect, our culture, our flavors and our tastes."

Indeed, every year more and more citizens flee the city and its diminishing local culture to live at higher elevations, decreasing the everyday ratio of residents to tourists. The mayor of Venice, Paolo Costa, said elsewhere in *The Times* of his worry about what a continued exodus might mean to the place: "It would be like you were in Williamsburg." To put his comment in perspective, former *Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable singles out Colonial Williamsburg in her book *Unreal America* as "a careful construct. . . where one could learn a little romanticized history, confuse the real and unreal, and have — then and now — a very nice time". Her main criticism: Williamsburg lies "frozen in time", restored to an arbitrary date in the past.

But does that not already describe Venice? Thanks to current and past mayors and the decisions they've made,

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"A brilliant, absolutely original book." — TOM PETERS

thinkAbout! thinkAbout! Read allAbout It!

What You'll Experience at thinkAbout this Year

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore

Dateline: Cleveland, Los Angeles, Chicago, Las Vegas, Mountain View, New York City, and now Cerritos, our seventh thinkAbout. The invitation to our very first thinkAbout said precious little about what exactly would transpire during the two-day experience. In fact, we used just twenty lines and sixty-three words to describe the flow of events. From the very outset, we've wanted to attract professionals who welcome uncharted territory, hunger for truly new insights, and value spontaneous routes to discovery.

While today we tell a bit more in advance, we've maintained that same emphasis, offering alumni an "early-bird" option to register for the next event without any details, other than date and location. The result: this year, over half of our available slots are already subscribed! Having experienced previous thinkAbouts, these alums *know* they'll benefit from whatever we have planned. They exemplify the whatever-when-ever-however attitude that exudes throughout each thinkAbout. They're precisely the kind of people we want participating because they bring so much out of each other when brought together.

With some fine-tuning over the years, we've maintained the same basic structure as that very first thinkAbout, with a four-part harmony of morning and afternoon across the two-day event. On Day One A.M., we invite outside talent to infuse thinkAbout with challenging new perspectives) On Day One P.M., we embark on a Learning Excursion™ by taking participants to new and different places throughout our host city (although two years ago – and again this year – we decided to place participants in new contexts within a single venue; though the term "Learning Incursion" just doesn't have the same ring to it!) On Day Two A.M., we've taken to employing various modifications of "open space technology"

thinkAbout isn't so much dependent on its structure as liberated by it

to extract lessons learned. Finally, on Day Two P.M., we present the Pine & Gilmore Top 10 list of experiences that we recommend participants take in during the coming year. Topping the list, we award the #1 experience our Experience Stager of the Year (EXPY) award.

To provide some flavor of this year's thinkAbout – with little risk of providing too much information, for we have plenty of surprises in store – here's a glimpse of what we have planned.

DAY ONE A.M. – Talking Heads 3-2-1-0

Since we're gathering for thinkAbout in the tome-filled Cerritos Public Library, it only made sense to invite a number of authors to jumpstart the event. Several factors, however, weighed in on how exactly to organize this time.

First, we've had individual authors before as solo acts (strategist/futurist Stan Davis, performance theorist

author-rounds, both in focus and in size.

Third, we wanted to introduce a twist to the traditional "talking heads" panel format. As you'll see, we'll begin in rather orthodox fashion but then move into a very unusual format for discussion – a variation of open space, with each individual author serving as a topical theme.

Finally, in the spirit of Authenticity, we wanted to get real and include as authoritative those who would offer truly unique perspectives on issues of real-and-fake people, places, performances, and principles. We also wanted individuals who would dare to contradict prevailing wisdom and disturb long-held truisms – including our own!



Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore

Thus the end result: three rounds of talking heads with a twist in one large group, followed by more intimate discussions later that morning in small groups. The morning will flow something like this:

Round 3: Reeling in Unreality

A Texan Architect, a Dutch Journalist, and a Michigan Lawyer walk into a bar, and proceed to talk about what's fake and what's real. The interaction between them, with us, and among participants will offer multiple perspectives on authenticity, fakery and the possibilities or impossibilities of escaping it. Sharing their perspectives are:

Michael Benedikt, director of the Center for American Architecture and Design, teaches and practices architecture in Austin, Texas, where he holds the Hal Box Chair in Urbanism at the University of Texas. In his essay-book, *For an Architecture of Reality*, Benedikt argues "it falls to architecture to have the direct esthetic experience of the real at the center of its concern." He calls for "High Realism" as "an architecture that stands against, or in contrast to, the culture-wide trend to ephemeralization and relativism." The bound volume exemplifies in its physical form the very components of such realness – *presence, significance, materiality, and emptiness* – that Michael advocates. (See his "Reality and Authenticity in the Experience Economy" on p. 5.)

Tracy Metz works as a correspondent for the Dutch daily newspaper, *HRC Handelsblad*, covering sundry happenings related to architecture, urbanism, and landscape design. A Californian living in Amsterdam for some thirty years, she is of course fluent in Dutch, but also in observation. Metz is the author of *Nieuwe natuur* ("New nature") and, most recently, *Pret! Leisure en landschap* (published

Library Journal as "an expert on the unsavory," is the Thomas G. Long Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School, and holds a J.D. and a Ph.D. in English, both earned at Yale. But he's really a medieval historian. Miller's tomes *The Mystery of Courage* and *The Anatomy of Disgust* have enjoyed critical acclaim throughout the world. His most recent book, *Faking It*, contends that we are all faking it much more than we care to admit. William calls the book an examination of "a world of posing and shams, anxieties of exposure, and a fear that the genuine may be just another sham whose cover is too tough to be blown." (See his "Postcards and Memories" on p. 6.)

Round 2: Conversing About Conversation

This second round of two authors could have been called, alternatively, "Collaborating on Collaboration" or "A Dialogue on Dialogue" or "Exploring Exploration" or any cross-combination thereof. The interaction between this pair of group-dynamic experts will communicate the essence of connected, coordinated, cooperative, and collaborative conversations – with perhaps some words on mega-conversations and meta-models to boot. The two do not know each other; we're just throwing them together because, well, how can they *not* get along? The aim is to address real work and real results in the business workplace.

Mary E. Boone heads Boone Associates, a consulting firm specializing in improving the performance of individuals and organizations through innovative approaches to communication and collaboration. Boone's first book, *Leadership and the Computer*, chronicles the hands-on use of technology by CEOs; her most recent, *Managing Inter@ctively*, addresses the challenges and competencies needed to achieve results in an increasingly networked world. Mary's research makes clear that inside enterprises Communication = Change; and in dealing with external customers, businesses need to move from "Tell and Sell" to "Ask and Engage". (See her "Conversation and Collaboration" on p. 7.)

Tom McGehee heads The WildWorks Group, specialists in staging collaborative work experiences – utilizing dynamic work environments, visual scribing, and real-time capture of output – that outperform traditional workplace decision-making. A former U.S. Marine, McGehee served as Vice President of Cap Gemini Ernst & Young's Accelerated Solutions Environment™ before starting his own firm. He is author of *Whoosh: Business in the Fast Lane*. We have employed his skills in visually documenting the past two thinkAbout events, yielding favorable experiences we can best describe as "Disneyland meets Parris Island". This year, we invite Tom up on stage with us, and with Mary. (See his "The Power of Models" on p. 7.)

Round 1: Society and Authenticity

For our final round, we explore the broader implications of Authenticity as a modern-day sensibility on the dominant social institutions of our times, namely government, education, non-profits, and church. Today, many people detect phoniness in our politicians, sense a certain inanity in our schools and universities, see the futility of many not-for-profit charities, and witness turmoil and scandal between and within religions. Amidst all this fakery, people thirst for the real. In this space, one author stands out in our mind as foremost in offering truly independent thinking and analysis, to the point of courageously alienating social critics of all stripes.

Dinesh D'Souza is the Robert and Karen Rishwain Fellow with the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. D'Souza's first book, *Illiberal Education*, brought to public attention the rhetorical excesses and strong-armed tactics of political correctness. A later book, *The Virtue of Prosperity*, challenged the utopian assumptions of "New Economy" digerati, examining how we can best improve society for the better in an age of unprece-

ded affluence. In his most recent work, *What's So Great About America*, Dinesh defends America from its liberal critics. It includes his examination, as a prominent conservative, of authenticity's emergence as a dominant ethos in American culture. This study provides invaluable perspective on the societal impact to result across the globe from increased experiential commerce. Interestingly however, *The New York Times Book Review* called the book "a thoughtful discussion of the character and historical significance of the United States" and "an indictment of American cultural conservatism". (See his "The Ideal of Authenticity" on p. 8.)

Round 0: What's On Your Mind?

In each of the first three rounds the two of us will conduct focused interviews with these authors. But these are merely preliminary discussions, consuming barely half the morning. In the final session, all eight authors (including ourselves) will scatter to eight individual stations around the room for more intimate, small-group discussions that explore whatever's on your mind in reaction to the first three rounds. Participants may freely flow to authors as they see fit, with whom they see fit, to discuss what they see fit, for as long as they see fit. These eight clusters of conversations will undoubtedly fluctuate in size and intensity; small groups might suddenly grow big while large groups may dwindle in size, all depending on where these discussions with each "talking head" drives participants to walk with their feet and speak their mind. This is part of the thinkAbout approach – you get to go where you get the most from the discussion.

DAY ONE P.M. – Stack Attack!

We've always thought the highlight of thinkAbout to be the interactions participants have with each other, and with us, in response to the stimuli introduced during the event's Learning Excursion™. While we usually hit the streets to experience the best (and sometimes, intentionally, the worst) a city has to offer, this year we stay within the Cerritos Library (and its park-like grounds) for our excursion, exploring the library's resources as provocations for our learning.

With books as the instigation, everyone will break out into small teams to come up with an Experience Economy-related topic to investigate together and set off through the library to gather intelligence. Teams will have access to books, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and other information resources, as well as library staff, most of our authors – including dedicated time with the two of us – and, most importantly, access to each other: sharing experiences, discussing possibilities, and forming conclusions.

We will, of course, integrate our usual tricks to help trigger the exploration.

Our aim this year is to use the time to maximize acquisition of new knowledge and insights in order to generate new ideas about the Experience Economy and what businesses should do as a result. The entire afternoon will be devoted to gathering input. We expect the conclusions of the teams' deliberations to push forward the state-of-the-art on what is happening in business today.

After a respite for dinner, the focus will shift to generating output, with time spent developing materials to present what each team has discovered. Understand though, we don't want the teams to just write down their conclusions – merely an information service – but rather create an experience for their fellow participants that may very well transform each other's thinking. To accomplish this, we will be providing a kit of wide-ranging contents to ensure your documentation and renditions of it might become more sensory, dimensional, and dramatic. The most important ingredient, of course, will be participant creativity!

Much of this development work will occur "after hours" when the library has closed to the general public. We'll have the library to ourselves for free-spirited intermingling along with hard-driving effort to complete the work-team projects. For thinkAbout alumni, think of this time as a

cross between the "Braindorming" exercise at thinkAbout U and "Touring 'til Midnight" in Las Vegas. For the uninitiated, imagine a cross between the all-nighters you pulled in college and the impassioned musings with your fellow new-hires on your first job.

DAY TWO A.M. – Experience Fair

What Day One A.M. is to your normal talking heads conference, Day Two A.M. is to your traditional trade show. That is,

From the very outset, we've wanted to attract professionals who welcome uncharted territory, hunger for truly new insights, and value spontaneous routes to discovery

you'll recognize the floor plan but enjoy an entirely different experience! Everyone will both exhibit and visit. That is, each person will spend time as the cast member for their own team's exhibit as well walking the floor in search of insights at other exhibits.

You should detect the open space feel. All of the morning's festivities will take place in the same room, facilitating ease of flow and getting to know each other's discoveries. The idea of showcasing ideas in an Experience Fair seems so simple. It is simple. So why say more?

DAY TWO P.M. – The Top 10 List

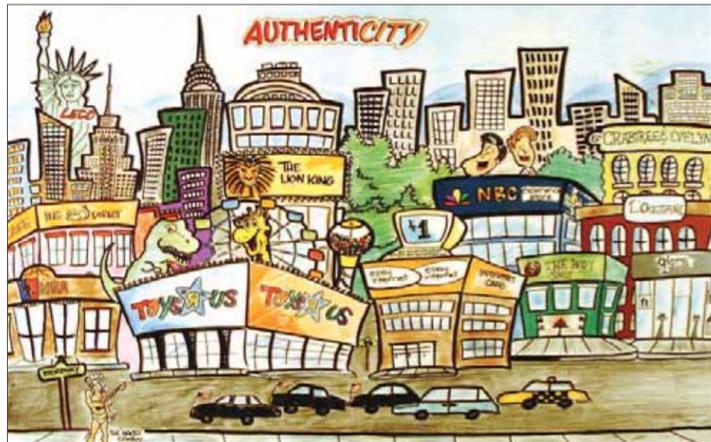
As we now do at every thinkAbout, we close the event with a countdown of ten experiences, each one worthy of directly experiencing by our participants. More than that, however, each one exemplifies a particular principle that we find compelling for business today. With the revealing of each experience, starting with number 10, we ask participants to apply this principle to their own business, given their own circumstances, to see what ideas emerge.

The final experience on our list wins our Experience Stager of the Year award, complete with the bronze EXPY statuette now gracing five previous top experiences: American Girl Place, The Geek Squad, Joie de Vivre Hospitality, LEGO, and, of course, the Cerritos Public Library itself. Participants will hear from the 2004 Experience Stager of the Year – then apply what they hear to their own businesses.

And with that, thinkAbout will come to an official close for another year. Unofficially, however, it continues in two ways. First, we invite every one to come to a post-event gathering. We generally like to peak the nature and location a secret, informing only those who register for the event. (In past years, we've treated those we stay an extra night to Blue Man Group, Cirque du Soleil, and a Broadway production, amongst other experiences – each included in the price of admission!)

Second, we extend the experience for ten months with both tangible and intangible reminders of each experience on our Top 10 List – and with continued application of the principles they exemplify.

We do hope we haven't given you too much information. Just keep in mind it is an event that is not so much dependent on its structure as liberated by it to create a dynamic flow of interaction, discussion, and application.



A scribe's panel of the Learning Excursion™ from the 2003 thinkAbout in New York City. WildWorks Group will once again scribe portions of this year's thinkAbout, giving participants a lasting visual representation.

Sally Harrison-Pepper, architect/place-maker Jon Jerde), but we thought this venue deserved far more than one. Given this was our seventh thinkAbout, it seemed only natural to settle on six authors to join us this year as talent for Day One, for a total of eight. (And if that made perfect sense to you, you *are* the right sort of person to join us as well!)

Second, we wanted these authors to provide different intellectual points of departure for the rest of our time together, so we took pains to assemble three very different

simultaneously in English as *Fun! Leisure and Landscape*). The book examines how "free time" and "fun" are having a far-reaching effect on the development of both cityscapes and the countryside. With regard to her own city residence, Tracy observes how Amsterdam's dependence on tourists leads to a degree of contrivance, of staged authenticity, where she and her fellow residents serve to render realism for the city's visitors. (See her "Tourist in my own city" on p. 6.)

William Ian Miller, dubbed by the

2003 Top 10

Visit www.StrategicHorizons.com/observations.html for a closer look at why each member made last year's countdown.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 10. Library Hotel | 5. Hard Rock Vault Orlando |
| 9. John Robert's Hair Studio & Spa | 4. Mid-Columbia Medical Center |
| 8. Swarovski Kristallwelten | 3. Zorb |
| 7. Medieval Times | 2. www.landsend.com |
| 6. www.AmericasArmy.com | 1. Cerritos Library |

Who will be on this year's Top 10 list?

Come to the 2004 thinkAbout to find out live!

Wow continued from page 1

information about cutting-edge library services, studied the systems at museums such as the Getty and Smithsonian, and looked at mass-volume public spaces like nearby Disneyland. The key was a willingness on the part of the City to consider a variety of options with the proviso that the needs of the community would always remain paramount.

If you want people to use, and eventually love, libraries you have to get people in libraries. Two important ideas surfaced during our research. First was the concept of the Experience Economy as articulated by Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore in their book by that title. The ideas within *The Experience Economy* fit well with our desire to make the public library more interactive, involving, educational, and – well, yes, more entertaining. The other seminal inspiration was visual – a photograph of the spectacular Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, rising above the ancient streets of the Basque town. That image caused the Library Planning Team to reflect on the concepts of finding the future in the past, shifting in time, integrating traditional culture with new technology, and blending library and museum. Cerritos selected “Honoring the Past – Imagining the Future” as the overarching theme for the new Library, abbreviated to “traveling through time”.

Using the metaphor of the library as a time machine, Cerritos has created a real place in the community that seamlessly blends themed spaces with traditional library resources, innovative services with new technology. “The Zeitgeist of the future is convergence” has been a real mantra of ours; it's not just bringing the book and the digital world together, it's bringing human experiences in proximity with library services, bringing everything together.

Wow Service – Beyond User Satisfaction to User Excitement

Upon entering, you pause just to drink it all in – and then you smile. Clearly, the ideas in this library are not all in books;



some of them have escaped into the environment. You know immediately that this place has exciting possibilities. In the two years since the new library opened, hundreds of librarians have come from around

the world to see what we now call the new “Cerritos Experience Library” and hear about its Wow customer service model, which focuses on the user's experience.

At Cerritos, Wow is not limited to the impact of the building or themed environments, but is best expressed by our staff, who are continually trained to focus on assessing user needs. The Cerritos staff is empowered to evaluate services and spaces in order to build confidence and a sense of ownership. By celebrating the pleasures of learning and new ideas, Cerritos has succeeded in creating a fun, friendly, collaborative environment and the word is spreading!

**Wow Programs – Powered by Imagination**

On your way through the library, you are tempted to linger at a number of imaginative and entertaining presentations that invite visitors to learn more about the world around them.

What we have discovered is that visitors create their own experiences at our library. For example, a whole new program has evolved as a result of our users selecting a leatherbound classic, complete with gilt pages, that they always had promised themselves they would read, and settling into a wingback chair near the fireplace and reading a chapter each time they come into the library.

Every element of the Cerritos Library design is an opportunity for an interactive learning experience. A “continuous loop”

of staff-created original programs highlights the library's collections, and partnerships with other learning institutions bring a global perspective to Cerritos.

Wow Collections – All This and Books, Too!

We have integrated technology-based collections with traditional library services. A session at one of the library's 232 workstations or 1200 laptop-ready “hot seats” reveals electronic databases, e-books, Internet access, office software, and streamed media.

We certainly did not want to eclipse books; as users explore the library, they find books – everywhere, on all three floors. There are best sellers, classics, rare editions, how-to manuals, picture books, and large-print books, as well as fiction and nonfiction titles in 10 different languages for readers of all ages.

In fact, we have gone out of our way to renew interest in the book as “the book”. Our multimedia Learning Center (located in the Old World Reading Room, which houses our leatherbound classics collection) is devoted to the printed word.

Cerritos developed the concept of multi-media Learning Centers to blend traditional and nontraditional resources in an inviting package, by linking library users to the best information wherever it's been developed. Our goal has been to gather and integrate materials of all types in support of experience-based learning. We want users to be able to pursue any interest quickly and easily across a full range of information sources and formats.

Every program, every performance, and every event held at the library, regardless of sponsorship, links back to the collections.

Putting Wow to Work – in Other Libraries

Wow service does not require a grand

new building. All it requires is a new way of thinking about libraries and a strong commitment to enhancing the user's experience. At Cerritos, we are so excited about the community's response to our efforts that we are working hard to share what we have learned with other library professionals through the creation of the clonstitute, a series of conferences designed to inspire libraries to inspire communities. Creating an experience-based library is an emotional journey; it has to be, in terms of the planning, and the clonstitute exists to encourage and support that journey.

Other libraries can do things on a different scale and still offer Wow learning experiences – just by taking bits and pieces of what we've done and adapting them to their own communities. It's even possible to implement the experience approach on a shoestring. In fact, our Cerritos staff incubated all the new programs and services in the trailers we used as our temporary facility. Even in that modest environment, switching to experience-based offerings increased our circulation by more than 17%!

The Wow Response – The Community Re-imagines its Library

In a community where the library was already an extremely popular public service before we poured on the Wow, circulation is up 67%, library visits are up 86%, library registration is up 292%, and program attendance is up 210%. But statistics don't get to the heart of the matter. Our reward is every day seeing a face light up at the sight of leather-bound examples of fine printing – “You mean I get to touch this?” Or hearing the squeal of a four-year-old racing ahead of his family to check out the T. Rex. The gentle “thank you” of a senior user after a personal lesson on how to use email to stay in touch with her grandchildren.

This library sparks imagination. It generates excitement. It fosters new learning.

The Cerritos community has expanded its vision of what a library can be, and what it can do. Now our users are the ones who are pushing the envelope, asking for new programs, thinking up new ways to take the experience beyond where it is today. We set the example that it's okay to break the old rules, to do traditional things in new way, and our users have taken that idea and are running with it.

All we can say is, “Wow!”

Waynn Pearson is City Librarian for the Cerritos Library.

Business Briefs

Strategic Horizons LLP**New Partner Named**

Strategic Horizons LLP said it named Scott Lash, Director of Marketing, to the position of partner, effective January 1, 2004. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to new offering development, producing the firm's flagship experience, thinkAbout, and overseeing the recently revamped Strategic Horizons website, the three extant partners unanimously voted in Mr. Lash as partner in full standing with all of the rights and privileges thereof. Mr. Lash will continue in his aforementioned duties, increasing his focus on new offerings and adding in full management of certain key accounts.

American Girl, Inc.**Pleasant Company Now Called American Girl**

Company officials announced in a recent press release that, as of January 1, 2004, Pleasant Company will be referred to as **American Girl, Inc.** According to Ellen Brothers, president of American Girl, “the change is in keeping with our desire to emphasize the strength of the nationally recognized American Girl brand and also serves to make our company name more consistent with how our customers, as well as the external financial community, identify with us.” The company's flagship experience in Chicago, American Girl Place, was awarded the very first Strategic Horizons EXPY Award in 1999.

The Home Depot**Record First Quarter Net Earnings**

The Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer, reported record first quarter net earnings of \$1.1 billion, up 26 percent, for the first quarter of fiscal 2004. Among the factors attributed to the increase was “significant progress in meeting customer aspirational needs, including an enhanced shopping experience.” Bob Nardelli, chairman, president, and CEO, previously stated in the Aug. 2003 issue of *Fast Company*, “When I became CEO, I reread *The Experience Economy*. It became clear early on that what had gotten the Home Depot to its first \$50 billion was not going to get it to the next \$50 billion. I knew that the new competitive arena was the customer's experience”.

CREATE IMPACT

How do you create more powerful impressions than traditional media can deliver?

INFLUENCE

How can you better influence the increasing number of decisionmakers you face?

MOMENTUM

How do you accelerate adoption of new products and technologies?

UNDERSTANDING

What kinds of tactics will move beyond awareness to increase understanding?

RELATIONSHIPS

How do you create deeper, more valued relationships?

RESULTS

How do you create better results?

A Point of View: What's an Idea Worth?

by Doug Parker, Managing Partner, Strategic Horizons LLP



Aurora, OH. Now that's a question I'm often asked. How do we establish the fees for our speaking and advisory time? Is an event like thinkAbout worth the asking price?

All legitimate questions, and not easy or even possible to answer quantitatively.

We often hear of the rising costs of tuition at colleges and universities – it's perhaps the most glaring example of modern-day cost inflation, as any parent who's saving for their child's education

(or currently paying tuition) will tell you. These institutions implicitly understand and charge for the "market value" of the transformation they are eliciting. Their changed student body is the product, and they charge for it commensurately. They realize that tuition of, say, \$35,000 per year – \$140,000 over four years – pays for shaping the minds of future leaders in business, architecture, law, medicine, and so forth – people who earn multiple millions over their lifetimes. Though difficult if not impossible to evaluate the worth of such an education, universities have been compelled to put a price tag on it that the market will bear. . . and it gets more expensive every year.

Likewise, our changed clients are our "product", so to speak – so one could argue that we, too, are in the business of

education. I think education is certainly part of it, but I believe it is subsumed inside of something greater. What we're really about is altering the existing perspective of our clients. As Joe Pine eloquently put it, "We're in the business of helping executives see the world differently." We liked that so much, it's our company's tagline – and the notion is as true today as when he said it nine years ago.

There's a lot to his statement. Do we know more about our clients' businesses than they do? No way. Are we hired because we have all the answers to their issues? Not a chance. But what we do provide is a unique and distinct Point of View to help our clients – the most knowledgeable people around regarding their company – see their situation anew. We're cross-pollinating them with our thinking, and it drives them to perform in new ways with new results.

This is high-value activity in our society. Take storytelling, one of the fine arts

of Point of View. When one considers a story, say, of three guys who go fishing – this isn't exactly the stuff of earth-shattering change. But through the vision of a gifted film director, we get *Jaws* – a phenomenon that forever altered the world's viewpoint of wildlife below the water's surface. That story could have been told in many ways, but a singularly creative Point of View produced a timeless classic.

Such is the power of perspective. When we perform for our clients, we create linkages that they had not considered and reveal greater truths about the world in which they compete. Those truths are always there. . . it simply takes trained eyes to guide one to see them. That's what our speaking and consulting – as well as our annual thinkAbout event – does for our clients. Afterward, our audiences find it very hard to return to business as usual.

Now we ask: How can you put a value on that?

thinkAbout Times

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by Strategic Horizons LLP

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Dude, Where's My Paycheck?

by Scott Lash, Director of Marketing, Strategic Horizons LLP



Aurora, OH. It's dark. And way too early in the morning. Cold and sluggish, you arrive at the fishing docks to struggle into a damp pair of hip boots and yellow fisherman gear.

You know that in the hours ahead, you'll be faced with back-wrecking labor, nets full of smelly, slippery fish, and the skin blistering chafe of the lines.

As you climb aboard, the old salt captaining the boat barks at you to east off. You look up. And smile. Then you press a few hundred dollars into his hands. . . just for the privilege.

Huh?

Welcome to a growing genre of experiences called *paying labor*. It's a world in which the completely rational among us actually pay to work in often physically demanding environments. It's happening in industry after industry – aboard fishing fleets and on farmer hay wagons, underground in mining camps, and across the prairie on cattle drives.

Today we are so far removed from the toils of the agrarian age and the hand-crafted workmanship of pre-industrial times that many people actually long – and are willing to pay – to get their hands dirty and experience the intrinsic joys of a hard day's labor. And though we see it primarily in labor-intensive industries, the practice is starting to spread to other, less strenuous environments.

And so it came to be that for the 2003 thinkAbout in New York, we tested this supposition on ourselves. Our goal: to find one person from among the legion of fans of the Experience Economy who would be willing to pay – above and beyond the regular admission fee – to work at thinkAbout as a paying laborer.

Happily, we found not one, but two such vanguards! As you'll read below, our two paying laborers had different motivations for their participation but each walked away with a unique perspective of the experience and its value.

We are pleased to announce that this year we once again are offering a limited number of paying labor opportunities. We promise insightful, challenging, and rare access to the minds behind thinkAbout and plenty (no, really. . . lots!) of hands-on experiences to boot! For more information, contact us at +1 (330) 405-2886 or email thinkAbout@StrategicHorizons.com.

INTERESTED IN GETTING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THE MINDS THAT CONCEIVED THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY?

WANT A BACKSTAGE PASS TO THINKABOUT?

CURIOUS TO TAKE PART IN THE PAYING LABOR EXPERIENCE?*



HERE'S YOUR CHANCE!

STRATEGIC HORIZONS IS OFFERING A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR FOUR INDIVIDUALS TO GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES IMMERSION INTO PINE & GILMORE'S CREATIVE COLLABORATION AS IT UNFOLDS LIVE AT THINKABOUT.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ENGAGING EXPERIENCE, CONTACT SCOTT LASH, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, AT +1 (330) 405-2886 OR EMAIL THINKABOUT@STRATEGICHORIZONS.COM.

*SOME ACTUAL LABOR REQUIRED!



Paying for Labor C.O.D.

by David Holder

Fredericksburg, VA. New York City provides a non-stop sensual bombardment that is unmatched as an experiential classroom. This NYC classroom offered Professors Pine & Gilmore the chance to trade in their mortarboards from ThinkAbout U [2002 in *Mountain View* – Ed.] for the representative sport caps of the Big Apple – New York Yankees for Joe, New York Rangers for Jim. In doing so they assumed the role of producers with the entirety of Manhattan available to them as a stage.

It became apparent to them that additional stagehands would be required; a perfect setting for testing the grand theory of paying labor firsthand. What could be more authentic than to practice a concept that the duo has preached from the beginning of their work on the Experience Economy?

As one of the willing and able actors fortunate enough to receive a part in this elaborate production, I realized early on that this was not a standard event, nor were these traditional educators. Sure, the thinkAbout crew needed some help in preparing the stage and delivering the content, but the value to me was worth a great deal more than the extra day away and the additional cost required to be paying labor. I went home with the usual great knowledge gained from thinkAbout, but I also absorbed an additional layer of benefit provided C.O.D. No, not that C.O.D. As a paying labor participant, I grew from witnessing the Creativity, taking advantage of the Opportunity, and assisting in the Delivery.

Creativity

A trademark of the thinkAbout brain trust is the constant use of props, take-home tools, learning excursions, and high-profile recording of the proceedings. The common theme uniting these various features is the creativity necessary for success. Witnessing the vision that trans-

formed a hotel corridor from a sterile meeting space into an aircraft, performing a conga line through a McDonalds as a learning exercise, and using mere soda and pencils as a method for organizing groups and facilitating discussion was powerful to the average thinkAbout participant.

My creative energy grew with the other participants, but being part of the setup team – converting the space, blocking the line, and passing out the pencils – removed any boundaries that potentially confined my creativity.

Opportunity

The possible catalyst for this personal creative revolution was a full afternoon with Jim Gilmore. It is always a useful exercise to step into someone else's shoes for his perspective of the world. When the shoes belong to Pine or Gilmore, the view of the world becomes radically different, with experiential offerings just around every corner – literally, in the case of Times Square.

One of the selling points for choosing to attend as a paying laborer was the opportunity to mine the strategic and creative minds of the two producers. I took full advantage of the time to sponge ideas, thoughts, and strategies through our time together. All of this absorbed knowledge would prove easily adaptable into my own business plans and strategies.

Delivery

Success fosters understanding and growth. I grew as a professional because I was accepted as part of the thinkAbout team. As a paying laborer, I knew my ideas were being considered and that I played a role, albeit a relatively minor one, in the successful delivery of this event. I was proud to be part of this event and eagerly await my next opportunity to be a performer on the thinkAbout stage.

David Holder is a 2003 thinkAbout alum and Director, Tourism and Economic Activity for the Fredericksburg Tourism Department.

The Real Value of Paying Labor

by Ed Cohen

Chicago, IL. So last summer I'm in O'Hare airport about to take a business trip when I finally get a chance to catch-up on my periodical reading. I was flipping through *Event Marketer* and ran into Pine & Gilmore's paying labor article. ["Take This Job and Sell It", *August/September 2003*, p. 52. – Ed.] At first, I was skeptical, mumbling in my mind about how this is such crap – which is exactly what I was doing when I read the theory of paid experiences in *The Experience Economy*, and now I advocate that to all my clients. I realized this, too, made sense.

How much is a day with Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore worth? Would you pay a premium price to roll t-shirts and walk around Manhattan with them? The paid labor position offered the opportunity to be in an intimate setting discussing *The Experience Economy*, learning more about their latest ideas, challenging them on execution implications, and even unloading one's own thoughts. Before I knew it, my credit card statement was proof enough that people are always willing to pay to get closer to the action.

While many readers will see the paying labor positions as an additional revenue stream, I believe the concept's true value is in its ability transform core consumers into key influencers who will deliver brand buzz. As one of two paying laborers from last year's thinkAbout, coupled with my 10+ years in the events industry, the following are suggested steps on how paying labor can payoff for you.

Pulling Your Target In

No matter the size or scope of an event, your target should always remain the same. During the planning phase, focus your resources on attracting existing core customers. Your proposition should include a *theater of the mind* description to build intrigue.

For example, when I first contacted Scott Lash to find out about thinkAbout's paying labor position, he maximized our

ten-minute conversation by inquiring about my promotional experience, skill set, and points of interest. He then weaved these talking points into a *visual* picture of how the paying labor role could benefit me in my current position, as well as how it would compliment my long-range career plans. There was no doubt after that conversation that I was in!

Drive Intrigue

In many cases, there is a significant lag time from registration to event. It is vital to build a sense of anticipation during this period. This delay is the time to introduce thought starters, begin seeding emotional connectors, and engender brand messaging.

If you have a web presence, it's a great time to drive your paying laborers to your site. Start creating a level of discovery by providing your laborers with "internal" access codes, which provide behind-the-scenes information. If you don't have an internal web presence, don't worry – the thinkAbout team provided the same sense of inclusion by sending mailings and copying us on internal emails.

Remember, the experience starts at the initial moment of contact. When executed properly, much of the event's anticipation, emotional connection, and branding are seeded prior to the participants arriving on-site.

Create an Authentic Experience

Each event is going to look very different based on the particular experience; however, one thing is fundamental: you have the opportunity to transform an event participant into a brand activist. So make sure to use your time wisely and capitalize on the participants existing affinity toward your brand.

The key is to have an experience that is part show, but also allows authentic discovery. I never felt that the thinkAbout team was playing flawless Disneyesque characters with a pre-set agenda. (It could've been that huge leak in the ceiling hours before the event. . .)

Sure there was a working outline and some talking points, but we were producing an event *together*. We were stage managers, technical support, and creative

directors. It wasn't glamorous climbing under chairs, walking city streets in circles, and testing walkie-talkies. But I was behind the curtain making it happen; there is no way to script such a real experience. The thinkAbout crew did their job by managing the experience process so that we two paying laborers could craft our individual path of discovery.

Empowering participants is a key step to transformation because this step allows them to take ownership by developing an emotional attachment. You know you have created this change when guests begin to craft your message in their own words. Now they are no longer spouting mere brand knowledge, but advocating their personal experience. And this has powerful implications.

Although not every experience needs to be choreographed to a Disney standard, it is universal that all facilitators walk the talk. One of the highlights of my paying labor experience was a preview of the walking tour with Joe. He was gracious and patient, answering all my questions and giving me the personal attention that was the core of my paying labor experience.

At the same time, he was moving our agenda forward by providing core talking points, which allowed me to assist him with his presentation the following day. By extending his knowledge, Joe provided my real payoff by helping me establish credibility. It was here that I transitioned from a paying laborer to a thinkAbout brand ambassador. This provided me the forum to subtly seed the conference's authentic message, while at the same time communicate my belief in the brand's core message, which was an affirmation, and indeed a manifestation, of the Experience Economy itself.

Think of it in these terms: if this article inspires just one person to participate as a 2004 thinkAbout paying laborer, I guarantee it will be money well spent. See you in Cerritos.

Ed Cohen is a 2003 thinkAbout alumnus.

Frontier continued from page 1

the City of Dreams remains artistically rooted firmly in the past – in order to attract the very tourists that are driving away the real residents. As late architecture professor Steen Eiler Rasmussen says in his book *Experiencing Architecture*, “Venice itself looms like a mirage, a dream city in the ether. And this impression of unreality persists even to the very threshold.”

vs. The Venetian

Ah, Venice. Meanwhile, in Las Vegas (one of the fastest-growing cities in



The famed canals of the fake Venice.

North America, a place where the rising number of relocations each year increases its ratio of residents to tourists), across the street from the Mirage Hotel & Casino sits The Venetian. Its owner, Sheldon Adelson, often boasts that folks enjoy his hotel and casino precisely because of its “authentic” representation of Venice, right down to the knock-off gondoliers singing renditions of Italian songs while “pushing” their ersatz gondolas back-and-forth (while actually they glide on tracks) across an artificial canal that sits a floor above the casino. Adelson told the *Casino Journal* “We believe [Las Vegas hotel & casino] New York-New York is a ‘faux’ New York. We are not going to build a ‘faux’ Venice. We’re going to build what is essentially the *real* Venice.”

W. Easley Hamner, principal with The Venetian’s architects, The Stubbins Associates, Inc., extended his client’s vision when he told *Inland Architect Magazine*, “By visiting the Venetian, millions of people who might never have the opportunity of seeing the real Venice can experience at least a portion of its romance and learn of many of its qualities. . . . Based on public and media reactions, the quality of materials, the experience of the Venetian, and its verisimilitude all seem unexpected. Unlike other destination resorts in the area, the marble is real, the columns and facades three dimensional, and the entire experience unique.”

Professional humorist P. J. O’Rourke picked up on Adelson’s comments to contrast the authenticity of the two places in the pages of *Forbes FYI* back in 2000: “But is the Venetian ‘essentially the real Venice’? For a Venice that’s on the wrong continent, in the middle of a dust bowl and was built last year, the Venetian is surprisingly authentic. The Campanile, for instance, is fake, but so’s the one in really real Venice. The original Campanile, completed in 1173, collapsed in a heap in 1902, and a replica was constructed in its place.”

O’Rourke’s observation of the obvious does little to persuade most people that Venice itself is as inauthentic as The Venetian, let alone that The Venetian can make any claim to being as authentic as Venice itself. People know the two places differ not just in degree but in kind. (As our editor at Harvard Business School Press told us, “Only a rat cannot detect the difference between the two places.”) But this comparison provides little insight into how some places (like any object) gain a reputation for authenticity while others do not. Frankly, a more relevant comparison exists in comparing competing Vegas resorts. In Las Vegas – an entire city arguably themed as “Anything Goes” – just why do some venues attract more guests than others? Why does The Venetian thrive while Aladdin Hotel & Casino, for example, lies bankrupt in Chapter 11?

The difference seems to be what consumers perceive in terms of authenticity. One sees The Venetian honoring Venice with its own version of St. Mark’s Square and other self-determined “Italian” traditions; whereas one walks into Aladdin and – despite its outward motif – immediately asks, “What’s it supposed to be?” The Venetian says to guests, “We know what we are, and you know it too.”

This can be illustrated with a personal experience we encountered on a gondola ride at The Venetian during our 2001 thinkAbout event. After finishing a rousing aria, our gondolier responded to our applause by saying “Grazie, grazie” followed by a perfect rendition of Elvis’ famous line – “Thank you.

Thankyouverymuch” – in effect, genuinely winking at Las Vegas’ entertainingly authentic inauthentic self. Time and again, visitors encounter features at The Venetian that resonate with those who come to Vegas seeking escape from the humdrum strip malls, service stations, and suburban sameness of everyday life. For them, it all comes off so real. Really. As O’Rourke concludes, “Most of the things that aren’t authentic about the Venetian’s Venice are, like the smell, an improvement.”

Our Worldview and Welcome to It

Things do not always seem as they are. As human beings today we mold not just



The Venetian in Vegas. Referential, but even more fake than the original.

our landscape, but increasingly our talk, our actions, our experiences – the very lives that we lead – in such a way that *everything* today is part of a reality we manufacture ourselves. This holds *especially* true for the economic offerings we create as businesses. Despite all the companies slapping “real” and “authentic” all over their products, nothing that’s offered by businesses is really authentic; it’s all artificial, manmade, and fake. Despite how much consumers today desire authenticity in a world of paid-for experiences, businesses can’t manufacture authenticity out of thin air; it’s not possible.

We realize these are bold statements. Not everyone will agree – particularly those responsible for designing, making, or marketing offerings that must appeal to the new consumer sensibility of authenticity. To see why these statements are correct – and what then businesses must do as a result – we need to take a brief detour into philosophy. Before we do so, it’s important to note some context. Philosophers and social critics discuss authenticity from a single, solitary viewpoint: that of the individual human being. While understanding where this concept entered cultural consciousness is crucial, it’s not where we’re coming from. The world we write about is the world of business.

**Nothing
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and fake**

There is also a strain of thought on authenticity that follows from the above, that of the authentic leader in business. That also is not our concern here. Yes, leaders must be equally authentic in our modern-day times, but our interest revolves around the authenticity of *economic offerings* themselves and by extension the *businesses* that offer them. Our method, as with the concepts of Mass Customization and the

Experience Economy before this, lies in observing what is going in the business world, identifying far-reaching changes that threaten accepted ways of thinking, and then developing frameworks to enable executives, managers, and workers to see these changes in a new light and thereby figure out what to do about it. And that means we have to get – at least a bit – philosophical.

The place to start: with Lionel Trilling, the late professor of English at Columbia University, who in 1970 presented a series of lectures on the subject at Harvard University that were compiled into the tome *Sincerity and Authenticity*. He sets himself the task of describing how the notion of sincerity from centuries past transformed over time into our present-day concern for authenticity.

For Trilling, authenticity “implies the downward movement through all the cultural superstructures to some place where all movement ends, and begins.” It is the alpha and omega of modern-day man’s conception of self, which Trilling recognizes in his discourse as he moves from discussing the “*idea* of sincerity” to the “*ideal* of authenticity.”

Trilling observes, most tellingly, that “from [Jean Jacques] Rousseau we learned that what destroys our authenticity is society – our sentiment of being depends upon the opinion of other people” and that for Rousseau, who wrote of the “noble savage”, authenticity consisted in “merely being not inauthentic.”

Such negation, in fact, drives much of how authenticity has come to be conceived and defined today.

Within Trilling’s lectures (as well as other such studies) we detect three distinct ways in which social philosophers negatively define authenticity:

That which is **not monetary** – Trilling says, “Money, in short, is the principle of the inauthentic in human existence.” In other words, *commercializing* any activity yields the inauthentic.

That which is **not mechanical** – Trilling says, “It was the mechanical principle, quite as much as the acquisitive principle [i.e., using money]. . . which was felt to be the enemy of being, the source of inauthenticity.” In other words, *altering* the natural order with machines yields the inauthentic.

That which is **not of Man** – Trilling says, “We understand *a priori* that the prescriptions of society pervert human existence and destroy its authenticity.” In other words, *qualifying* one’s choices by the norms of society (Mankind with a capital M) yields the inauthentic.

Of course, the first two negations follow from the third, as both money and machines are manmade devices, created within and supportive of society.

Thus we can see the obvious but nonetheless startling conclusion: *Nothing offered by any business is authentic; it’s all artificial and fake, being monetary, mechanical, and of Man.* The moment humans alter the created (“natural”) world, the resulting product is *manmade* and hence inauthentic. Sell that product and it’s doubly so – *money* being that manmade device representing the human effort expended in altering the natural world. And what business today can produce any output – even an experience – without resorting to some *mechanical* means? Clearly, if any business – as a manmade, mechanically dependent, monetary-seeking enterprise – creates an offering, then that offering by its very nature is indisputably inauthentic.

Realize, too, that *there is no such thing as an inauthentic experience* because that experience happens inside of us (including our experience of using all the different kinds of economic offerings). If *we* – as human beings – experience an offering, then that experience by its very nature remains inherently authentic (as long as in any sense we remain authentic human beings). But if a *business* – as a manmade, mechanically dependent, monetary-seeking entity – creates an offering, then that offering by

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Reality and Authenticity in the Experience Economy

by Michael Benedikt



Austin, TX.

We move about in an increasingly media-saturated environment. In suburb and city, the semantic quiet of nature has become harder to experience

on a daily basis, as has the semantic quiet of classical and “classic” Modernist architecture – buildings that radiate that they are what they are, that they have already said what there is to be said, that although they stand by us and *for* us, they do not seek to persuade.

Reality – this quieter reality, anyway – is under threat, as well as authenticity, which is the authority that comes with being real in just this way.

Some argue that this state of affairs is an ineluctable consequence of the evolution of our economy. As increasingly we make our livings and seek our pleasures in the fields of information created by others, more of us are drawn into working in a new kind of economy. It is an economy beyond the familiar “information economy.” Today we live and work in the *Experience Economy*. In a book of this name, Joseph Pine and James Gilmore argue that as free-market capitalism evolves, the locus of new value creation (and, with it, the locus of new profits) shifts from the production, distribution, and consumption of *commodities*, first to *goods*, then to *services*, then to *experiences*. This development can be seen as counteracting the simultaneous movement in the opposite direction: the steady devaluation, under routine price competition, of hundreds of once-estimable goods and once-luxurious services to low-profit commodities and automated “services.”

The focus of more and more of our creativity, then, is not things, really, nor services conceived of as quanta of useful labor, but bounded information fields, treated as property, in which memorable and entertaining *experiences* can be had. Thus restaurants compete on atmosphere and service, the food becoming more like art on a plate and the waiters more like actors. Climate-controlled shopping streets become “Roman marketplaces”; gigantic suburban bookstores imitate old-time, intimate ones with living room furniture, readings, and espresso bars (can a resident cat or two be far behind?); movie houses become movie “palaces” again (but much more economically, off free-ways); and indoor entertainment complexes vying with sports stadia and art museums. Sporting goods stores become gyms, arenas, and celebrity-meet spots. At children’s hospitals, patients become explorers, “embarking on a journey to recovery”, while new housing developments imitate historic or imagined small-town life (if at quadruple the density). In short, every place, every product, every service and event in the Experience Economy becomes *themed*, as though it were part of an endless carnival.

These developments have not been lost on architects, of course. Ever since Postmodernism broke through late-Modernist orthodoxy in the early 1970s, more and more architects have joined in the business of entertaining with their buildings, i.e., providing pleasurable experiences. Although rather few architects today are interested in perpetuating the classical-historical pastiche that Postmodernism first favored, many are still interested in the proposition that *all* buildings – not just amusement parks, museums, hotels, aquaria, and such – ought to provide exciting and memorable experiences, albeit with trendier shards and curves or luminous twisted volumes crammed with electronic paraphernalia. Follow this trend and extend it, and ultimately we must arrive at a new general understanding of architecture – to wit, architecture as *experience* a la Jon Jerde or, let it be admitted, Frank Gehry – and a new base-line as to what the word “experience” means in the everyday.

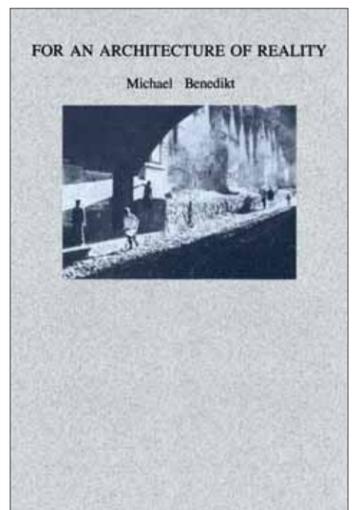
Given architecture’s long history of providing visitors marvelous experiences – think of Rome, think of Venice, think of Disneyland – why does the thought of our whole economy mutating into an Experience Economy not thrill every architect to the marrow? After all, it means more spas to design, more resorts, more visitor centers, art museums, planetariums, casinos, movie palaces, retail emporia, etc. – fun and profitable projects, all. Might such architects’ misgivings belie nothing more than elitism with respect to popular culture? Might it belie the fear of not being able to compete successfully with the other experience-producing industries, like film, music, sports, and television? Maybe.

But perhaps architects who worry about the rise of the “Experience Economy” are on to something more significant. Perhaps, like canaries in the proverbial coal mine, they are registering a disturbing shift in modern culture, namely, the loss of a healthy *balance* between what is *real* in life and what is not – between what is authentic and what is not – and of the balance that architecture has historically been instrumental in providing.

Consider – every person has an abiding need to make this related set of discriminations: between the actual and the illusory, between the true and the false, between fact and fiction, the natural and the artificial, the material and the non-material, the significant and the trivial, the authentic and the fake, the guileless and the motivated, the found-ready and the made-ready. . . and so on. Why? So that at the very least we can freely choose between them, or more basically, because without the ability to make such binary discriminations we could not function at all. Let’s try to take this thought to architecture.

In *For an Architecture of Reality*, I analyze the quality of *realness* into four elemental components, namely, *presence*, *significance*, *materiality*, and *emptiness*. “Presence” is about a building’s perceptual clarity and self-confidence. “Significance” is about its involvement in actual people’s lives. “Materiality” is about a building’s physicality and made-ness, its heft, temperature, airiness, and so on. “Emptiness” is about a building’s lack of didacticism, its indifference to us combined with a generosity that we can’t or don’t want to explain. These four qualities, I argue – presence, significance, materiality, and emptiness – comprise our sense of reality about everything, including buildings. But it is *buildings*, which routinely and everywhere embody all four of these qualities to some degree because of what they are, that play an important role in providing people with benchmark examples of what reality is and what the experience of reality feels like. This standard-bearing is all the more needed when we live in a mediated and media-filled world. Buildings that have powerful presence, significance, materiality, and emptiness serve as touch-stones relative to which other, more ephemeral human productions are shown to be less than fully real, though perhaps no less important for life’s richness. On this accounting, the play is less real than the set, which is less real than the theater, which is less real than the hill the street covers over.

Am I ignoring architecture’s many long flirtations with illusion and artifice? No. Poised between nature and culture, architecture, even at its most fanciful, has always shown two faces at once, the real and the un-. However much artifice architecture has historically indulged, and it has, the face of reality always shone through as a matter of technological, physical necessity. One could not see the *trompe-ciel* angels without also seeing the heavy vaults they were painted on. With today’s light-weight construction methods and late-20th/early-21st century attitudes towards “reality”, the situation has



changed. Keeping skepticism at bay takes a great deal of work, as does striking a balance between real and unreal at the scale of both buildings and cities. When so many building types are reduced to card-thin containers; when, genie out of the bottle, any shape dreamed of can, with computers, be rigged with light steel, plastic, gypsum, and glass; when “reality” is a word seldom printed or pronounced without quotes or a knowing chuckle. . . only economic constraint keeps us from building our most extreme architectural fantasies.

Some architects have responded to the potential horror of the situation by regressing, as it were, to Miesian modernism, i.e., to stringent economy-of-form and absolute “honesty” in construction, and refusing to indulge in the formal and semantic possibilities offered by the full

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A Tourist in My Own City

by Tracy Metz



Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Cities, in the Netherlands and elsewhere, have become popular destinations again since the 1980s. The city seems to have been rediscovered as a motor of economic and political development and – as an extension of that – as the center of leisure, consumption, and culture. The more people live in the suburbs, the more the city becomes a playground, a leisure domain for shopping and strolling, for eating out and going out.

The main charm of the center of Amsterdam is its authenticity: it was not conceived or constructed as a tourist attraction, but has been built over the centuries for and by the residents. The combination of a single, lively city where people live and work in what it still a beautiful, compact, historic setting like the canal area, enchants many a visitor – particularly Americans like myself, for whom the idea of downtown was for decades synonymous with decay and anger. Now, however, the biggest threat to Amsterdam is the opposite: the lethal picturesqueness of a city like Brugges in Belgium.

Slowly but surely the character of the inner city is changing. The already precarious balance between visitors and residents, between housing, work, and entertainment is tilting in favor of the latter. It is increasingly the visitors who set the tone and determine policy decisions, because entertainment has grown to become the number one inner city function. According to the Amsterdam Tourist Board, almost 3.2 billion euros [\$3.9 billion] were spent in 2000 on entertainment in the city as a whole, more than half of it in the city center. I feel like a tourist in my own city, an object in my own museum, an attraction in my own theme park.

Center of Consumption and Culture

Visitors stroll enthralled from one cute shop to another, while the residents see a gradual one-sidedness take over. The fish-

monger makes way for an antique dealer, the cobbler for a fashion boutique, the grocer for a cosmetics lounge, and the houseboat further down the canal has been turned into a Houseboat Museum. ("See a houseboat from the inside!") As gentrification proceeds apace, the everyday, commercially weaker functions cannot pay the inflated rents.

During the past ten or fifteen years the city council has also put a lot of effort into improving the look of the city, particularly the esthetic quality of public space. Dam Square has been repaved twice, now with small granite cobblestones. The "Amsterdammertjes", characteristic posts meant to stop cars from parking on the sidewalk, are disappearing; the roads along the canals are being resurfaced in

an old-fashioned baker on the corner, but they buy their bread from the supermarket." It is the visitors – in 2000 five million of them came from other countries, 5% more than the previous year, and they spent no less than 3.4 billion euros [\$4.2 billion] – whose euros finance the decor in which the residents live on a daily basis.

The moment is bound to come when, as a resident of the historic city center, you are actually pleased to see dog crap or an illegally parked car. The city is losing its everyday quality, its mundane ordinariness. On the crest of the wave of prosperity, city branding, and fun in all its guises, Amsterdam is turning into a city for people who are strolling. You can pick out the residents easily: they are the ones who zigzag over the pavement in an attempt to over-



Everyday scenes in Amsterdam: a disappearing facet of normal life as the city increasingly becomes a caricature of itself.

dark red brick, stone curbs, and street lamps with a historic look to them.

This process is full of ambiguities. On the one hand, the city becomes more attractive – for the people who live there too. Without those ten or so million visitors a year, this city of less than a million inhabitants would never have the wide and cosmopolitan range of restaurants, shops, and culture that makes Amsterdam the village-sized metropolis that it is.

Consider the baker on the corner: "I wouldn't be able to make a living here without the tourists who buy a packet of 'stroomwafels' or a tin of 'Jodenkoeken' as a souvenir", he says. "The locals like having

take the dawdlers and the gawkers, or ring the bells on their bikes to warn the foreign tourists of the existence of that unique Dutch phenomenon, the cycle track. It's a good thing that the lobby that wants to rid the city center of cars has not gotten a foothold lest the city die of beauty.

For Amsterdam, as for many popular tourist centers, that success is also a menace. This process of aestheticization, of museumification, spawns an environment that is made to please – threatening precisely that authenticity which distinguish-

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Postcards and Memories

by William Ian Miller



Ann Arbor, MI. Have you not also experienced the small shame of having felt more for a photo or reproduction than for the thing itself? It seems we often prefer

the fake. Nature can be at its best in postcards or nature documentaries. When *en scene* I am never quite sure I am positioned for the best possible view, with the best light, in the right season, to say nothing of the vexation of bodily discomforts and the insects (and tourists) who claim the outdoors as their own. I am determined too that the kids better enjoy it since I paid a small fortune to bring them here. Better not waste such an opportunity. At least I can blame some of my failures to feel exactly the awe and delight I think I should feel on the kids, which may be why it was a good idea to have brought them along. When one has paid money for the view, there is pressure to get one's money's worth – felt ever the more keenly because I have to make up for the kids' lack of interest – and that complicates the pure aesthetic experience with yet another distracting intrusion, another demand upon me to perform or else. I am assaulted from two directions: I not only worry that the kids are not feeling it as they ought, but that I am coming nowhere near my wife's quiet appreciation of the scene. Going alone doesn't solve the problem either because of the need to share your oohs and ahs and have them confirmed by another. There is sometimes an overpowering urge to confess the depth of your experience, if you think it deep, within seconds of its occurrence.

But the sublime seems to invite the ridiculous. We, for instance, often consider the expedition a success when we

find that the scene lived up to the postcard, that the expectations it raised were met. The postcard (or the nature documentary) can't help but be a reference point, a standard we erect to orient and gauge our aesthetic judgments of the scene. We also seem almost bent on knowingly sacrificing the present moment to make sure we get a good photo of it or hurry back to a souvenir shop to peruse the collection of postcards, deferring the appreciation of the present to a more tranquil appreciation of an epitomized version on film viewable at whim in the future.

I am being unfair. The photo could just as well be an homage to the grand moment just lived, an effort to memorialize it. But taking a picture often ensures

We often consider the expedition a success when we find that the scene lived up to the postcard

a less than optimal experience as we fumble with the settings, wait for people to get out of the way, puzzle over which is the best segment of the panorama to settle on, and then when to commit and click the shutter. The photo can also have the unpleasant effect of diminishing the positive memory of the experience if it in fact turns out not to reflect the exquisiteness of the setting adequately.

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Conversation and Collaboration

by Mary E. Boone



Norwalk, CT. I've been working in a wide range of organizations as a communication consultant for over 20 years and the single most common mistake I've witnessed is the

inclination to view communication primarily from a broadcast – as opposed to interactive – perspective. In other words, there's a strong tendency to think in terms of "tell and sell" as opposed to "ask and engage".

Interactive communication is about *dialogue* instead of monologue. It's about *engaging* people rather than simply getting buy-in. In short, you can't be interactive if you're not conversing and collaborating.

The shift to a more interactive perspective on communication brings with it a host of opportunities for organizations regardless of size, type, or industry. Communication in business is often considered soft or intangible – something that's incidental after the real issues of numbers, strategies, or business processes. This can be a very costly assumption. If you plan to innovate, engage your customers, and get things done in your organization, effective communication is key to your success.

There are many methods and technologies that can help you to connect, inform, and engage the stakeholders that are important to you. In my latest book, *Managing Interactively*, I outline over 40 ways in which you can make communication more interactive. In this article, let's focus on just one of them: mega-conversations.

Mega-Conversations

Mega-conversations are meetings that involve large groups of people focused on a common topic. They have been used for many years in the field of organizational development and to date have primarily been aimed at improving internal communication. What makes mega-conversations different from any other large meeting you might attend is that they involve large groups in a dialogue as opposed to an audience/speaker set-up.

There are a number of different methods that are aimed at providing large groups with an interactive experience, including Open Space, Future Search, and GE's WorkOut. These innovative approaches to creating dialogue have been used for many different purposes, but all of them have the same objective: to create a collaborative environment where creative conversations produce ideas that can be useful to all of the people participating in a meeting.

A number of organizations even have used large group approaches to engage their customers. In doing so, they're able to collaborate with customers instead of just asking for opinions and feedback. For example, Boeing involved its customers in a large meeting where they assisted with design modifications to the Boeing 777. The mega-conversation provided interesting insights, according to Billie Alban, author of *Large Group Interventions*. One customer participant from United Airlines pointed out that the proposed location of the engine would interfere

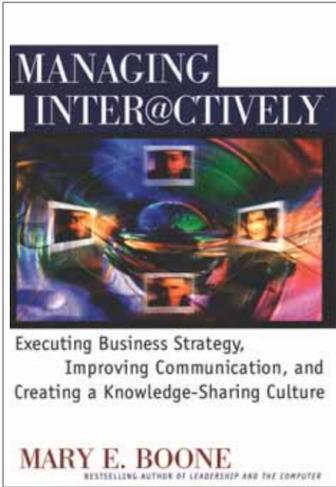
with fueling, resulting in the need for United to either get "eight-foot mechanics or 1200 new trucks to fuel the planes".

And the conversation, of course, brought out the small details as well. Another Boeing customer participant from British Airways explained that the toilet seats on the 777 made a sudden crashing sound whenever the plane jiggled. Not only did this make for a less-than-relaxing experience for the first-class passengers, but it also caused the pilots to wonder where the noise was coming from. This is the kind of detail that design engineers would easily overlook in their need to focus on speed, elevation, and other functional characteristics.

One of the most interesting side products of a mega-conversation is the level of candor it creates. When people engage in productive dialogue under the right conditions, the result is a very authentic experience for all of the participants. For that reason, mega-conversations are often used in circumstances where the topic is highly controversial. But even when the circumstances aren't charged, the level of open, honest exchange is greatly heightened with these types of meetings.

High-Tech/High-Touch

Mega-conversations don't have to take place in a physical room. Online conferencing software can provide the same



types of opportunities for people to engage in open dialogue on a particular topic. While having people in the same room produces some distinct advantages, online mega-conversations are particularly useful when it is impossible or prohibitively expensive to bring people together. Online conversations are also preferable when there are many introverts in a group or when there are significant language differences. They give people opportunity for reflection and for participating in the conversation when they are ready to do so.

Tom Sudman, President of Digital AV, says one of his clients considers the inclusion of customers in the design process to be their number one competitive advantage. Sudman says online teamwork has advantages over focus groups in gaining customer input. Instead of taking lots of time coming up with product specs by running a focus group to get statistical data to take back to product design, collaborative technologies can change the whole process and directly include the customer in new product design as it happens.

The use of technology in mega-conversations isn't restricted to virtual events. A number of pharmaceutical companies are using technology during face-to-face mega-conversations to gather rich cus-

tom feedback on the applications and effects of drugs that they sell. They bring together large numbers of physicians who sit at small tables of up to 10 people. Each table has a laptop that is connected to a network. Conversations are held at the tables and input from these conversations is gathered and entered into the computer for later analysis.

Ground Rules for Mega-Conversations

Each large group method has its own approach and philosophy. However, there are some commonalities in implementing mega-conversations:

Rule 1: Decide what you want as a result. If you decide to engage customers in a mega-conversation, make sure that both you and they know why they're there and what both of you want to get out of it. Simply holding it for the purpose of "improving relations" is a laudable goal, but you're more likely to achieve that objective if you use the session as a means of actually doing something productive. If you ask people to contribute their time and ideas and then do nothing with them, you will destroy your credibility and end up generating cynicism instead of results.

Rule 2: Make it equal and open. In a mega-conversation, everyone has an equal voice – from CEO suite to assembly line – which is what allows the conversation to create an authentic, candid environment. In classical rhetorical theory, the Greeks insisted that people enter a debate in a state of mind called *self-risk*, in which the person not only opened him or herself to listening, but also to *being changed* as a result of the interaction. So while debaters would argue points, they did so not to win, but rather to come closer to the truth. The same state of mind is important for conversations (whether large or small). If you ask your customers (or any other stakeholders) to tell you what they think, be prepared to hear (and speak) the truth.

Rule 3: Hold the conversations in a flexible physical environment. Large group meetings present significant challenges in terms of logistics. There's a need for the flexibility to break into small groups, come back together as a larger group, and use a variety of materials to capture thoughts and ideas. Using the appropriate tables, having movable furniture and movable walls, etc., can make an amazing difference in the quality of a mega-conversation. And, interestingly, the same thing is true online – you must pay attention to the way in which the software works and use it to design your meeting well.

Interacting With Your Customers

The potential that mega-conversations bring to customer relationships is enormous. Not only can mega-conversations produce information *about* the customer experience, it can also be an experience in and of itself. Many companies have not yet taken advantage of all the ways in which they could enhance loyalty, learn new ideas, and create memorable experiences through these powerful meetings.

Whether or not you think mega-conversations are the right way to go for your organization, the most important point to remember is that your communication with customers and other stakeholders needs to include a strong interactive component. If your objective is to give your customer a memorable experience of your brand, consider the ways in which interactive communication can enhance that experience.

Mary Boone is President of Boone Associates.

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es a city from a theme park. The everyday is transformed into a commodity to satisfy the desire of visitors to enjoy the most authentic possible experience and to have a story to tell when they get back home. In 2001 the city of Amsterdam offered visitors the opportunity to spend a day with the garbage fishermen of the Water Department who keep the canals clean. The refuse collectors cheerfully play the part of actors on their own floating stage.

City as Leisure Domain

Although residents and visitors are more often drawn to the city for the same attractions, the gap between the entertainment décor and the environment of everyday life will continue to grow, argues the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells. "More and more people are living in urban villages near a city, while the city center is turning into an attraction for tourists and consumers. . . . [C]ity centers gradually acquire the characteristics of theme parks. The residents seek new places to meet each other because the traditional public space in the city center is often undermined by consumer tourism."

How do you run a leisure domain like this when it has a lot in common with a site for events or a theme park, but is still a public space? Amsterdam, says director Hans van Driem of Holland's national Tourist Board, stands to learn a lot from Disney and Holland's best-known theme park, the Efteling. "Amsterdam has gone out of control as a result of its own success. The city is changing, but its management lags behind, and the city council has difficulty accepting advice from a branch which they see as vulgar. Any amusement park could do a better job than most of the councillors."

There is a tremendous tension, Van Driem continues, between politicians who are elected and are therefore accountable to their voters, and the urban economy that is dependent on entrepreneurs, most of whom live elsewhere. "The thinking in local politics is still too elitist – while at the same time they copy elements of the historical stageset such as 'old' street lights. I think that negative attitude is a shame, because you can learn a lot from a corporation like Disney, with 80 million visitors a year, a turnover over 30,000 million euros and fifty years of experience in theme parks and crowd control."



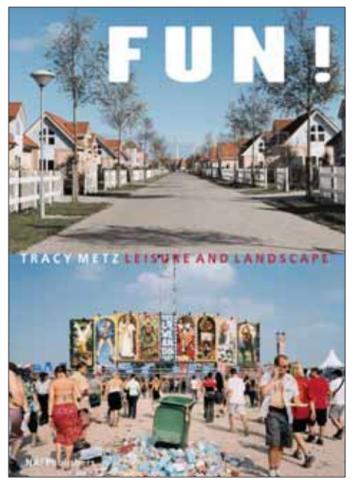
Indeed, says Van Driem, running a city center with an entertainment economy is quite different from one that depends on industry or business services. "Nowadays the entertainment economy is decisive, so it must be given priority. That is why I advocate a sort of Disneyfication of the inner city. Disney invented the theme park because the U.S. didn't have any historic city centers – we do have them and we don't run them properly!"

Staged Authenticity

In our consumption of the city as a pleasure dome, visitors and residents have become increasingly interchangeable

(except that the former stroll and the latter hurry). With one essential difference: at the end of the day, or when the excursion draws to a close, the visitor departs and the resident stays.

Residents have an altogether different



relationship to the place where they live, a different loyalty, and they need facilities that are either irrelevant (school, family doctor) or pushed out (fishmonger, cobbler) in the recreational city. If your only involvement with a place is that you like spending your money and drinking a beer there, your involvement with that place's weak spots is weak too.

Besides, visitors everywhere are noticing that the historic city centers are gradually turning into one-sided designed-to-please environments. The mix of functions that makes the city attractive for both living and spending time is shifting; it is becoming a reservation of commercially generated, purpose-driven fun. And then the charm of the authentic soon disappears. The city is navigating a tricky course between the Scylla of museumification and prettification and the Charbydis of the uniform banality of chains stores and money change kiosks.

In their book *The Tourist City* political scientist Dennis Judd and urban planner Susan Fainstein note that tourist attractions have a curious quality in common with theater: tourism, like theater, transforms those who attract the tourist's interest into objects, into performers. "The occupants of the touristic space, whether they are employees of inhabitants, are what Disney calls 'cast members' who provide local color and ambiance. . . . Since the tourist experience is contrived, staged authenticity replaces the genuine."

Seen in this light, the men whom you can join on their barge while they fish the refuse from the canals are not only engaged in living and working – they are also staging a performance. The more authentic the performance looks, the more of an attraction it becomes. Of course, this staging of everyday life is much more of an intrusion into the lives of, say the residents of an exotic island (who depend for their livelihood on tourism) than for the residents of Amsterdam, for whom life goes on anyway, tourists or no tourists. But a European capital too has to take into account the importance of tourism for the urban economy.

I am not trying to hold back change, but to *hold on* to the casual, the everyday, the unsuspecting, that distinguishes a city from a tourist concept. But, admittedly, for me too the city centre is a source of "experience" as the place I live in. There's no escape: I'm a tourist in my own city.

This article is based on Tracy Metz, Fun! Leisure and Landscape (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2002), pp. 90-105.

On Becoming a Creation Company

The Power of Models to Change Our Organizations

by Tom McGehee



Plano, TX. Usually when I introduce people to these concepts, I do it in person. I have a whole conversation that I have carefully developed over the

years. It took so long to develop because this is a tough idea for people to understand, but once it sinks in. . . WOW. Why is that? When people understand the nature of models, they realize that they can change almost everything about their organization. Constraints that once seemed fixed in cement just disappear. It's amazing.

Let me try to demonstrate here in print the way I do it in person. I don't start with an agenda, or rules, or an introduction. I stand up in front of the room and hold a toy car.

"What am I holding in my hand?"

Often no one wants to answer this obvious question, so we share a long and somewhat uncomfortable silence. Why do I let this simple question hang in the air? The participants don't understand this but I am not just talking about models, I am modeling. I am modeling the behavior I want from them throughout the session. I am not there to facilitate, convince, or coerce. I am there to enable conversation, and a large part of conversation is listening, or, in this case, waiting to allow discussion to begin.

Finally someone suggests an answer. "It's a toy." Then another: "It's a car." At that point the dialogue has started. The participants have no idea where it is going, but it's still early and they will usually give me the benefit of the doubt and play along. From that point on the discussion goes on something like this below. (For the purpose of illustration, I will record their answers in quotes and what I believe their thinking is in parentheses.)

I ask: *OK, what else is it?* (You mean it is several things? All these answers seem right to me.)

Silence. (Where the heck is he going with this anyway?)

"It's a car."

Is it a real car, I ask?

"Of course not."

Why not?

"Because it's smaller than the real thing. Oh, any other reasons?"

"Yeah, it's not real."

Not real? How do you know that?

"Because it is just a model."

So are models not real?

"Well, most are not, but some are real."

They are? Can you give me an example? (Silence)

Are all models smaller than the thing they represent?

"No, some are larger."

Can you give me an example?

"An atom, DNA, a circuit board." (Now a few are starting to engage.)

Have any of you seen DNA, I ask? (All the heads shake side to side – except for the time I asked this of a group from Genentech.)

Then how do you know what DNA looks like?

"Because I've seen a model of it," someone replies.

So your basis of reality for DNA is based solely on a model, a representation? Are there other things that you believe are real, when you have only seen a model?

A hand in the back. "The flag," he says.

Tell me more, I say.

"The flag is a model. I've seen men die for it and I've seen people burn it."

You may say it's a model, but to me it's much more than that."

(Silence. Everyone's thinking: I didn't think we'd be talking about this, we have work to do!)

So models are representations. Sometimes they represent specific things, sometimes larger ideals or concepts. If a model is only a representation, then it means that something has been left out. If it had everything it wouldn't be a model, it would be the real thing. So who decides what goes in a model?

"The model maker."

And how does he decide those decisions?

"They are based upon what he decides he wants the model to do."

Who decides when it is no longer useful? The model maker? The person using the model? The customer? What if they can't agree?

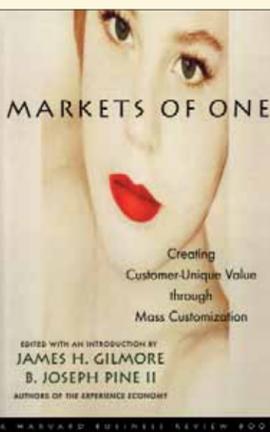
(The room is silent because this isn't an easy question. What they are realizing is that each of the people who uses a model may find different value in it, and thus, to make any real change, they are truly going to have to collaborate.)

The Purpose of Models

This conversation can go on for quite a while. The important thing is not where it goes, but that the group participants discovers the nature of models on their

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THIS COLLECTION OF TEN HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW ARTICLES, EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PINE & GILMORE, CHRONICLES THE EVOLUTION OF BUSINESS COMPETITION FROM MASS MARKETS TO MARKETS OF ONE.



The American Ethic of Authenticity

by Dinesh D'Souza



Rancho Santa Fe, CA. The ideal of authenticity now helps to define what it means to be an American; beyond our shores many people find it incredible and incomprehensible.

Even within the United States it is controversial: many cultural conservatives react to it with fear and loathing. Irving Babbitt's famous critique of [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau anticipates many of the charges we hear today. Babbitt sees Rousseau as simply weird, exhibiting "an eccentricity so extreme as to be almost or quite indistinguishable from madness". The ethic of authenticity, Babbitt writes, undermines the Christian notions of sin and individual self-restraint. Self-fulfillment is in Babbitt's view another term for selfishness. Babbitt alleges that Rousseau is an advocate of a new form of immorality that is all the more dangerous because it is presented in esthetically alluring garb. Babbitt's indictment has been echoed in recent years by cultural conservatives such as Allan Bloom, Patrick Buchanan, Bill Bennett, and Robert Bork. These men would like nothing better than to uproot the ethic of authenticity and restore the moral consensus that existed in the 1950s.

The problems with this root-and-branch repudiation of contemporary ideals can be seen by considering an example, which I offer as representative of the whole culture of authenticity. Recently I stopped into my neighborhood Starbucks, and there, behind the counter, was a specimen who probably would not have existed in earlier generations. I surveyed him with curious fascination: the Mohawk hair, the earrings, the nose-ring, the studs on his forehead and tongue, the tattoos. I could just imagine Judge Bork entering the room. His immediate reaction would probably be, "Arrest that man." Since this is not practical, another option would be to grab the young fellow and yell, "What is wrong with you, you demented freak!" From Bork's point of view there is simply no excuse for some people.

But what good would come of this? The epithets and remonstrations of the con-

servative have no chance of persuading the Starbucks guy. Indeed they are likely to have the opposite effect: "Get away from me, you fascist!" From the Starbucks guy's perspective, the cultural conservatives are enemies of freedom. He would undoubtedly regard Judge Bork as a self-righteous mullah who is trying to tell him how to live his life. The Starbucks guy believes that he has the inalienable right to determine his own destiny, to make his own choices. Thus he regards the conservative approach as presumptuous, coercive, and un-American. And he is reluctant to listen to anything these conservatives have to say.

The Starbucks guy's objection to the conservatives is valid on two counts. First, many conservatives do sound like they are against freedom. Bork, for example, has urged the enforcement of "public morality" through the censorship of objectionable songs, movies, TV shows, and Internet websites. Buchanan heartily agrees, calling state censorship "an idea whose time has come". Some religious and political activists have gone further, demanding laws that enforce Christian precepts, or the norms that prevailed in the 1950s. I cannot see how such strategies could possibly work. Is it realistic for a democratic society to enforce norms based on a moral order that is no longer shared by the community? How can a political strategy that defines itself against America's core value of freedom possibly succeed? Cultural conservatives must recognize that the new morality is now entrenched and pervasive, so that there is no way to go back to the shared moral hierarchy of the past, however fondly that era may live on in their memories.

Second, the root-and-branch rejection of authenticity ignores the moral force of this ideal. Contrary to what the cultural conservatives fear, the new morality is not simply a screen for self-indulgence and immorality. If you were to sympathetically engage the Starbucks guy in conversation, and ask him to account for himself, he would probably say, "I am trying to be unique." "I want to be an individual." "I am trying to be me." Some may find these aspirations banal, even comical, but the goals for which the Starbucks guy is striving are legitimate ones. Even at the cost of bodily pain, he wants a distinctive identity, a life that is not simply a copy of other people's lives. In short, he wants a life that counts.

I do not think that it is either right or prudent to attack him for this. The Starbucks guy is an idealist, and it would be wrong to trample on that idealism.

Moreover, his ethic of authenticity is entrenched in his psyche; how realistic would it be to uproot it? A much better approach for conservatives is to acknowledge the legitimacy of the ideal of authenticity, but to make the case that the Starbucks guy has adopted a debased form of it. The Starbucks guy wants to be original, and this is a good thing to be, but it may be pointed out to him that he is not succeeding in this, because every fourth guy at Starbucks looks like him! Perhaps there are more meaningful ways for the Starbucks guy to convey his individuality: through art, for example, or by dedicating himself to a cause he believes in.

Instead of completely denying the value of expressive freedom, conservatives would do better to embrace it – at least in part – and to focus on educating people about the rich moral sources of freedom, and about how to use freedom well. But the conservative is not the only one who needs to change; the Starbucks guy does too. He needs to realize that his bold stance against the institutions of society – against commerce, against family, against community, against morality – is a bit of a pose. Indeed it fails by its own standard: it is inauthentic. After all, it is our rich, commercial society that makes an establishment like Starbucks viable. It is the

guy is in a different situation than his parents, but they are the ones who have placed him there. In short, a little gratitude and understanding should not be too much to expect from the Starbucks guy.

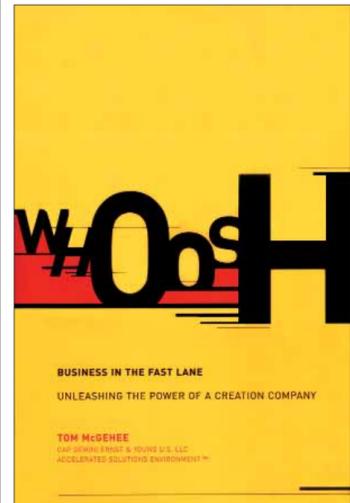
In addition, champions of authenticity and moral autonomy like the Starbucks guy should understand that identity is not completely self-generated and that freedom is not its own justification. Our identity and self-image emerge out of our relationships with others. Even the Starbucks guy's studs and tattoos are an attempt to communicate *something to somebody*. Ultimately this expressive freedom must have some underlying purpose. Freedom becomes insignificant if it makes no difference what I choose. Thus the Starbucks guy's mantra, "I can choose for myself", raises the next and indispensable question, "What are you going to choose?" It is not enough to answer, "Whatever my inner self dictates." Even the inner self needs a compass – it operates according to some substantive understanding of the good life. There is no cause to believe that this understanding is impervious to reason, and cannot be shaped through education and discussion. The grave weakness of the ethic of authenticity is that it evades this fundamental issue and simply stresses the autonomy of choice.

Since the earliest days of Athens and Jerusalem, most of the great figures of Western civilization have regarded the question of the content of the good life as the central one. The American founders agreed with this, and they created a mechanism that allows people to pursue the good life without government interference. Since the triumph of authenticity in the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis has been on radical freedom, largely to the exclusion of the question of what that freedom is for. The great conservative challenge is to bring this issue back to the forefront. Our freedom and autonomy are precious commodities, and conservatives better than anyone else recognize that it is a great tragedy when they are trivialized and abused. Their mission, therefore, is to steer the American ethic of authenticity to its highest manifestation, and to ennoble freedom by showing it the path to virtue.

Dinesh D'Souza is the Robert and Karen Rishkewain Fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. This article is excerpted, with slight changes, from Dinesh D'Souza, What's So Great About America (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2002), pp. 156-160.

Becoming continued from page 7

own. To apply models properly, they need an intuitive understanding, so it's important that they learn for themselves. It's those "aha" moments that matter here. Models are powerful tools when used properly, because they can free people to focus on what is important, which makes real progress possible.



Here's the lesson: models are representations of reality, not reality itself, and our organizations are full of them. We use models to make decisions all the time – every spreadsheet, every projection, every marketing plan is a model, but usually we are unaware of its nature. To us, locked in our non-modeling, compliance mindset, the model becomes reality.

Models serve a great purpose, because they allow us to experiment, to create, to tear down and recreate, to stimulate, to react, and to communicate. They allow us to take large concepts, like the globalization of our company, or small things, like scheduling work hours, and bring them to a working level. Models allow us freedom to try, to experiment, to test ideas, to progress, and to develop understanding. They allow for quick decision-making, and give us a way to govern repeatable actions. Finally, the use of models allows creation for other models.

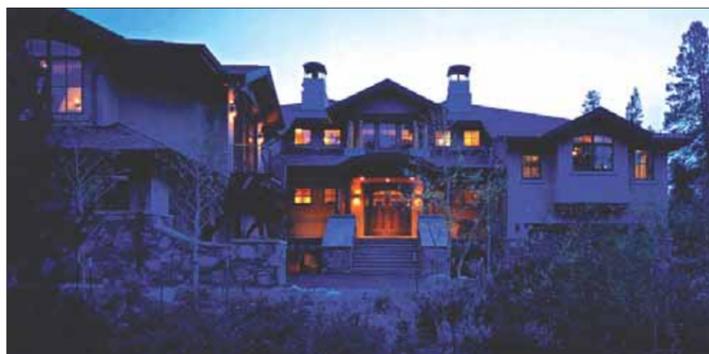
Models free us from three great constraints that prevent us from discovering the innovations that will, as Peter Drucker says, create "change that will lead to a higher level performance". Models free us from the mindsets that keep us bogged down by false assumptions and preconceptions. Models give us a way to reinvent continually how we do our work. Models let us examine multiple ideas and viewpoints, which increases exponentially our ability to handle complexity.

People didn't wake up one day and say, "Hey, let's build an organization around ourselves so it can be really screwed up and make our lives miserable!" The original intent was to achieve some purpose – very probably a worthwhile purpose. It's important to remember that. Organizations are just models; they are representations of all the things that are happening, the people who work there, the customers they serve – all are embodied in this thing called an organization. If you need to change the results, change the model.

Tom McGehee is a two-time thinkAbout alumnus and founder & CEO of The WildWorks Group. This article is excerpted from Tom McGehee, Whoosh (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001), pp. 104-106.

thinkAbout⁷

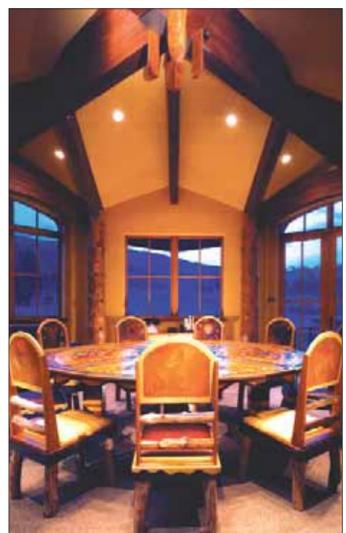
by Gary Adamson



Starizon is an Experience Design Place immersed in the Rocky Mountains surrounding Keystone, Colorado.

Keystone, CO. What do I think about thinkAbout? Apparently quite a lot, as I've been to every one, with the exception of the 1999 event in Chicago. (I sent Leigh, my wife and business partner, to that one.)

With all my schedule demands and the myriad conference/event options avail-



This is Discover, where clients (called explorers) apply the principles of experience staging to their own businesses.

able, why have I made this same choice every year? (Yes, Leigh and I are already signed up for Cerritos in September.) Is it the innovative people I meet? Is it the new frameworks I'm exposed to? (After all where else can you get a physics lesson mixed in with your business strategy?) Is it the postcard reminders that extend the lessons for a full year after the event?

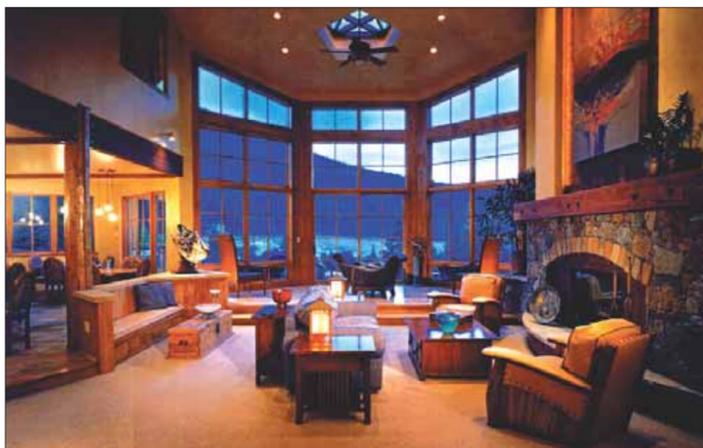
Sure, I think all of these things are wonderfully valuable, but what keeps me coming back to thinkAbout is something much more tangible. Something so tangible, in fact, that I was willing, as you'll see, to spend \$4 million of my own money on it.

More than any other event in the world, thinkAbout has taught me the importance of *place* in the Experience Economy. Whether it's the around-the-world tour of Joe and Jim's Top 10 list of experiences, or the around-the-town tour that is their incredible Learning Excursion, I have been shown the essential connection between an engaging experience and the stage upon which it is performed.

And I've applied all the lessons from all these places in building Starizon – my own Experience Design Place – in Keystone, Colorado.

Starizon is an idea – namely, that to be successful in the Experience Economy companies must commit themselves to transformational change, not just incremental improvement.

Starizon is also an approach – specifically our "Six I" process that we teach to our clients as a new management capabil-



In Explore, explorers dream of their future place in the Experience Economy and enact that vision on its performance stage.

ity. We also guide their application of it to achieve new-to-the-world breakthroughs in experience offerings that translate the philosophy of the Experience Economy into real, tangible competitive advantage.

And, as you can see from the nearby pictures, Starizon is indeed very much a *place* – one that let's our clients live in an experiential environment that exemplifies the very changes they aspire to make in their own companies. It is, by far, the most powerful teaching tool we have and the strongest differentiation we own. **AND IT ALL CAME FROM thinkAbout!** (Joe thought we embodied the lessons so

well that he decided to join us as a partner in Starizon.)

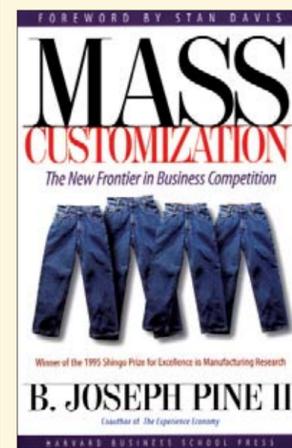
If pictures, in fact, are worth a thousand words, then this article is probably long enough. One last thought though. When people ask me if I think that I got a substantial return on my six thinkAbout investments I respond, "You bet!" But I don't think the return from the six events is additive; it's exponential! So here's to Cerritos and thinkAbout⁷.

Gary Adamson is the Chief Experience Officer at Starizon, Inc., and a five-time thinkAbout alumnus.



Every room at Starizon is named to signify its purpose. In Explore, client teams learn of the emerging Experience Economy and how to think about staging compelling experiences.

IN THIS ENDURING WORK BY JOE PINE, YOU'LL FIND THE STRATEGIES, METHODS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS REQUIRED TO DEVELOP, PRODUCE, MARKET, AND DELIVER INDIVIDUALLY CUSTOMIZED GOODS AND SERVICES ON A HIGH-VOLUME BASIS.



Postcards continued from page 6

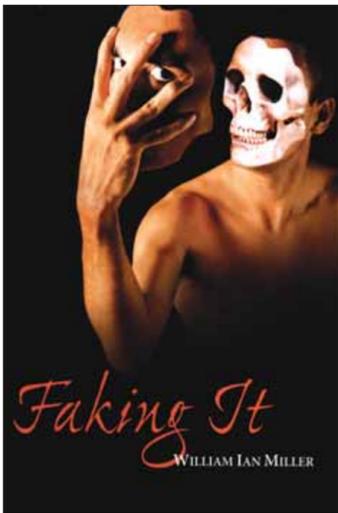
You end up having to apologize for it when you show it to a friend: it's not really a good picture, but you get the idea don't you? And though a mediocre photo works well enough to produce a very active memory of the original experience the first time it is viewed, it becomes less able to do so as the event recedes in time and the photo itself becomes more and more the primary source for the memory. You end up seeing the scene forever as you ineptly photographed it.

Memory also acts like a postcard in those scenes and paintings we actually revisit in the flesh; it can enhance the experience, but it can also make it disappointing. The memory, contaminated by the pictures we took and the postcards we bought of the scene, sets a standard by which we judge the present and sets up various interferences with present enjoyment. Good memories, as I noted earlier, may be especially good because you have selectively forgotten all the anxieties that attended the experience when we had it. This may be a kindness memory's fallibility and malleability offer us, but it is a mixed blessing, for it risks making the present fail to match the imagined past.

Stonehenge moved me when I first visited it like I never thought it would. The sheer size of the stones, the unfathomability of transporting them and raising them up given the available technology, the uncanny perfection of the way some were knocked over and how perfectly they fell, looking significantly more sublime as ruins than had they been preserved in their original glory, gave me the heebie-jeebies. I dragged the family to it because I wanted to treat them to the awe. I told them that it surpassed all PBS specials, all postcards, and this was a recommendation indeed because they are well aware of my preference for reading about places rather than seeing them, or for watching them on TV rather than dealing with the people and clumsy changes of position that comes with visiting them in the flesh. I was expecting to be moved again myself; I was disappointed. It looked so much smaller, and I could not decide from which point of the circle it looked most like Stonehenge. What was the optimal point from which to view it? And what was "most like Stonehenge" to mean?

The second trip made me doubt the authenticity of my memory of the first trip. Had I really been moved by it to the

extent I recalled, or was my memory a fake constructed to have made the first trip worth it, a self-deception concocted to avoid the self-contempt of having wasted the opportunity to be moved? Was it that the memory, in Wordsworthian predictability, was the experience to cherish, not the actual



provision of the raw material of the memory, the experience itself? What was my present experience but a reassessment of my prior experience which now too suffered for having played its part in ruining the second trip. There was no bittersweetness of nostalgia or wistfulness to add texture to the loss, just a vague annoyance at Stonehenge for not backing me up in front of my family.

Not only natural beauty or the sublime suffers the postcard effect. The museum brings you face-to-face with grand paintings you've seen in art books and on the big screen in your introductory art history class. Sometimes the real thing wins hands down and not only when it is bigger. The Vermeer is even more amazing for being smaller than you imagined it would be and you discover that it has a luminosity that is beyond reproduction, while some large paintings don't live up to the gasp you emitted when they flashed up on the screen more than thirty years ago. Such moments in art history class had all the elements of surprise: a darkened room, the big screen, the feeling you were finally getting educated and cultured. In the museum you have to deal with the crowds in addition to the painting, the annoyance of having your

view blocked, the concern you are blocking someone else's, the fear you may be looking foolish as you try to figure out how precisely to look appreciative and awed without looking pretentious; and pathetically hoping the gorgeous soul a few feet over chooses to notice you as well as the painting. You suffer feeling foolish for worrying about looking foolish, especially when you know that nobody is watching you (but they might, mightn't they? Better be prepared, just in case). Unless you are really misbehaving or are the best-looking woman in the crowded room, you will be playing to an audience of one. But that audience of one can be quite demanding and will insist that you put your best foot forward.

You know these are foolish thoughts, yet you still worry, especially about when you can declare yourself released from paying attention to the painting. That is more than a matter between you and the painting. In a museum there are many other masterpieces housed in the same building, in the same room even, jealous of your attention, getting impatient and insisting you attend to them. Not only your companion wants you to move on; the other pictures are asserting their demands too. Then, when the day is done, you feel somewhat defeated by experience, by the fact you were cowed into granting your not-quite-sincere homage completely predictably, paying attention only to paintings you already knew were to be admired.

You may be tempted to dismiss this as a highly personalized neurasthenic account, not worthy of being generalized. Sure, there are people, you will say, who are this agonizingly self-conscious, and we will even grant that many of us have experienced similar sentiments in some settings. But most of us do not find nature and museums as agonizing as you, Mr. Miller, would make them, nor the appreciation of beauty as fraught with constant self-defeating self-monitoring as often as you claim. A good number of us go to museums and are wholly absorbed, not giving a damn about what others think, other than looking around occasionally to see if we have been occupying the best viewing position too long. Some of us know we are posturing and love the posturing, love any offense it may give, or any status we may achieve by it. Posturing as an appreciator of art can put us in the proper mood to be pleased by it and to appreciate it; posing as appreciative helps mark the moment as an appreciative one and what is so wrong with that?

Others of us like the fact we are in Florence or New York or Amsterdam or Madrid and love that what it means to visit those places is go to the museums they are famous for. So how, we say, do you get the right to use "we" or bully us with that "you" with such a presumption of authority? If you, Mr. Miller, can be so anxious about a trip to a museum or looking at the trees in their autumn beauty, how can you be so complacently unanxious about claiming universality for your inner states?

I allege in partial defense that the sensibility and anxieties I have described look typically western, and its typicality outside the west seems confirmed in a negative way by various eastern philosophies that are centered on the desperate effort to train the spirit out of experiencing reality the way I have suggested we, or many of us, often do. The competitive non-satisfiable anxious sensibility that informs this book is the hobgoblin of Buddhism; it is the sullied sensibility that must be overcome and exorcized. That tormented sensibility, at least in Buddhist thinking, is

taken to be the default setting from which humankind must work to free itself. And in my defense too I ask you to consider the ubiquitous museum shop. Were the epiphany before the original grand work all that it was cracked up to be a postcard or a replica would blaspheme the experience. The shop exists as a testimony to our guilt for having blown it before the original. It is not as if we just stumble on to the shop at the end, but we feel ourselves pulled, even hurrying toward it, so that we can get a manageable version, one that is less intimidating because it won't raise such unfillable demands to appreciate it more than we are capable of. And we owe those shops a true debt of gratitude, for those reproductions do teach us to admire the greatness of the original that made us too self-conscious to appreciate it.

This article is excerpted, with slight changes, from William Ian Miller, Faking It (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 161-166.

Frontier continued from page 5

its very nature is inherently inauthentic.

And yet, as human beings we experience offerings every day that we view as authentic. As consumers, we view marble – cut, polished, and tumbled as it might be – as authentic in a way that vinyl flooring could never be. We view thick, pulpy orange juice – even though it was machine-squeezed and comes out of paper container – as authentic in way that frozen orange juice could never be. We view Archer Farms Honey & Nut Toasted Oats cereal – even though the real almonds were machine-cut and the honey likely farmed – as authentic in a way that Kellogg's Froot Loops could never be.

The Authenticity Paradox

Despite the fact that all these offerings at their core are inauthentic, nonetheless consumers view them as authentic, or at least more authentic than the alternatives. The businesses that offered them were thus able to create the perceptions of authenticity in the minds of consumers, and again the best word to describe this process is *render*. And rendering one's offerings more authentic requires embracing this essential paradox: Philosophically speaking (better tighten those seatbelts!), all human

enterprise is *ontologically* unreal – that is, in its very being, it is inauthentic; and yet, much output from that enterprise is *phenomenologically* real – that is, perceived as authentic by the individuals who buy them.

This authenticity paradox lies at the core of thinking about authenticity in business. Indeed, individuals long for authenticity, but struggle with how to gain it. Businesses long to fulfill that need by selling authenticity, but cannot really provide it. Consumers do perceive many offerings – as they do countries, cities, and nature – as authentic, so enterprises can somehow manage to render the perception of its unreal output as real – and with authenticity becoming the new consumer sensibility, companies *must* learn how to render their offerings as real.

The primary philosophical question at hand, then, is this: How does something really unreal come to be perceived as real? However, we are not philosophers. We are business thinkers, and our mission, therefore, lies in helping those in business generate practical new ideas for creating economic value from their offerings and thereby satisfy the desires, wants, and needs of their customers. Doing so today means, to rephrase the above, getting customers to perceive your inherently inauthentic offerings as undeniably authentic.

To be sure, our newly-remodeled rooms are an enticing sight. As for exciting the rest of your senses, try Coyote Ugly™, our bar & dance saloon; Nine Fine Irishmen™, our authentic Irish pub; ESPN Zone™; and ZUMANITY™ - Another Side of Cirque du Soleil™ - a show so stimulating, you might just head straight back to your room, for some enticing sights of your own.



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EXPY Exposé

All Dolled Up with a New Place to Go

EXPY Countdown

Since the very first thinkAbout, we've identified companies and offerings that, for one good reason or another, are a cut above their contemporaries in hitting the sweet spot of the Experience Economy. That Top 10 countdown, culminates in the presentation of the Experience Stager of the Year award.

The thinkAbout Times recently looked at each of our past EXPY winners. You'll find updates on their progress here in the EXPY Exposé.

1999

American Girl Place
Chicago, IL.

The first-ever EXPY winner. EXPY selection for: recognizing the value of paid-for experiences.

2000

The Geek Squad
Minneapolis, MN.

EXPY selection for: turning an ordinary service into an engaging consumer and B2B experience.

2001

Joie de Vivre Hospitality
San Francisco, CA.

EXPY selection for: an incredibly insightful and effective approach to theming.

2002

LEGO Company
Billund, Denmark.

EXPY selection for: creating a portfolio of experiences that exemplifies all ten levels of the Location Hierarchy Model.

2003

Cerritos Library
Cerritos, CA.

EXPY selection for: integration of architecture, theming, design, technology, and human performances to create an engaging educational experience.

2004

Come to thinkAbout and find out live!

An Interview with Ellen Brothers, President of American Girl, Inc., Winner of the Very First EXPY Award in 1999



Middleton, WI.

In November 1998 the first American Girl Place opened on Chicago's Magnificent Mile. This was to be much more than just a retail establishment selling the company's immensely popular line of girls' books, dolls and accessories. It was designed as a place to stage great family experiences. Inside the 40,000-square-foot location, girls and their parents can take in a musical at the American Girl Theater, enjoy a formal tea in the Cafe, have their picture (with their American Girl doll companion of course!) put on the cover of *American Girl* magazine – and more. In just over six years, that single location has welcomed more than 6 million visitors, served 700,000 meals in its Cafe, and performed to 300,000 theatergoers.

In the interview that follows, the thinkAbout Times had the opportunity to catch-up with Ellen Brothers, president of American Girl, Inc., on the company's past, present, and future, including its successful launch of the second American Girl Place in New York City in November 2003. For more information about American Girl, visit www.AmericanGirl.com.

Q: After twelve years of selling goods exclusively via direct mail order, how does a company decide to get into the very competitive retailing world, and ultimately start staging great experiences?

It's really been part of the company's approach from the beginning. When the company started in 1986, the founder, Pleasant Rowland, knew she couldn't begin competing as a mass merchandiser. She became a direct marketer – because she had to. But she also knew that could be a tremendous advantage, that she could tell a greater story through her own catalog – using the medium to develop the storylines and characters and create a world, an entire experience, around the dolls.

Very early on we saw the potential for branching out. For example, when we debuted our fourth doll, Felicity, whose character grew up in Colonial Williamsburg, we hosted a tea party there and 11,000 girls and their moms came and had tea with Felicity. So experiences really have been part of our roots from the very beginning. And as that momentum grew, this idea for a place for the

American Girl experience grew with it, and as a result we opened American Girl Place in Chicago in 1998.

Q: Do you find the experiences you stage at American Girl Place strengthen brand loyalty – and increase the duration your customers stay involved with your product line?

Absolutely. I can say our most loyal customers are generally those who have been to the store and seen it in all its glory. They are fully involved with us – they have the experience at our store; they buy from our catalogue; they shop our website; and they read our magazine. They tend to get involved in all aspects of the brand – and become our best customers.

And in terms of the store's impact, we certainly couldn't create the two-hour stay – that's the average length of a customer visit at the Chicago store – if we didn't have a great experience. Incidentally, we had to deal with some early handicaps with the store itself, in the traditional retailing sense, because we had to work around some difficult existing space configurations. But we found that we were able to create a sense of anticipation and a "what's around the corner" feel as a result, and it's turned out to be a great place of discovery as the girls explore the space.

Q: What, if any, impact on overall catalog sales can you attribute to the presence of your experiences in Chicago and now New York? In essence, does a trip to American Girl Place help increase your "share of customer"?

We know from our studies (and we've done many of them) that in the six or seven surrounding states surrounding the Chicago store – call it day-trip distance – our catalogue sales in those states are our most robust. We've proven that year after year. The numbers for New York aren't in yet, it's just too early, but we expect to see the same there, following the trend that customers in closer proximity to the store become true multi-channel fans of the brand.

Q: Among the many things you do well is gathering customer data and preferences about, and from, your customers. Can you give us an example of how you've used some of this great customer information?

Probably the most profound example happened in the summer of 2002 when one little girl wrote us a very poignant letter explaining her birthday was on September 11th, and the difficulty she was having with that. It prompted one of our editors to check, and we found nearly 2,000 girls in our database with the same birthday – and very likely with the exact same concerns.

So we made a decision at American Girl to reach out to these girls. We sent a package to the moms – not the girls directly, as we wanted the mothers to choose if it was appropriate to share with their daughters – and included a copy of one of our advice books, *Feelings*, which deals with emotions many young girls face today: being scared, worried, anxious – really a lot of issues. And we included some ideas for activities, a birthday card, and some tips to help the girls celebrate in a fun way.

The response was overwhelming. Lots of moms wrote to us thanking us for the sentiment and the joyful time it helped create with their daughters.

Q: How is the New York American Girl Place doing since the grand opening in November 2003?

Oh, it's very much exceeding our expectations – and they were already very lofty! We wanted an ideal location – and we certainly found it on Fifth Avenue. Phenomenal things are happening with the New York place. Just since the November 2003 opening we've had over 775,000 visitors, with 100,000 advance reservations for the Café & Theater. By all standards, it's been a fantastic start.

Q: The newly opened New York venue is just ten blocks from what used to be the epicenter of the toy world, FAO Schwartz, which twice filed for Chapter



Kids and their moms can enjoy a meal or afternoon tea at the Cafe.

11 in 2003. How do you avoid that same fate in a world filled with fickle customers and every-day-low-price retailers?

I get asked that a lot. For us, it's really all about proprietary offerings – what we have that no one else has. We control the product, the service, the experiences, and the place. So if a customer doesn't have a great experience in our places, shame on me.

The other big factor to our success is that we're still, to this day, the only place that's devoted exclusively to girls. It's not gender neutral; it's not trying to be all things to all markets. So we know our girls, we're steeped in intellectual property, and it helps us create something just for them. And it can be a magical experience.

Q: What's next for American Girl?

One of the most exciting initiatives is our foray into the television-movie industry. Julia Roberts' production company, Red Om Films, along with Revolution Studios and Warner Bros. Television, is producing a live-action television movie based on our popular historical character, Samantha Parkington, an orphan girl raised by her grandmother in 1904. The movie, *Samantha: An American Girl Holiday*, is currently being filmed in Toronto, and we expect it to air during sweeps week this November on The WB Network. Building on the anticipated excitement surrounding the Samantha movie, we are also introducing several new movie-related products, including a new 18-inch Nellie doll, Samantha's best friend from the series and our first-ever "friend" doll to join the historical Collection.

While entering into new arenas like the entertainment industry is certainly exciting for us, the bottom line is that we will continue to provide meaningful interactions, memorable experiences, and high quality products that girls love and moms trust. We look first and foremost at ensuring everything we do is age-appropriate, of high value, and, of course, trustworthy. It's how we approach each opportunity. We owe that to our girls.



American Girl Place visitors watch as their dolls get primped and pampered at the Doll Hair Salon.

Geek Squad Continues Quest for World Domination!

A thinkAbout Times Newsflash



Special Agents, with its staccato "Can Do!" attitude and geek attire has grown with wild abandon. While thinkAbout Times made repeated attempts to apprehend Chief Geek and founder Robert Stephens for an update, he was so busy replicating Geek Squad locations throughout the U.S. that we couldn't buttonhole one of our favorite thinkAbout alumni to get his thoughts directly. We called this update from a variety of publicly available sources and our own super-secret spy tactics. Geek on, Robert. . . and call us when you get a chance to come up for air!

Minneapolis, MN. The Geek Squad, a business that started in Minneapolis 10 years ago with \$200, has announced a new major nationwide expansion in its quest

for world domination.

This winner of the second Strategic Horizons Experience Stager of the Year award for its superb theming, inspired costuming, and wonderful theatre, this 24-hour computer support task force was acquired in October 2002 by computer superstore retail force Best Buy. (Whispers are that Geek Squad really infiltrated Best Buy in a devious Trojan Horse gambit. . .) With the full strength of Best Buy now behind it, the company continues its breakneck expansion. In recent blockbuster news, Geek Squad special agents will now be available for on-the-spot repairs and upgrades in all Best Buy stores by the time of thinkAbout Cerritos. It's a major advance for the Experience Economy and computer-tormented citizens everywhere.

According to the Geek Squad website (www.GeekSquad.com), this elite tactical unit of highly trained and highly mobile individuals seeks out and destroys villainous computer activity. These individuals have banded together and sworn to rid the

world of inferior computer behavior. Wielding sparkling badges and even sparkler technical ability, Geek Squad Special Agents repair crashed hard drives, secure networks from unauthorized intruders, contain virulent outbreaks, and even help newbies get on the Internet.

Ultimately, it's their mission to rid the world of bad computers. "That, and the fact that we can't land dates," says Geek Squad Chief Inspector and Founder, Robert Stephens.

This media darling has been known to come to the rescue of not only the common man but also the rich and famous, allegedly including The Rolling Stones, U2, The Oscar Mayer Weinermobile, and Blue Man Group. The Geek Squad is frequently spotted urging the public to contact them if they feel threatened by erratic computer activities or if they witness any suspicious computing behavior.

At press time, tight-lipped Geek Squad representatives would neither confirm nor deny the rumor of a possible movie deal. Time will tell!



Geekmobiles now patrolling Best Buy.

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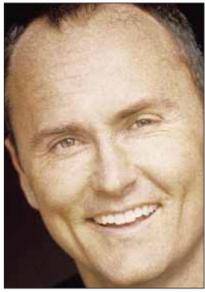


STRATEGIC HORIZONS LLP

EXPY Exposé

The Joy of Industry Recessions

An Interview with Chip Conley, Founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre Hospitality, the 2001 EXPY Award Winner



S a n Francisco, CA. Chip Conley, Founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre Hospitality (and winner of the Experience Stager of the Year award in 2001), talks

about how his company has survived the worst downturn in the history of American hotels. Amongst other things, this interview discusses why the company created Yvette, the Hotel Matchmaker, and the revolutionary implications for the hospitality industry. For more on the company (and a live demonstration of Yvette), see www.jdvhospitality.com.

Q: How has it felt riding the economic rollercoaster of the past few years?

No metropolitan U.S. hotel market had ever seen its revenues drop 40-50% in a three-year period. Not only have occupancy rates dropped, but average room rates have plummeted by \$40 per night in San Francisco and \$70 per night in Silicon Valley. And, with the introduction of online booking with third-party web sites, it's almost like the consumers' approach to selecting a hotel has been commoditized.

The big hotel chains consider it the most catastrophic change in the hotel industry in decades. And, while booking online makes lots of sense for airline tickets and rental cars that really are commodity products, it poses challenges for choosing a hotel, which is a more personalized product (you sleep with the product, shower with it, and have a more prolonged and deeper experience with it).

Q: What is the effect of your introduction of Yvette, the Hotel Matchmaker, to help overcome commoditization?

Yvette solves this by personalizing the hotel booking experience and driving consumer business to our own web site for booking rooms, which means we don't have to pay the big commissions to what I call the hotel "supermarkets".

With 25 Bay Area hotels (more than any other hotelier), Joie de Vivre is particularly vulnerable since all of our hotels are in this depressed region. Fortunately, more than 80% of our hotels gained market share in the past three years, but we've still seen them become more and more reliant on the Expeditas of the world. We have a great relationship with them and will continue putting our hotel product on their "supermarket shelves", but we realized last year that our only salvation was to drive more consumers to our own web site, www.jdvhospitality.com. And, the only way we could do that was to create the coolest little boutique place with the most personalized experience. Additionally, we're offering a low-price guarantee for our customers, which means our cool little shop matches the prices of whatever a customer finds at the hotel supermarkets.

Q: How does this new Joie de Vivre web site compare to the consumer experience on Expedia or Hotels.com?

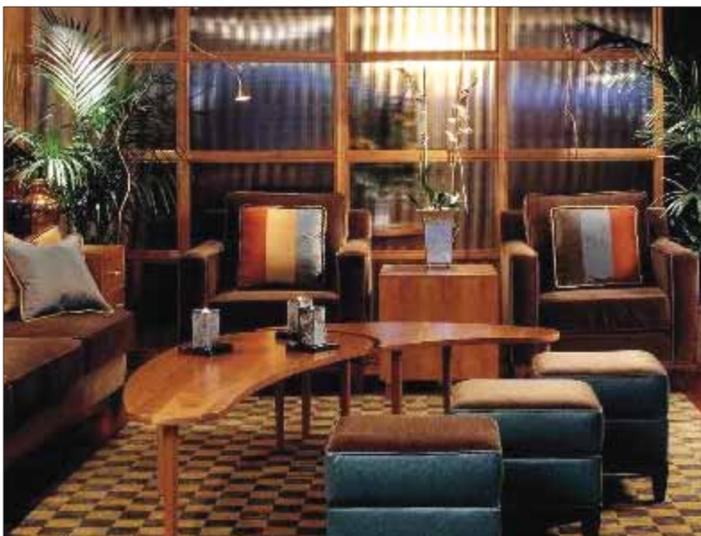
It could be compared to the difference between buying shoes at Niketown versus

Yamamoto Moss (a well-known Minneapolis-based brand strategy and design firm), recently wrote a paper entitled "Why Leisure Travel Companies Should Infuse Hospitality into their Web Strategy". In it, he writes that travel companies should try to transform the "cold, technical channel which is web booking into a warm, inviting place where brand-loyal guests feel nurtured and gratified." I read this groundbreaking paper as we were putting the finishing touches on Yvette and got a huge smile on my face because that's exactly what we're trying to do.

offerings. He goes on to say, "If ever there was an industry that benefits from personalization, it is the hotel industry." Serve up a customized product in which the brand is a mirror for the customer and you will be rewarded with higher room rates. If consumers make decisions with their head and commitments with their hearts, I think we've found a way to capture those potential hotel guests.

Q: How accurate are the results? Has the Hotel Matchmaker been beta-tested?

We've had all kinds of people take the test and have been amazed at the accuracy



Smart, creative, iconoclastic, avant-garde, and adaptive. The lobby at Hotel Avante, the site of the 2002 thinkAbout in the heart of Silicon Valley.

Our online experience should be as memorable and personalized as our hotel experience. Joie de Vivre won the Experience Stager of the Year award in Las Vegas in 2001 (which was quite an honor), so we've always been focused on creating a compelling guest experience, but now we're just making sure it starts with the potential guest's first experience with our web site.

Q: How does the Hotel Matchmaker tap into Joie de Vivre's roots as a boutique hotelier that's been around since 1987?

Since our start when I bought a run-down motel in San Francisco's tough Tenderloin district, our approach to creating hotels has been very niche-oriented. Each time we create a hotel, we imagine a magazine that helps define the hotel.

For example, for that first hotel that became The Phoenix, my goal was to create a cool and funky hotel for young people and traveling musicians. We chose *Rolling Stone* magazine as the brand personality we wanted to emulate and came up with 5 words that describe the hotel we wanted to create: funky, irreverent, adventurous, cool, and young-at-heart. Everything we did in creating that hotel – from the art in the guest rooms to the unique services we offered – came back to those five words.

This approach has helped us create soulful little landmarks full of character, and we've learned over time that the guests who tend to fall in love with a certain Joie de Vivre boutique hotel would use many of those same aspirational words to describe themselves. The hotel is a mirror for our customers. The hotel provides an identity refreshment. That's why we've built such loyalty from our Joie de Vivre guests.

In thinking about how we were going to upgrade our web site, we took all of this into account and it led us to creating the psychographic personality test that drives the Hotel Matchmaker process. But in some ways, our lack of a singular product type like W or Ian Schrage Hotels had historically worked to our disadvantage, as it's hard to describe a Joie de Vivre hotel other than to say each one is different. Introducing Yvette, the Hotel Matchmaker, takes this brand problem and turns it into our greatest marketing weapon – the fact we have a hotel for every personality.

Q: Why will web customers prefer this method of booking a hotel?

It's more fun. The fact that Yvette serves up five hotels, two local people, and six experiences to have that match the personality of the customer (based upon the quick test they've taken) is so cool. It taps into Mass Customization, with customers selecting the product that best matches their individual needs.

Peter Yesawich, the culture and trend-spotting guru of the hospitality industry, has found in his surveys of travelers that nearly 40% of Internet users would be willing to pay 20% more for customized

of the results. Of course, it depends on the mood of the person taking the test, but Yvette gives a couple of helpful hints about how to take the test in the most effective manner.

Q: Any evidence that the Hotel Matchmaker concept is working?

Yes, in all kinds of ways. First, we've seen our Joie de Vivre web site bookings as a percentage of our total revenues grow from 3% to 9% in the past year since launching Yvette. At the same time, our reliance on the commission-expensive third party web sites has only grown from 10% to 12% during the same period. Clearly, we are successful in directing more people to our web site.

We've also found that people who take the test are five times more likely to make a reservation. Most important, we've been able to track that the customer satisfaction of guests who used the Matchmaker function is higher than for our normal guest since these Matchmaker guests are finding the perfect product for them.

I can say definitively that we create much more repeat business with this Matchmaker approach than we do by attracting guests through Expedia who may be mismatched with the hotel

We've always been focused on creating a compelling guest experience. . . now we're making sure it starts with the potential guest's first experience with our web site

because their primary focus in the buying process was purely price. Finally, Yvette the Hotel Matchmaker has also become a media celebrity having been featured in everything from *The Wall Street Journal* to all kinds of national newspapers so it has been a foundational element of Joie de Vivre's marketing campaign.

Chip Conley is Founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre Hospitality and a two-time thinkAbout alumnus.

Expanding the LEGO Portfolio

Creating the Creation Experience

by Mark Hansen

Billund, Denmark. Creating with the classic LEGO brick is still the best-known symbol of the LEGO experience. The LEGO brand has become synonymous with an integrated universe of experiences that enhance children's imagination and creativity through the LEGO brick.

Perhaps the most famous LEGO experience is the LEGOLAND Parks. The first opened its doors back in 1968 displaying inspiring LEGO creations in our home town of Billund, Denmark. Breaking conventional boundaries LEGOLAND Billund gave kids and sometimes adults the opportunity to rule the world, if just for a day. Today this "little kingdom" has expanded to Windsor, UK, California, USA, and Günzburg, Germany. For some, the chance to design a LEGO creation is a lifetime dream.

Indeed, LEGOLAND California embarked on a three-month nationwide search to find its next Master Model Builder, starting in November 2002 in Washington D.C., and culminating in Orange County, CA. Participants had 2,000 LEGO bricks and 45 minutes to create a model. The specific theme of the project was not announced until the clock started, so contestants truly had to exhibit creativity, strategy, and calmness under pressure.

One of the participants, Nathan Sawaya of New York, was interviewed by Newsday.com. He made it clear that the national contest could be his big chance: "I immediately called my girlfriend and said 'Here's my dream and it can really come true!' I felt like crying, because it was so absolutely unbelievable." When asked if he would sincerely consider leaving his serious adult life as a lawyer in New York, Sawaya smiled: "If I were offered the LEGO gig, I'd be making five times less than my current salary. I'd be leaving a city I love and my girlfriend. . . . It would be a whole new world to me, and it'd be scary – in other words: Absolutely. In a millisecond." Today, Nathan Sawaya is getting paid to play as a master builder in LEGOLAND California.



A rainbow of colors greets builders and helps spark imagination and creativity.

Now, in 2004, LEGO wants to enable children and fans of LEGO to create their own products in LEGOLAND Brick Shops and in limited LEGO Brand Retail locations. Imagine being able to create a funny or impressive LEGO model with 3D elements on your PC and then sharing it through a gallery around the world with others. And then imagine that you would like to build the model in real life, with real LEGO elements. But, maybe you don't have the necessary bricks and other elements needed to create the model physically. Then you could purchase the elements needed from LEGO in any number of ways.

Just as Nathan wanted to be a Master Designer for LEGOLAND, many others want to be able to design and share their ideas through other various LEGO venues. And internally, LEGOLAND Parks and Brand Retail Stores have wished for a tool of creative inspiration to increase brick sales.

Today, it's possible to create your own or download other 3D digital LEGO models from a pallet of assorted virtual LEGO bricks using software called LEGO Digital Designer (available at www.lego.com/ldd). The model creation can be saved and used to share in a model gallery on LEGO.com with thousands of other creations from children and fans from around the world.

Version 1.1 of the LEGO Digital Designer was launched in the summer of 2003 and has already been downloaded more than 200,000 times from the net. Version 1.2 is on its way in July of 2004 and will have the added features of a "Brick List" and "Virtual Building Instruction".

The Brick List is a capability for kids to generate a list of physical bricks needed to build their creation or another creation from the gallery on LEGO.com. With this functionality, kids can find the elements from their own collection to build with. The building instruction capability will allow the creator to assemble their creation and share the instructions with others.

The LEGO brand has become synonymous with an integrated universe of experiences that enhance children's imagination and creativity through the LEGO brick

Two new creation experience offerings are now available: a CD-ROM for LEGOLAND season pass holders for the 2004 season and an in-store creation capability at LEGOLAND Brick Shops and at limited LEGO Brand Retail stores in Europe and the USA. These offerings are supported by a special version of LEGO Digital Designer in which the bricks in the software are aligned with the available bricks in the LEGOLAND Brick Shops or Brand Retail Pick-a-Brick wall. The child can build and create at home from the CD-ROM version, and then come to the Park or Brand Retail location and walk through the store and find the bricks they need: twelve of the red ones, eight by two, four of the blue, two by one, and so forth. . . . The program can even tell them in which bin of bricks in the store assortment to find the needed bricks.

The in-store offering will be available for Park guests or retail customers to build their creations in-store and have the creation placed on the gallery in the store location for other customers to see and be inspired. The customer will be able to purchase the elements needed for the creation before going home. The differentiation between the two venues is the number of bricks available to consumer to create from. A range of 50 to 100 bricks are in Brand Retail, and over 400 bricks in LEGOLAND Parks allow endless creative possibilities.



Pick-a-Brick: Building the LEGO creation experience one piece at a time.

The value is created through encouraging repeat visits to create and share their creation ideas and purchase the bricks needed to build the model physically. This is a new era for the fundamental LEGO experience of play that connects the physical and virtual play experiences that encourages creation and imagination for all ages.

Mark W. Hansen is Director of Commerce Customization at LEGO System AS and a two-time thinkAbout alumnus.



Yvette: Joie de Vivre's online web guide.

Foot Locker. The hotel supermarkets provide the most plentiful supply of product at the lowest prices, but the experience can feel relatively generic.

Lee Thomas, one of the executives at

Why Many Marketers Struggle to Make It Real

by Dave Norton, Ph.D.



Colorado Springs, CO. There has never been a better time to be a marketer. There has never been a time when consumers have more wanted meaningful experiences

with brands. And there has never been more need for innovation than there is today.

Tremendous opportunity to do great work and be rewarded for it awaits – if you can make it real. Opportunities like capturing the demand of the explosive Geotourist market for meaningful travel experiences. Or producing a real product, like the Dyson DC07 Root Cyclone – a torqued-up, bacteria-killing, 100,000g vacuum cleaner. Or promoting your vast cornucopia of brands the way General Mills has with its Box Tops for Education – the single most successful promotion idea ever to come out of Big G.

What makes it real? Intention, heart, purpose, and the ability to do the right thing for consumers. While there are hundreds of examples of how companies successfully made it real for people, there are millions of examples where they failed. The reason why marketers struggle to make it real is that most are held back by three things:

- promises that are never kept
- having no higher purpose than profit
- models of consumer behavior that reduce people to pockets

Promises Never Kept

In the late '90s, the Banking Administration Institute and the Boston Consulting Group found that the main branding challenge in financial services was to transition from creating "name awareness" to "branding the experience". They discovered that the American consumer was not so much interested in a "rich lifestyle" but rather in living "rich lives".

Not coincidentally, in October of 1997,

MasterCard launched perhaps the most memorable advertising campaign of the past 10 years: "Priceless." Such copy as "Real conversation with 11-year-old son: Priceless." captured the attention of Americans who felt hooked on plastic and plasticky experiences. Created by the New York office of McCann-Erickson, the campaign won the Gold Effie, Addy Award, and the Cresta Award, and now airs in 96 countries and 45 languages.

The Priceless campaign continues to be phenomenally successful because it taps into a truth: Some things in life shouldn't be for sale. That's the way people feel

There has never been a time when consumers have more wanted meaningful experiences with brands; and there has never been more need for innovation

today. They are barraged by buy-it-will-make-you-happy messages on hundreds of channels, vast numbers of Web sites, and piles of mailed catalogues. They want to be happy. They want live rich lives and have priceless moments with family, friends, and fun places.

But they don't believe the stories marketers tell. They are jaded. If they buy your product will their lives really be more convenient, exciting, deep, wonderful, or real? They don't think so because the experience does not align with what the advertising promises. Ask yourself, when was the last time you had a truly meaningful experience, as promised, on an airline, with an HMO, with a phone service – let

alone with a credit card?

Yamamoto Moss surveyed marketers and asked them how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: brands make life more meaningful. Only 16 percent agreed or strongly agreed with that sentiment. Fifty-two percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. And the rest, 31 percent, were neutral. Now if marketers, the producers of promises like the Priceless campaign, don't believe that brands in general make life more meaningful, why should consumers?

Yes, MasterCard has had great success with its campaign. Besides improving MasterCard's tremendous global brand reach, the Priceless campaign has helped the company somewhat shed its image as the "other credit card". (You have your Visa and/or your American Express, and then you have your "other credit card".) The Priceless campaign changed the subject from Visa's "Accepted everywhere you want to be." and American Express' "Membership has its privileges." to Mastercard: The brand that brings the most important moments of life to you. Who cares that you still can't use it at the Olympics?

But imagine what more MasterCard could have done. Imagine if people really did associate MasterCard with the most meaningful experiences in their lives because they had priceless moments with MasterCard every time they slapped down their plastic on a store counter or made a payment – or attended a MasterCard-sponsored event. They would have been perceived as more real (and they probably wouldn't be looking for a new campaign idea right now). Instead,



The Dyson DC07 Root Cyclone – a torqued-up, bacteria-killing, 100,000g vacuum cleaner.

Continued on page 22

Passion for People

Making a Contribution to the Quality of Life through Meaningful and Compelling Experiences

by Albert Boswijk



Editor's note: The European Centre for the Experience Economy was founded at the University of Amsterdam in 2001 with the main aim to ground the Experience Economy in

theory, to specialise in educational programs, and to assist organisations in the application of the theory through consulting. Its community of practice includes researchers, teachers, students and practitioners from business and government. Their purpose is to shape the body of knowledge and to apply lessons learned through sharing knowledge and best practices.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In this report from the European sector of the Experience Economy I would like to share some insights, provide an overview of emerging trends based on research, and demonstrate these trends in practice through European case studies. Our key finding: Experiences created from a place of passion for people (not purely founded in economics) make great contributions to the quality of life and are economically successful in the end. If the motive is purely economical, the lifecycle of these experiences will be shorter than those based on such passion.

These insights will definitely influence the research agenda of the European Centre for the Experience Economy in the near future, to focus more on quality of the lives of individuals and social groups and the role of experience offerings in enhancing this quality of life in an authentic and profitable way.

What's Going On?

In examining how the Experience Economy is playing itself out in Europe, we've studied the writings of sociologists, economists, psychologist, philosophers,

and others looking at the transformation of European society, including Arnold Cornelis, Meerten ter Borg, Suzanne Piët, Helmut Gaus, and Carl Rohde and Hans van der Loo. Several themes emerge in common:

Society is going through an important and deep transformation, one where self-determination and sense-making are becoming key bywords.

The economy is taking on an increasing role of helping individuals make meaning in their lives through the exploration of identity.

Authenticity – being real – increasingly drives how people spend their time.

Life cannot be fully scripted, but people must be allowed to connect and share with each other.

While these findings seem to apply in America and other parts of the world as well, they do seem to be more pronounced in European culture.

To illustrate these emerging trends, consider four European cases: Achmea Healthcare (health insurance), ING Private Banking (financial services), ID&T (music & entertainment), and Interdit (a traveling restaurant).

Achmea Healthcare

Achmea Healthcare is the leading Dutch Health Insurer with a full portfolio of insurance services. Its director, Fred Lingg, embarked the company on an experience journey in 2000. He and his management team realized that health insurance was a very low-interest service (until one becomes ill) while the industry was becoming more and more competitive. So Lingg changed Achmea's paradigm from sickness insurer to health provider, from low-interest price competition to high-interest experience staging.

Realizing that prevention is better than curing, Achmea's mission changed to helping people become conscious of how to manage their own health better. Achmea Healthcare considered the needs of customers for health offerings from birth to death and designed unique experiences to

Continued on page 13

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Passion continued from page 12

fulfill those needs profitably. It developed special benefits to members; health centers were acquired; a magazine and website introduced; private clinics instituted; and offerings created in such new areas as re-integration to work after illness.

All the new experience offerings raised revenues and became profitable. Further, Achmea discovered that taking care of the health situation of their clients lessened the amount of money it had to pay to hospitals, doctors, and physiotherapists.

Interestingly, success in the marketplace influenced and accelerated the transformation of the organization. Now, Achmea's staff focuses on the experience of people and not on the rules of delivering care. When health problems do occur, they focus on the needs and desires of their clients and do everything possible to help them regain their health. "It is a matter of empathy and compassion, people first then rules", says Lingg. This is a major shift in the behavior of the staff of Achmea, which previously was mere administrators and not people dedicated to caring about others.

But, in fitting with the trends noted above, these experiences are not the scripted ones of, say, a movie or ride, but rather involve real choices of Achmea's clients in facing difficult situations, authentic conversations and circumstances, and meaningful experiences.

ING Private banking

The core business of ING private banking is assisting private business owners during takeovers. One of the problems of small, privately owned businesses is that owners often have great difficulty in letting go of their businesses when the time comes. For ING Private Banking, however, facilitating the sales and transfer of these businesses is a core activity. So, rather than sponsor the usual golf tournament, director of marketing Jan Sinnema, after reading *The Experience Economy*, developed the concept of a theme dinner centered on "how to let go of your business".

At these dinners ING sets the stage for what Sinnema calls "a relevant emotional encounter" – an almost therapeutic setting whereby every client will go as deep and as far in talking about himself as he likes or wants to. It creates a safe environ-

this, but it was the only way to create trust with its clients. And the results have been stunning, with many participants relating how a dinner changed their lives – and with ING gaining many new business opportunities.

ID&T

At the start of the nineties, hardcore house music was breaking through in the Netherlands. Irfan van Ewijk, Duncan Stutterheim, and Theo Lelie (from whence came ID&T) were so passionate about the music that they began to organize their own house party in 1992 in Utrecht. They each borrowed \$40,000 from their parents and, despite dire warnings from family and friends, succeeded in getting over 8,000 people to attend their post-Graduation party, "The Final Exam", and made a tidy \$50,000 profit.

After this first success, the three founders wanted to organize even larger raves. And large they became, with names like Thunderdome, Global Hardcore Nation, Mystery Land, Speed Razor, and Earthquake. New offerings, such as CDs, magazines, and other merchandise were added to meet the needs of a whole new sub-culture, called "Gabbers".

Thunder Magazine became the best-selling dance magazine in the Netherlands, with over 30,000 subscribers. Then, the market changed. The fad around hardcore house music came to an end, and in order to secure its future, ID&T (which at the time employed over 50 people) had to respond. The founders decided to switch to other musical styles and in 1999 organized Innercity in Amsterdam. It was a risk, as never before had such a large indoor event been organized without hardcore music. However, ID&T pulled it off, and today Innercity is, according to its creators, the largest indoor festival of any kind in the world.

New experience offerings like Trance Energy, Shockers, and Massive followed. The latest events, a series called Sensation, with White and Black Editions, each drew over 70,000 people dancing from 10 at night until 6 the following morning. This year tickets were sold out in two hours.

ID&T further created its own radio station, two more magazines, ID&T magazine, a beach club, and a restaurant. Most recently, a theatre in the center of Amsterdam was transformed into a Moulin Rouge-like nightclub.

ID&T believes it to be in the core business of creating meaning for a large group of young people in society that are on the threshold of making their mark in life. They help these people make sense of what they see and do in the world, and thereby create their own identities. They construct an environment and a social group to which people can belong and in which they can participate.

Interdit, the Cowboys of the Kitchen

Interdit, which means forbidden in French, is a most unusual culinary concept, designed and implemented by four young creative people from Amsterdam, Brian, Jaymz, Tiddo and Niels. They are "the Cowboys of the Kitchen", and their concept can be described as a culinary, disobedient, semi-illegal, traveling cultural restaurant.

The Interdit concept is as follows: first of all the collective founders define a location where the event will be taking place. They specifically look for places that are out of the way and have something mysterious about them. A disco that is empty and needs to be rebuilt, or an old church that is not being used, an old warehouse that is waiting to be transformed into an apartment building, or the latest, the arcade under the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.



An Interdit Location – Before

Interdit does ask permission from the owner to use the place, but not from the police or other formal organizations. The staff of Interdit knows how to turn these places from nothing to something on the spur of a moment. By using crude, temporary locations, Interdit avoids expensive drawn-out startup periods and stays focused on what they are good at: hospitality, atmosphere, and good food.

The restaurant is only open for a set number of days at a particular location (from a weekend to at most ten days), thereafter going into hiding only to resurface somewhere else after a couple of months. That's how the Interdit concept stays fresh and challenging for both the guests and the initiators. Each new location further offers new perspectives and possibilities. Just a week in advance the founders notify all their contacts and relatives via e-mail and SMS and within a few days they are fully booked.

Guests sit at large tables, bring their friends and enjoy each other's company, even with strangers. They enjoy a good meal and some entertainment. The atmosphere is open and dynamic; there is room to stand up and recite a poem at the dinner table, should one so desire. The processes are smartly organized, and the food, which they call "*chauvinisticregional-europeanstyle*", is the core essential, pure and exciting.

The menu is created each day depending on what is freshly available. Primarily organic products are used in light versatile dishes – classic ingredients in innovative combinations. They steer clear of the usual and present a 6-course narrative dinner, commencing for all the guests at the same time, usually 8 pm, and taking up the whole evening. The service is quite unassuming, not formal but friendly and well-meant, supple and noiseless.

Within a few days the experience ends at that particular location. The entrepreneurs seek new adventurous locations to



An Interdit Location – After

create a fresh Interdit experience and to build a larger pool of Interdit-customers who enjoy the excitement.

The conviction of Interdit is that the public of Amsterdam is ready for a fresh impulse. An initiative that stands for pure values and especially for quality, without getting lost in complicated ideas and gimmicks. Simple, honest, temporary – but definitely innovative and exciting.

Interdit certainly is in the experience business; they create an informal, friendly atmosphere together with their guests and friends that so often is lacking in professional restaurants. They bring an informal organization to a high professional standard. Their motive, as they say, is to offer pleasure in an unusual way; it's not restricted to economic motives. Its challenge is somewhat like that of ID&T – not becoming part of the "formal world" while keeping the spirit of originality and creativity going.

Conclusions

When looking at these four cases some similarities spring to mind. First of all, we see passion as a major driver of business. In the case of ID&T the whole business started with a passion for music and dance. Interdit is based on a passion for people and for the combination of good food and unique locations. Achmea shows a passion for their customers' health, while ING exhibits it for their clients' lifestyles and legacy.

All four also focus on more than just the economic value. ID&T offers a feeling of togetherness, of belonging to something bigger than yourself. Interdit offers an ideal in combination with spontaneity, Achmea offers a context for the health of its customers, and ING a time and place where entrepreneurs can learn from each other about the next stage in their lives.

Overall, these cases illustrate that an experience provider with a passion for people and their specific needs (health, food, entertainment, togetherness, surprise, excitement, relaxation, etc.) is able to generate successful business. More specifically, these cases well illustrate the emerging trends of self-determination and sense-making, identity and meaning, authenticity, and connecting and sharing through un-scripted interactions.

In Europe the trend is towards more customer-driven experiences that enhance the quality of life, where economics are not the only driving value. Many staged experiences are considered too commercial, too artificial, too superficial, and too boring. Confronted with the question of what values they are looking for, people respond not with economic values, but social values (e.g., friendship, intimacy), cultural values (e.g., honesty, involvement, idealism), and personal values (e.g., independence, self-expression). People seek a balance between control by the experience stager and self-determined activity with its spontaneity, freedom, and self-expression.

Businesses should ask themselves: how can they make a worthwhile contribution to the quality of lives of individuals and of social groups through meaningful and compelling experiences?

Albert Boswijk is Executive Director of the European Centre for the Experience Economy.

Experience continued from page 1

here's what you'll partake in at this year's thinkAbout:

Enlivened interaction with a specially chosen – and especially engrossing – slate of book authors, including opportunities for small group, perhaps even one on one, conversation.

An illuminating trek through the stacks, across the shelves, and over digital data. The aim: learning new ideas across the breadth of our intellectual arena that each participant, working in groups, can apply to their own businesses.

A free-flowing exchange of information, knowledge, and perhaps even a little wisdom gleaned from every one's own investigations – that's why we call them *participants*, never attendees! – and forged in the crucible of connections made between authors, ideas, and participants.

Our own, new Top 10 list (and postcard exercise), complete with the announcement of the 2004 Experience Stager of the Year award winner – and our venue for 2005.

We've designed the entire agenda, obviously, to fit perfectly with our library venue – with a few twists thrown in. And through it all, what really makes thinkAbout work is the time we share together, exploring new frontiers, wrestling with different points of view, and experiencing the creative energy that permeates the event.

For now, read our *thinkAbout Times* with an eye to your own personal experiences, and your own business. Even if you're unable to come to Cerritos with us this September, you'll find the newspaper you hold carries a wealth of thought-provoking intelligence about what is going on in the business world today.

Read all about it with an open mind to soak up the circumstances, the exemplars, and the principles of the Experience Economy. Keep your own business in mind as you read, take notes of, or highlight, what interests you, and begin thinking about how you and your business should change to match the times in which we work.

But for those that want to go beyond, the place to be is the 2004 thinkAbout to be held September 29 + 30 and hosted by our friends from the Cerritos Public Library.

Do think about it.

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An ID&T Experience: The White Edition

ment where clients can freely speak about their feelings and emotions about something so very closely to their heart. They then connect to and share with other people in very similar circumstances, including past clients who tell their own stories about how they did indeed manage to let go of their business...

The special role ING's personnel is to *not be there*, to not commercially act! Only the director of the regional ING branch is allowed to attend, serving in the role of dinner host. Sinnema had great difficulty convincing his organization of

In essence, ID&T transformed the entire market, which research from KPMG estimates at \$500 million in the Netherlands alone. Through it all, the company has maintained a core set of values, which co-founder Duncan Stutterheim says are *intuition, dynamic, creative, unexpected, and no boundaries*. Its "ten commandments" include such sub-culturally specific maxims as "Only God can judge us", "Yesterday is history, today is a gift, tomorrow is a mystery", "Do the don'ts", and "Keep your dark side".



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Making the Health Care Experience Even Better. . .

Giving Us All Something to thinkAbout

by Sonia Rhodes



San Diego, CA. When you think about positively memorable experiences, what comes to your mind first? A five-star dining experience? A romantic vacation?

Taking the kids to Walt Disney World?

Or, is it perhaps your most recent colonoscopy? You know – the medical procedure where a physician uses flexible scopes to view the inside of your intestinal tract. No? Well, at Sharp HealthCare we're doing everything we can to add colonoscopy – and all aspects of health care – to the top of our customers' list of great experiences.

We know that health care is extremely important to everyone. We also know that what should be a personal, respectful, and caring experience all too often turns out to be confusing, frustrating, or downright scary. With nearly twenty years of experi-

ence in the health care industry, there isn't a week that goes by without a friend, family member, or neighbor asking me for help or advice on how to better navigate the health care system to get the care they need and deserve. It shouldn't be that way.

From Good to Great

As San Diego's largest not-for-profit health care delivery system (and largest private employer, with 14,000 employees), we believe we have a responsibility to our community to provide the very best health care experience for our patients. While Sharp has always been a good health care organization, just over three years ago we decided that good wasn't good enough. In late 2000 we set out to make Sharp a great health care organization by focusing on transforming the health care experience for our staff, physicians, and patients.

We knew that positive health care experiences meant more than the latest technology. To build the right platform for change, we set out on a national investigation to learn what the best of the best were doing to create positively memorable experiences for staff and customers. We investigated leaders in other service industries as well as other health care organizations.

We read books and journals to stay abreast of what the thought-leaders were saying – and one of our first assignments was to read *The Experience Economy* by Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore. The book became our guide, and our very first stop on a six-month best-practice investigation

was thinkAbout Chicago in September, 2000. Immersing ourselves in the economic experiences of Chicago and especially in the thinking of Joe and Jim set the stage for a remarkable journey.



Sharp HealthCare: San Diego's largest not-for-profit health care delivery system.

Along with our best-practice investigation, we also conducted over a hundred focus groups with staff, physicians, and patients to better understand what was working and what needed work. The response was overwhelming. Sharp was known to have the highest caliber techni-

cal skills and clinical outcomes, but each group wanted more from their experience.

The Sharp Experience

From that, we used the sensory assessment tools that were taught by Joe and Jim to envision all aspects of the experience we wanted to offer. We created a model with three core components: 1) Service Excellence/Experience Design, 2) Corporate Learning (Sharp University), and 3) Accountability. In September, 2001, we launched what we call The Sharp Experience – our organizational improvement initiative designed to make Sharp HealthCare the best place for people to work, the best place for physicians to practice medicine, and the best place for patients to receive care.

In 2001 we brought all of our employees to the San Diego Convention Center over a two-day period of time to attend one of three identical all-staff assemblies. We called these assemblies "re-commitment ceremonies" because we were asking our staff to recommit to their purpose, to their worthwhile work, and to making a difference in the lives of others. We used these assemblies to re-connect our staff with their heart – and the reasons they chose health care as a profession.

Health care, and the people who work in it, has always had purpose at the core. Over the years, the complexities of health plans, technology, and thousands of rules and regulations seemed to have taken the industry – and many of the workers – off track. We were giving them a chance to

reconnect with and honor why they got into health care in the first place. Staff members were then asked to serve as the architects of change by participating in one of over a hundred action teams across our organization. Overnight, we had over one thousand employees actively engaged in work teams to make Sharp a better organization.

Next, we identified our six pillars of success: Quality, Service, People, Finance,

Continued on page 22

REAL LIFE ADVENTURES by Wise & Aldrich



More medical school secrets: Scaring Patients Willless 101.

Reality continued from page 5

range of contemporary construction technologies. Others are more eager to explore these possibilities. . . but, at the same time, in the name of modernist "honesty", feel compelled to expose structure, fabrication, joints, and ductwork to public view. Yet others are quite comfortable creating dramatic and themed spaces – as long as they can be frank about the artifice (perhaps here and there showing the props behind, this being their way of being honest). But honesty is not enough, since most of the facts that buildings portray are up to architects to choose in the first place. The quest, rather, is for authenticity, which is the authority that comes with being real without trying.



Presence. Significance. Materiality. Emptiness.

And there's the rub. The moment one tries to be real, tries to be authentic, and the trying is detected, the bubble bursts and inauthenticity spills out.

But all is not lost. The best actors can make us forget they're acting. Affecting non-affectation (unless their characters are affected), they somehow remain true to themselves as persons and true to the characters they portray, reconstituting them into singular and wholly new personalities. One might argue that the "willing suspension of disbelief" that is prerequisite to the functioning of the theater and movies works unfairly in the actors' favor. But in truth, a parallel and equally willing suspension of disbelief works in the architects' favor too. People assume their buildings to be fully real, giving them as much credit on this score as they possibly can. Who can sustain thinking of

finished Sheetrock-on-studs as Sheetrock-on-studs rather than as a plastered wall? Who but an architect can tell whether an arch is really carrying a load? On the other hand, who doesn't know that the Bellagio in Las Vegas is not Bellagio in northern Italy? People are not fools to that degree. They know the Bellagio in Las Vegas to be what it is: a huge concoction and experience – with, yes, real flowers and real water up front. Matters are more problematic when chain bookstores, stocked with best-sellers and staffed by twenty-year-olds, disport themselves as cozy haunts for bibliophiles.

A world without circuses is not one I want to live in. But nor is a world that is circuses only and nothing is what it seems to be. The authenticity of an architecture that takes as its goal embodying the quieter realism I spoke of earlier of should

be no harder to achieve than the authenticity that writers, actors, and musicians of any talent routinely achieve. All we have to do is want it. Many ordinary people want that sort of realism too, and long to have experiences of it that are not obviously for sale. I offer my analysis of architecture's realism as a tool for thinking about the issue, and suggest that we look to the work of Alvar Aalto, Aldo van Eyck, Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa, and Peter Zumthor for guidance as to what authentic architecture might look like in modern times – not to mention the thousands of unassuming yet generous old buildings that still dot the American landscape, patiently awaiting our attention.

This article originally appeared in ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, November 2001, pp. 84-89, with slight changes here.



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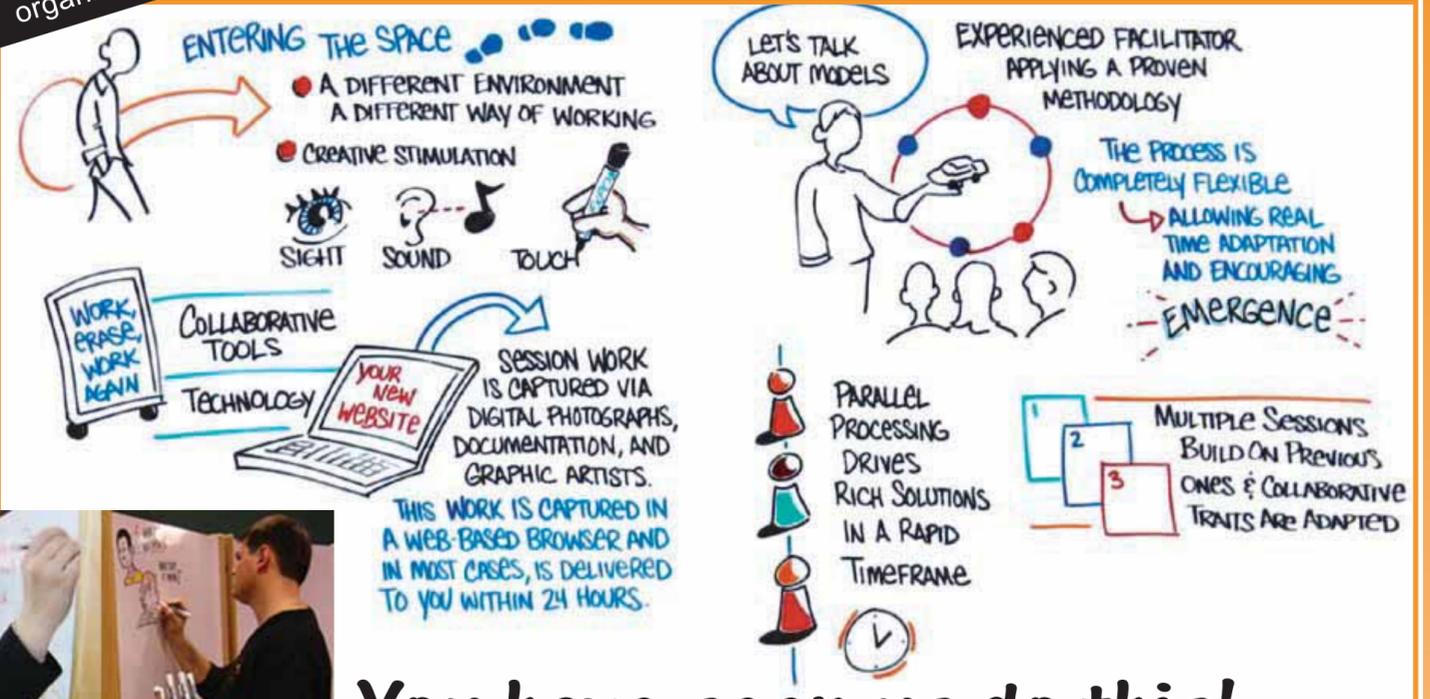


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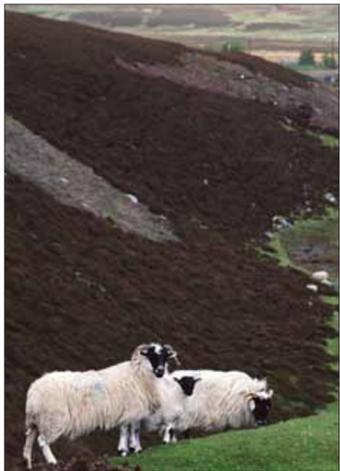
by Jim Gilmore

Shaker Heights, OH. "New Zealand is one of the most isolated countries in the world." So reads the first sentence of the *DK Eyewitness Travel Guide for New Zealand*. I was booked to speak at the 2001 New Zealand Food & Wine Tourism Conference, and buying the guide was part of the research and preparation I normally do for any such engagement.

The country's geographic isolation became scrupulously evident during the twelve-hour flight from LAX to Auckland. A subsequent domestic flight within NZ's North Island, however, provided a greater appreciation of its psychological and emotional isolation. For in Napier, boarding the aircraft required no security screening – no identification check, no "Have you packed your bags yourself?" no metal detectors, nothing! What an escape from the hassles of travel back home.

But it was the education gained from the visit that provided the most valuable memories. The Experience Economy thrives in New Zealand. Far from the familiar loci for experiences – Vegas, Orlando, Amsterdam, London, Tokyo – New Zealand is home to a rich mix of experiences exemplifying the kind of enterprise that increasingly comprises new economic output.

In Auckland, tourists pay to view the city from the observation decks of Skytower, while locals take in the casino, restaurants, and shopping in Skycity below. Others stroll down Parnell Road, New Zealand's magnificent "Mile of Style". There's an IMAX, of course, but there's also "bridge climbs" over the very top of the Auckland Harbour (suspension) Bridge. Elsewhere, one can take in Lionzone: The Lion Beer Experience, or visit Agrodome, a sheep and cattle farm offering animal-show entertainment ("sheep shows"?), hands-on milking and shearing classes, guided tours, and other agri-rides.



New Zealand: more than sheep and hobbits.

an enormous water park bizarrely located in the middle of the Hawke's Bay wine region, or interact with sharks and penguins at Underwater World. There are experiential retail venues like The Golf House and Candyland. Need transportation? The "alternative" coach-bus company Kiwi Experience advertises that it *never* takes the most direct route from point A to point B! What a perfect distinction between a mundane service and a memorable experience.

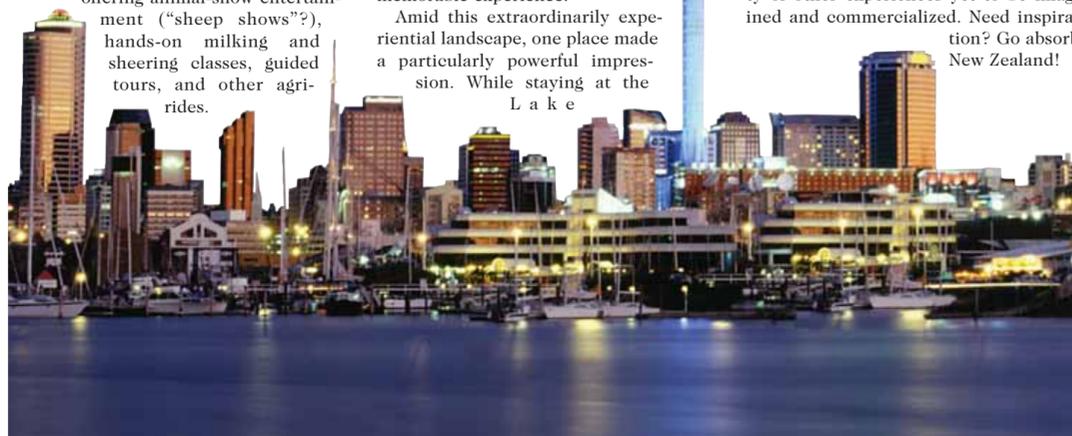
Amid this extraordinarily experiential landscape, one place made a particularly powerful impression. While staying at the Lake

Taupo Lodge, the proprietor pointed the way to Scenic Cellars, New Zealand's largest wine retailer (the serendipity of choosing Lake Taupo for an overnight stay provided some additional research fodder, as the store's wine-cellar tour supplied a delightful experience). And just around the corner, the most amazing experience was encountered: McDonald's!

McDonald's? Yes, indeed. Right there in of all places, Lake Taupo, NZ, was a McCafe. Strategically, esthetically, and geographically positioned between Starbucks – found in only the largest NZ cities – and the cafes and tea-rooms that literally adorn every village along New Zealand's two-lane highway system, such McCafes (now numbering in the hundreds worldwide) offer "A Whole New Experience at McDonald's" (as the tagline reads on the, still, paper place-mats). Amazingly, it's a place for customers to spend *more time* at McDonald's, not less (the traditional focus of *fast* food chains) and to form memories (we took a picture of the "golden" arches formed in brown on the foam of our cappuccino). But wait – and with apologies to Gertrude Stein: There's more there there. In addition to an indoor *and* outdoor playground, an old DC3 airplane repainted as McDonald's Airlines offers an alternative dining venue. Climb the stairs and spend time experiencing an in-flight Happy Meal!

So the worldwide icon for the Service Economy, McDonald's, now stages new experiences – in New Zealand! Ah, but it makes perfect sense. This country has invented, exported, and created one of the world's largest experience industries: Bungee-jumping. It's next biggest export? There's *Lord of the Rings*, of course. But also something called Zorbing, where one's placed inside a large ball and rolled down steep hills. . . .

Don't worry; be happy: there are plenty of other experiences yet to be imagined and commercialized. Need inspiration? Go absorb New Zealand!



Pine's Top Ten getAways

by Joe Pine

Dellwood, MN. With two girls aged sixteen and fourteen, I'm in a bit of a different situation than Jim, enjoying both family vacations and getAways with my wife, Julie. We also sometimes take standAlone vacations while at other times extend a business trip into a mini-vacation. (Hmmm – I detect a 2x2 matrix emerging!)

So here are ten places I love to go to across all permutations, in order of how well each place hits the sweet spot:

Pebble Beach – Including Monterey, Carmel, and its environs, this is our absolute favorite place to be (no matter which quadrant of the 2x2 we happen to be in!). If you're a golfer, you *have* to play Pebble Beach at least once in your life. Julie and I had the opportunity to see the 2000 U.S. Open there, when Tiger Woods set record after record.

Hilton Head – Two years after we were married, with Julie seven months pregnant and me on crutches, we took a vacation in a place where for the first time I actually wanted to stay longer when the trip was over. Now we own a Marriott vacation place at Grande Ocean resort.

Arizona – On an extended trip around the entire state, one truly can believe they can fill an entire magazine, *Arizona Highways*, with pictures of its beauty. And in the winter, it's a great place to spend an extra day to – you guessed it – golf.

Amsterdam – My favorite city to be in, now largely out of familiarity. There's always something new to discover, with most everything within walking distance. Even if you don't smoke cigars, stop in the P.G.C. Hajenius store for a wonderful

retail experience that all by itself hits the sweet spot.

San Francisco – An absolutely wonderful place to visit, even if you wouldn't want to live there. The history, the happenings, the Joie de Vivre hotels. . . . A truly beautiful city with fantastic shopping, great jazz clubs, terrific theatre – and where I first talked with Doug Parker about the three of us joining together to form Strategic Horizons LLP.

Side Lake, MN – Julie's father still has the family cabin where she spent her summers in this little community north of Hibbing. We enjoy slowing down and getting away from it all by going up north.

Las Vegas – Little-known truth: until *The Experience Economy* was published, I'd never even *been* to Las Vegas! Now it's my favorite spot to extend a business trip by checking out the latest and greatest experiences. My favorite place to stay in the Experience Capital of the World is the New York – New York Hotel & Casino, run by my good friend Felix Rappaport.

New York, New York – Meanwhile, in the real New York, New York, one can always find something new to experience in the city that doesn't sleep. If you haven't been there since 9/11, you simply must visit the site of the former World Trade Center and pay your respects to those that fell there.

Orlando – We used to go here every other year or so when the kids were littler, but it still holds our allure for nostalgic reasons, for closeness to my father in Tampa, and for the new and wondrous in escapist experiences in this premier experience hub.

Yellowstone National Park – You have to see the natural beauty of this place at least once in your life.

Principles from Paradise

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore

Aurora, OH. Surely you've seen the advertising taglines – "A Magical Experience", "Once upon Our Lifetime", "It's No Place Like Home" – all touting Atlantis on Paradise Island, Bahamas. The scale of this renowned experience of Sol Kerzner's Sun International astounds: a 63-slip marina, 38 restaurants, 18 holes of golf, 11 swimming areas, 11 exhibit lagoons, 10 tennis courts, 2 porte-cocheres, and 1 casino – not to mention a luxurious spa, a comedy club, an under-21 nightclub, Discovery Channel Camp, retail shops, and oh, yes, miles of pristine beach.

Perhaps few readers own or manage an experiential offering that can rival this amazing destination resort. But that should not preclude extracting principles from Atlantis and creatively applying them to your venue. If the ancient myth of a lost continent can inspire such an exemplary Island experience, then surely the modern-day Atlantis can inspire an archipelago of ideas for all the smaller, but no less important, businesses that together represent the bulk of the Experience Economy.



So consider these ways to enhance your experience:

Package, package, package. Most experience staggers offer packages of one sort or another (season passes, annual memberships, local tie-ins, and so forth), but they're often embraced reluctantly, featured sporadically, or promoted haphazardly. Worse, such packages often focus exclusively on price, price, price. Atlantis certainly advertises its prices, but they don't come across as a discount. Why? Well, its everyday pricing is the package offer. The sales pitch for its packages offers more than mere cost-savings or convenience, it promises completeness – the fulfillment of an overall experience – exemplified by offering packages atop packages (book a hotel package, then add a meal or golf package). The lesson: Make packages your unapologetic lead, not your last ditch effort to drum up demand.

Package a backstage tour. Atlantis also makes an offer to *non-guests*. It charges \$25 to visit the place via its (front-stage) "Discover Atlantis" tour. Granted, it can command such a fee because the experience is *worth* \$25. But the mere existence of such an offer serves to *validate* the value of its core packages. Consider a

somewhat easier route: think about what behind-the-scenes tour of your venue could be leveraged to elevate the image of your experience. And don't be surprised that much of what you consider mundane may fascinate those unfamiliar with the ins-and-outs of your business.

Offer options for all ages. One of the most ingenious aspects of Atlantis lies in alternative experiences for any age group. Take its water slides. The much-publicized "Leap of Faith", situated atop the (recently constructed) ancient Mayan Temple, is not for little tikes (or the faint of heart). But there are plenty of alternative rides, ensuring nearly every age group finds something appealing – from "Ripples" slides for the smallest tots, moving up through various intermediate rides, to a number adult options, and a "Lazy River Ride" for the whole family to enjoy. Do you similarly offer something for everyone, regardless of how young or old (or how timid)?

Define a signature center. At the heart of Atlantis is "The Dig", which houses underwater remains and artifacts of the (anciently drowned) continent of Atlantis. This maze of underground corridors provides incredible views of the exotic marine life of the resort. Given the vastness of the

place, it also provides the invaluable function of *centering* the overall experience in a way that pointedly translates the Atlantis theme into a credible reality. What core experience could you use to provide the same sense of integrity to your theme?

Sign on a signature artist. Elsewhere, Atlantis displays the luminous glasswork sculptures of Dale Chihuly. These pieces provide sightseeing spokes to the resort's "The Dig" hub. More importantly, it does so through use of a single artist's work. You probably can't afford equally expensive art to set off your experience, but you can introduce some art (or craft) – and when doing so, limit yourself to a single, local artist's (or artisan's) work, so that its display becomes your signature sightseeing attraction.

Set up a signature photo spot. A large, empty throne graces one entrance of the Atlantis Casino, serving as the one must-spot for picture-taking. Children and adults alike hoist themselves into the massive seat to commemorate their experiences. Got such?

Don't let the lessons of Atlantis be lost!

This article originally appeared in Entertainment Management, September/October 2002, p. 10.

Gilmore's Top Ten getAways

by Jim Gilmore

Shaker Heights, OH. What getAway spots do I recommend? Well, my children are ages eight and six, which accounts for many selections on my list. I do manage to split evenly between U.S. and non-U.S. destinations. Simply in alphabetical order:

Atlantis – a must at least once in one's lifetime. I dig The Dig, and there are water ride and slide experiences for every age. Despite the visual appeal of the familiar hotel towers, I prefer to stay at the timeshare villas for the added space. (See "Principles from Paradise" also on this page.)

Camelback Inn, Scottsdale – a must in March. Enjoy poolside breakfast, a walk up Mummy Mountain, and then head to the pool. It's also just a short drive to numerous Spring Training baseball venues, and I always try to take in a Phoenix Coyotes (NHL) game.

Chalet du Lac, Iseltwald, Switzerland – near Interlaken for certain conveniences. The balcony view off one's room here is grand. I love walking about the small hamlet. Many glorious day trips can also be had from here.

Horizons by Marriott, Orlando – another place on the list for March baseball. One day at Disney is all I can handle, so

Horizons offers a welcome respite. There's a wonderful villa and my children love the pirate pool. It's a great family experience.

L'Ermitage, Beverly Hills – rather than take red-eyes home on West Coast trips, I opt to spend an extra night, and to spend it here. It's my favorite hotel. I pack plenty of CDs, order in-room dining, and really relax.

London – 'tis my favorite city. I like to hotel hop and also take in some West End productions. I try to include a Sunday on my stays, just to worship with the saints at Saint Helen's Bishopgate, near Lloyd's of London.

New Zealand – the two islands would surely require two months or two years to fully explore. New Zealand is the first place I'm planning to return to when my wife and I become empty nesters. (See "Absorbing New Zealand" also on this page.)

Shadøxbrook Resort, Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania – Go in the summer and enjoy golfing, bowling, miniature golfing, swimming, and ice cream eating beneath two cow heads, all in one rural resort located in my hometown.

Wales – stay at a bed-and-breakfast in Laugharne; spend an afternoon at low tide at Dylan Thomas' Boathouse. It's perhaps my favorite spot on all the earth.

Westin, Maui – enjoy a Heavenly Bed on this heavenly island. Ah, the sunsets. . . .

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Entertainment

For the Contemporary Jazz Collector

by Joe Pine

Delwood, MN. A confession: I'm not much of a rock and roll fan. (Indeed, I barely recognize half the artists to whom Jim refers nearby, referentially or otherwise.)

When in my office, I tend to listen to classical music in the morning (mostly baroque, actually), contemporary jazz in the afternoon, and so-called "New Age" in the evening. When going out — where my attention need not be diverted to work matters — I love both the concert hall (Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is my absolute favorite) and the jazz club (for more attention-grabbing straightahead improvisation). You could say there are multiple music markets within this one customer.

Once, I was thumbing through the stacks for CDs at a music store, when I overheard a lady ask a clerk for help in picking out some contemporary jazz for her Christmas for her son, who had just gotten a CD player. (This was awhile ago!) He didn't know much, so I volunteered to lead her to the best of the genre.

It's my pleasure to share my (newly updated) picks here in the pages of the *thinkAbout Times*. These albums (can one still use that term?) are the classics of the genre and should be in every fan's col-

lection. When you play them, don't be surprised to find your attention diverted to some wonderful music.

[Please, no letters to the editor on the definition of "contemporary jazz", alternative names, relative merit or musical quality of this genre vs. "true", "straightahead", "classic", or any other jazz, whether or not these particular albums qualify for either genre, whether or not they're even any good, etc. — Ed.]

Dave Grusin, *Mountain Dance*. The all-time best exemplar of contemporary jazz from one of the fathers of the genre (and founders of GRP Records). Grusin's tinkling of the keys on the title tune, backed by Harvey Mason's expansive drums, is a wonder to behold.

George Benson, *Breesin'*. Hear the guitar master with the smoothest of vocals midway in his journey from straightahead to contemporary jazz — and before he transitioned over the top into to sappy pop.

Grover Washington, Jr., *Winelight*. Play it during a quiet dinner, whether in a group or with just the two of you.

Joe Sample, *Carmel*. An album that actually

lives up to the beauty that inspired it.

Bob James and Earl Klugh, *One on One*. It's so hard to represent the work of these fine gentlemen with any one of their solo

offerings, so listen to them at their best in their first collaboration.

John Klemmer, *Mosaic*. Hear Klemmer's soulful sax wail, more often than not over, through, and around the playing of Dave Grusin on the Fender Rhodes.

David Benoit, *Inner Motion*. Perhaps the very best of a terrific, twenty-year-plus oeuvre representing the best of contemporary piano playing. (Ask me for my David Benoit story sometime.)

Al Jarreau, *Breakin' Away*. My taste tends toward instrumentals, but every one of the songs on this album are wonderful, and wonderfully unique.

Includes the best rendition of Sammy Cahn's "Teach Me Tonight" I've ever heard.

The Rippington's, *Moonlighting*. From the fertile fingers of guitarist Russ Freeman accompanied by a long succession of both sidemen and superstars, it was so tough to figure out which album is best, and I just went with the first, from 1986.

Craig Chaquico, *Once in a Blue Universe*. The newest album completes my list, for it represents a new fusion between rock and jazz (Chaquico is former guitarist of Jefferson Starship). Now this is the sort of rock I can roll with.



Gilmore's Favorite Flicks

by Jim Gilmore

Shaker Heights, OH. Film is the dominant media of our times. Doubt me? The next time you fly on a transcontinental or overseas flight, watch how obediently all the window-seat passengers respond to the request to lower the shades for viewing the in-flight movie. Or, take a window seat yourself and don't comply. Explain to the flight attendant and your seatmate how you like to read books by natural light, and see how quickly you're ostracized.

Of course *Jet Blue* and the like take the in-flight, movie-viewing experience to a whole, new customized level. Still, I'd rather pack a DVD of one of my favorites for playing in my laptop:

Casablanca — I can watch this classic over and over, and never tire of trying to figure out what he and she think when.

The Maltese Falcon — It's the stuff that dreams are made of. The movie sends me over.

Ben Hur — Voted best film in the year of my birth, it has to be on my list.

Rocky — My favorite line: "To you it's

Thanksgiving; to me it's just another Thursday."

Unforgiven — Rich in symbolism. It's all here: the no-good, the bad, and the ugly.

Gods and Generals — As a friend at church pointed out to me, this film contains perhaps the most realistic prayers ever portrayed in film.

The Great Escape — I can't help but put this star-studded gem on my list. Maybe it's Steve McQueen and the baseball glove. . . .

A Bridge Too Far — My favorite war movie, this one trumps all others. Saving Private who?

Harold and Maude — After naming three straight war movies, I had to put some irreverent cult classic on the list. It was either this or *King of Hearts*, with the Cat Stevens soundtrack giving this disturbingly delightful flick the nod.

Forrest Gump and Philadelphia — They have to be considered as one. The back-to-back, Oscar-winning performances of Tom Hanks could not be more different or more inspiring.

You've got my list: no animation, no Adam Sandler, and no Michael Moore.

Now if we could only get the airlines to serve some popcorn!

Pine's Prized Pictures

by Joe Pine

Delwood, MN. One of the experiences our family most enjoys together is watching movies — and then talking about them afterwards. (Indeed, one can gauge the engagement of a movie by the amount of time spent discussing it.)

So it was tough narrowing down my all-time favorites to a top ten list. I concentrated on those movies I'd want to see most if stuck in a cabin in the woods where the only choice was watching movies or listening to Jim's favorite CDs. . . .

LOTR — If you need those initials explained to you, then you've obviously missed the greatest cinematic achievement of our, or any other, time. Of course, this judgment is from a guy who read each of the books like eight times growing up and spent over two years reading them to his kids as the greatest bedtime story every told. . . .

The Matrix — I was in awe the first time I saw it. And the second. And the tenth. I was even wowed by the two sequels, though of course they don't measure up. (How could they?)

Casablanca — Look up the word "classic" in the dictionary and see a picture of Humphrey Bogart putting Ingrid Bergman on that plane.

Forrest Gump — One of my favorite '80s sitcoms was the hilarious *Bosom Buddies*, and to think how far Tom Hanks has come

to become the premier actor of his, and just perhaps any, generation. This movie can be considered all by itself as Hanks' best work.

The Philadelphia Story — I often say that any movie starring Cary Grant is worth watching. I also think Katherine Hepburn was a phenomenal actress. This was their best work together.

Toy Story + Toy Story 2 — Wonderful technological achievements combined with superb storytelling — with the amazing achievement of the sequel actually bettering the first film.

Raiders of the Lost Ark — Sure, it was an incredibly exhilarating movie, but also one that changed the ways movies were made. Every adventure yarn after it had to increase the excitement quotient all the way up to and including "non-stop".

Shadowlands — A surprising love story with the subtle backdrop of the greatest love story of all.

Somewhere in Time — Long my avowed favorite movie (despite some rather poor directorial choices). I'm a sucker for time travel movies, and this tearjerker always tugs at my heart. (Jane Seymour as the love interest has something to do with that. . . .)

The Dirty Dozen — A sentimental favorite: the very first movie I saw twice while it was still in the movie theater.

Rock and Roll Referential

by Jim Gilmore

Shaker Heights, OH. On my first visit as a Batten Fellow to the Darden Graduate School of Business at the University of Virginia, I picked up a September 4, 2003, copy of the MBA student newspaper, *The Cold Call Chronicle*. In it, Darden professor Ed Freeman and his son, Ben, co-authored a front-page article entitled "The Death of Rock and Roll?". The two lamented what rock and roll music had become, noted how modern-day bands have lost connection with the blues, and pined for rock music with real meaning.

At its climax, the article dared readers to name any album recorded in the past twenty years that "belongs in the same breath" as these ten:

Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin II*
Allman Brothers, *Live at Fillmore East*
King Curtis, *Live at The Fillmore*

Jimi Hendrix, any album

The Beatles, *The White Album*

Carole King, *Tapestry*

The Doors, *The Doors*

The Clash, *London Calling*

Bob Marley, *Legends*

Cheech and Chong, *Big Bambu*

Of course, I couldn't resist the challenge and began thinking about various rock-and-roll recordings of more recent vintage. In mulling over the possibilities, I found myself struggling to think of any rock artist without simultaneously making mental reference to some combination of previous rockers. It quickly became an exercise confirming our contention that being refer-

ential provides a means of rendering authenticity.

This referential authenticity is evident in other genres of music as well; indeed, it arises with any other genre of economic offerings. For example, I highly recommend Richard Peterson's *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* for insights on how this unfolds in country music.

So reflect on this with me, ignoring the specific albums and focusing instead on the artists. Then consider how any breath-worthy suggestion for a contemporary equivalent can be defined by referring to two rock stars from decades before. Ready? Ah, one, two. . . .

Led Zeppelin + Iggy Pop = Red Hot Chili Peppers

Allman Brothers + Paul Simon =

Dave Matthews Band

King Curtis + Joni Mitchell = Mary Lee's Corvette (at Arlene Grocery!)

Jimi Hendrix + Tom Jones = Prince

The Beatles + The Beach Boys = Barenaked Ladies

Carole King + Richie Havens = Tracy Chapman

The Doors + Paul McCartney = Nirvana

The Clash + Bootsie Collins = Kid Rock

Bob Marley + Peter Frampton = Lenny Kravitz

Cheech and Chong + Lenny Bruce = Adam Sandler

See how uncannily this works? (Hmmm: from "Going to California" to "Californication".) Try defining some other contemporary artists (Charro + Cher = Britney Spears?). More importantly, consider how your business today could render itself more real by referring to the past. That's just one thing we can explore together at Pine & Gilmore + you = thinkAbout!

Now I need to recommend my own ten LP's worth of tunes for your listening pleasure. . . . Rather than list my all-time favorites, I've made ten choices extending this referential theme:

The Grammy-winning *Timeless*. This tribute to Hank Williams features an amazing array of artists, from Bob Dylan to Johnny Cash. Sheryl Crow's cover of "Long Gone Lonesome Blues" makes you wonder why she doesn't do country all the time.

Wayne ("The Train") Hancock, *Thunderstorms and Neon Signs*. I once heard country singer Katy Moffat refer to Hancock as "the reincarnation of Hank Williams". Darn right — as The Train really gets the juke joint jumping. (Interestingly, Hank Williams III covers the title track on his *Risin' Outlaw* album.)

Let's add three albums featuring covers of Tom Waits tunes: *Step Right Up*, *New Coat of Paint*, and *John Hammond, Wicked Grin*. (Have a listen and then start your Waits collection with a copy of his folksy first album, *Closing Time*.)

A Nod to Bob: An Artist's Tribute to Bob Dylan on His Sixtieth Birthday. Don't think twice about getting it (or the Victoria Secret Exclusive, *Lovesick*.)

Mary Lee's Corvette, *Blood on the Tracks*. Recorded live at Arlene Grocery, NYC, Mary Lee's Corvette daring cover of my favorite Dylan album somehow manages to out-nod the official Nod.

House of Blues issued *Paint It Blue: Songs of the Rolling Stones (This Ain't No Tribute)*. I'm not a big Stones fan, but I love this album.

Ain't That America: The Bluegrass Tribute to John Cougar Mellencamp. An uplifting instrumental album that, stripped of the original lyrics, actually yields a greater appreciation of the Indiana songwriter.

Jerry Garcia & David Grisman, *So What*. This instrumental album includes three tracks offering separate takes on the Miles Davis jazz standard, "So What".

Finally, an additional jazz note: I'm delighted to see Al Jarreau's *Breakin' Away* on Joe's list. Jarreau singing his own lyrics to Dave Brubeck's "Blue Ronda A La Turk" blew my mind away when I first heard it.



Sports

Authenticity in Baseball

by Joe Pine

Yankee Stadium, Bronx, NY. Last season, this diehard New York Yankees fan took the opportunity to see his favorite team play against the Seattle Mariners in fabled Yankee Stadium. It was a terrific pitchers' duel, won 2-1 by the Yankees' Mike Mussina.

The Mariners took the lead 1-0 in the top of the fifth from three consecutive singles, but catcher Jorge Posada tied it in the bottom of the inning with one swing of the bat off loser Joel Pineiro. An inning later now-departed second baseman Alfonso Soriano scored what would prove to be the winning run on his own solo home run.

Posada provided defensive heroics as well, throwing out two base runners, including Ichiro Suzuki trying to steal second base to end the eighth inning. (An especially exciting play for the crowd, filled as it was with Japanese tourists coming to the U.S. to see Suzuki battle against the Yankees' Hideki Matsui, for later that week the two teams met again in Seattle.)

As sparkling as the game was, it was the venue that made it special: Yankee Stadium. The House that Ruth Built. The home of the most storied franchise in baseball, the New York Yankees, which has won almost a third of the World Championships and almost half of the American League pennants since Babe Ruth led them to their first World Series in 1921. The team did not win its first Championship, however, until 1923 – not coincidentally, the maiden year of Yankee Stadium. (Fittingly, the Babe hit a home run in the Stadium's very first game on April 18, 1923.)

Thanks to its age, to its rich heritage, to the many outstanding, memorable, and critically important games played there, and to the significance of that most-honored of baseball teams that plays there, Yankee Stadium clearly is *Real Real*. It is what it says it is – the home of the New York Yankees – while clearly remaining true to itself despite the inevitable

changes, upgrades, and adaptations that inevitably happen to a building erected over eighty years ago. Even when the dimensions of the center-field and surrounding fences were brought in progressively from their original gargantuan depths to a more modern distance (the left-center field fence, originally 500 feet away, now sits at 399), the team created a Monument Park, first on the field of play and then behind the fence as it came in. Standing plaques, accessible to fans before and after games, were dedicated to a long series of star players, managers, and executives (not to mention two Popes).

Contrast that with the home stadium of the Yankees' (unfortunately, winning) opponents in last year's World Series. The Florida Marlins play in Pro Player Stadium, and as far as this lifelong baseball fan is concerned, the place is *Fake Fake*. First of all, it's not even a baseball stadium – it was built for the Miami Dolphins football team in 1987 and originally named Dolphin Stadium before being re-christened Joe Robbie Stadium after the Dolphins' owner (but before its opening). It was retrofitted for baseball, beginning in 1991, with the Marlins' first season in the place two years later.

So not only isn't the place what it's supposed to be, but even with the baseball-induced renovations it's not true to the game. The stadium was amongst the first to have luxury boxes separating the hooplooi from the bleacher bum in the most democratic of traditional American sports. It has awful retractable seats, never aesthetically appealing. Nor are all the Dolphin orange and teal seats ringing the tiers. The fences have various nooks and crannies owing to its original purpose. The traditional center field scoreboard is missing, replaced by two equal scoreboards placed appropriately for the end zones of the football configuration, but out of proper sight lines for baseball. Reminders of the Dolphins abound even during baseball season, including the retired names and numbers of football stars lining the upper deck façades.

Overall, it's just a *lousy* baseball stadium.

Great for football, no doubt, but it doesn't fit the game of baseball.

To top it off, in 1996 Fruit of the Loom (!) paid \$20 million for the ten-year rights to name the stadium after its sports apparel division, Pro Player. So its name no longer has anything to do with the stadium's heritage, with its owner, or even with who or what plays there. It was sold – as in sold out – to the highest bidder, which promptly went bankrupt in 2000. Fruit of the Loom sold the Pro Player brand to Perry Ellis, which now pays nothing for its brand namesake, so the name of the stadium now doesn't even have anything to do with the company that named it!

And you really know Pro Player Stadium is fake because not a penny of public funds went into its building – it was financed completely by private hands! And you call that a Major League Baseball stadium? (Ok, actually, in the greater perspective of things, that one thing is in fact more real. . . .)

It's not that newly built stadiums can't aspire to realism. Just take a look (or, better, take in a game!) at Camden Yards in Baltimore or Jacobs Field in Cleveland to understand how even a new kid on the city block can render itself authentic through its location, its design, its materials, its homage to tradition, and even its name.

In the 1992 movie "A League of Their Own", the manager of a professional 1940s-era women's team, played by Tom Hanks, famously (and exasperatingly) exclaimed, "There's no crying in baseball!" True, but there is authenticity in baseball.

At least, that is, until the growing steroids scandal (fake bodies equal fake records), which has the potential to forever render the game inauthentic to even the most dewy-eyed of baseball fans. That would be a pity.

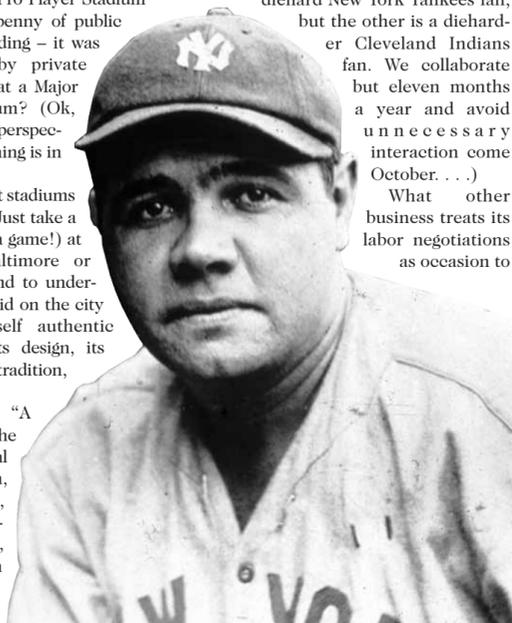
Managing Major League Baseball

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore

Aurora, OH. The current management philosophy of Major League Baseball basically can be summarized in two words: Damn Yankees. If it's bad for the Yankees and its owner, George Steinbrenner, then it must be good for baseball. Or so what amounts to MLB strategic thinking goes. (Full disclosure: one of us is in fact a

diehard New York Yankees fan, but the other is a diehard Cleveland Indians fan. We collaborate but eleven months a year and avoid unnecessary interaction come October. . . .)

What other business treats its labor negotiations as occasion to



vain to speed up the game (after all, baseball's uniqueness centers on the absence of a time-keeping clock). Instead, be true to itself, and strive to get customers to spend *more* time (and therefore more money) at the ballpark – before, during (many, if not most, leave early), and after each game.

2. Sell Experiences

Baseball is in the experience business, so it should stop acting like a goods manufacturer (talk of the "product" on the field perpetuates this erroneous positioning). Promotions based on goods giveaways are no longer enough. Today, people desire unique experiences that engage them in a distinctively personal way. If a Dennis Tito will pay \$20 million to labor as a space tourist, what experiences might command fees orders of magnitude above today's ticket prices from fanatically enthusiastic and financially wealthy fans, while simultaneously driving increased ticket sales? How about the following:

Start with *paying labor*, charging to work jobs traditionally performed by paid labor or unpaid volunteers: scoreboard operator, grounds crew, mascot, organist, spring training helpers, even honorary managers – say at the All-Star Game (and after the fiasco at the 2002 game,

don't tell us the risk of mismanaging the game too great!). Package all these offerings within fantasy camps or educational classes, and recast existing workers as hosts for such experiences.

Offer *special access*, charging for unique game experiences: sitting with the owner or General Manager during games, viewing or listening to the action with devices that connect to specially placed cameras and microphones, or traveling with scouts.

Stage experiences around *scarce memorabilia* and *customized merchandise*: eBay rosin bags, bases, and uniforms (especially those associated with specific game highlights), and allow fans to design and produce their own t-shirts using various game photos, box score statistics, and ticket stub scans (both at in-stadium kiosks and online from home).

Franchise *Internet TV* and *radio* web-casting rights to anyone willing to pay and compete for listeners. The paradigm of one local broadcast channel need not apply online, and the multiple voices may serve to attract fans from outside local geographies.

Double the business. The neglected area with perhaps the biggest opportunity to generate new revenue? The 81 away games played each year! Teams should build immersive virtual stadiums specifically designed to experience away games in a technologically sophisticated way.

Such ideas as these – all predicated on Major League Baseball being true to itself, rather than going beyond the boundaries of what it is and has always been all about – will not only generate direct revenues and profits, they'll also drive demand for more tickets and enable currently less-fortunate franchises to better compete with those damn Yankees. And if not, at least there's no more authentic result in baseball than the Yankees again being in the World Series.

More importantly, these ideas should also spark thoughts for your own business.

Much of this article first appeared in "R.I.P. MLB", Context Magazine, Winter, 2002/2003.

An Experience Per Inning

by Jim Gilmore

Jacobs Field, Cleveland, OH. I offer here nine ideas, one per inning, for enhancing your experience at The Jake, home of the Cleveland Indians.

Most, though not all, of these ideas also can be put into practice at most any ballpark. I say this because some practices should be rightly restricted to the place where they were originated. For example, throwing an opponent's homerun ball back onto the field is a practice that should only be done at Wrigley Field. Cubs' fans invented that tradition, and it's bothersome to see the act imitated elsewhere.

Indeed, Cubs fans only keep balls hit by opponents when they go foul. Of course, Cubs fans should first make sure foul

balls are completely out-of-play before grabbing them!

On to the ideas:

Counting Caps – From the moment you step into the ballpark, keep track of how many caps of different Major League Baseball you see worn by fans. You can make this a collective effort for your group, or choose sides and compete on AL vs. NL sightings. (My friend Bill Morgan came up with this cap game. A note on Bill: he won't let any kid wear #3 on the Little League team that he coaches! Priceless.)

You Are What You Wear – There's a correlation between what ones wears to a game and how actively one participates as a fan. So at least don a cap. I also wear an "authentic" 100th anniversary Cleveland Indians jersey. In this age of free agency, I struggled with what name and number to

have customized on the back, until I came up with "140-R 10", my section-row and seat number. It usually generates an inquiry from some fan in the stands as to its significance. My comeback: "And what seat are you in?"

Fellow season ticket holders throughout the land should consider customizing jerseys in similar fashion, except Yankees fans. They should be required to buy a new numbered jersey each year corresponding to George's latest superstar grab.

Pass the Peanut – I hate "The Wave" at baseball games. This inane act belongs at college football games, or frankly, it most befits indoor soccer. As a wave-mocking alternative, I like to initiate Pass the Peanut. Give a peanut to the person to your immediate right. Ask them to pass it to the person to their right, and so on, continuing until the peanut has made it all the way around the ballpark.

If you're really outgoing, you can pass out peanuts to each person seated in the aisle seats of your entire section. Then on the count of three, have them begin passing their peanuts in a contest to see which row returns its peanut first. This game promotes the same knucklehead participation as The Wave, without distracting much attention from the actual game that true fans are there to enjoy. Everyone wins.

All-Star Voting – Having fans vote for starting players for the All-Star game is ridiculous. As far as I'm concerned, the players alone should do the voting. Informed fans need to vote in some ridiculous line-up to encourage Major League Baseball to call greater attention to the folly of fan voting. So do what I do each year: Vote using the fewest possible number of last names. (Alternatives: pick names that all rhyme or start with the same letter of alphabet.)

Here are my recommended picks for the 2004 All-Star game. For the American League: Martinez – 1B, Wilson – 2B, Young – SS, Chavez – 3B, Martinez – C, Johnson, Ramirez, Young – OF. For the National League: Johnson – 1B, Giles – 2B, Wilson – SS, Ramirez – 3B, Johnson – C, Chavez, Giles, Wilson – OF. Just seven last names for sixteen positions! Then root for Pedro Martinez and Randy Johnson to be named as starting pitchers.

Mascot Mocking – If the home team has a mascot, look for occasions when it stands on the dugout or otherwise obstructs your view of the field. Then yell, "Down in front!" In Cleveland, add for hideous mascot Slider: "You ugly pink carpet remnant!"

Be Thing – I first did this at The Ballpark

at Camden Yards when with thinkAbout alum Dee Silfies. It works as well as any stadium playing the theme from the old TV show *The Addams Family* between pitches, at bats, or during innings. You'll need to have purchased (and consumed) some popcorn or other food and beverage requiring a cardboard tray. When the theme song plays, stick your hand through your popcorn box or food tray and do your best imitation of Thing.

Singing at the Stretch – When singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" remember it's *Cracker Jack*, not *Cracker Jacks*. Baseball is a game of correctly executing the fine details. Do your part as a fan and get the lyrics right.

1. Face Reality

The cry for "competitive balance" just serves to cover up clandestine accounting and poor decisions of the past. Had MLB not moved to three divisions and a wild card prior to the (strike-shortened) season of 1994, the New York Yankees would not have even qualified for the post-season in its championship seasons of 1996 and 2000 – they would have finished second each year to Cleveland in the old AL East. (But there's no hard feelings here. . . .) The format change just increased the likelihood that "big-market" teams make the post-season, and that some "small-market" team having a good year gets knocked out in the playoffs.

The real issue: Stop focusing on redistributing existing revenues (perpetuating a zero-sum mindset) and allow teams to retain new revenues generated from non-traditional sources (fostering an innovation mindset). Pooling revenues from such new ventures as mlb.com just accentuates the disparity that exists between teams in TV revenue; letting teams retain revenues from individually owned and uniquely differentiated web sites – as just one potential set of innovations – could help close the revenue gap.

Stop managing minutia, like trying in

at Camden Yards when with thinkAbout alum Dee Silfies. It works as well as any stadium playing the theme from the old TV show *The Addams Family* between pitches, at bats, or during innings. You'll need to have purchased (and consumed) some popcorn or other food and beverage requiring a cardboard tray. When the theme song plays, stick your hand through your popcorn box or food tray and do your best imitation of Thing.

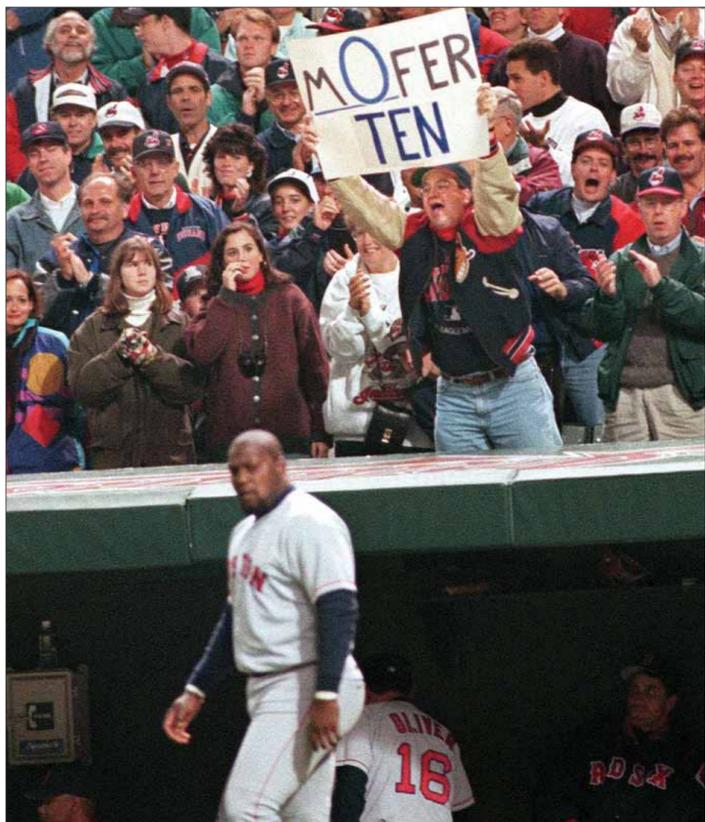
Singing at the Stretch – When singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" remember it's *Cracker Jack*, not *Cracker Jacks*. Baseball is a game of correctly executing the fine details. Do your part as a fan and get the lyrics right.

Competing Jerseys – Look for two fans wearing numbered jerseys from two different players, ideally from the same team but competing for playing time. (As you

shall see in my example below, do not limit yourself to baseball jerseys.) Go up to each of the wearers and ask them to come with you. You'll be amazed how compliant some folks will be, never questioning your motives. Then, in a prominent area, have the crowd cheer for the player they like most by putting you hand above the head of each selected person while encouraging applause.

Last August, amidst the quarterback controversy with the Cleveland Browns, I had two fans sporting jerseys, #2 Couch and #10 Holcomb, stand at the front of my section while I whooped up rival cheers back and forth. (Of course I did it between innings.)

It Ain't Over – Stay for the entire game. No matter what the score, stay for the final out. The beauty of baseball is that it has no clock. Why ruin that by rushing off somewhere?



Jim Gilmore transformed into a rabid Tribe fan during Game 2 of the Boston - Cleveland postseason series in 1995, in which the Red Sox's Mo Vaughn went hitless.

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Whither Report

Highlight: Experience Hubs Across the Globe

We know from whence the Experience Economy came, but whither is it going? As both cities, regions, and nations have competed for first supplying and trading natural resources, and then for manufacturing plants and the jobs that went with them, and now for service jobs, so too will they compete for tourists and the experience jobs that go with them. They will do so through the creation of *Experience Hubs*. Our general *whither forecast* call for more cities and regions around the world to declare themselves to be the place to go, not just for general experiences, but more and more for a specialized experience focus.

National Forecast

Many Experience Hubs are already established across a number of fronts. Look for the Northeast to continue to be dominated by New York's Times Square and the Southeast by Orlando, but there are high pressure zones developing around Philadelphia and Atlanta that bear watching.

Out west, locally heavy experiences in and around Los Angeles don't seem to draw the excitement they once did around the country, but it remains a great place to visit. The real whither activity continues to be centered around Las Vegas, well-deserving of its title of the Experience Capital of the World. We find an up-and-comer zone in Seattle – while the weather is usually depressing, the experiences are cheering. A topical

depression, however, continues around San Francisco with the bursting of the dot-com bubble, but one shouldn't count it out – Silicon Valley always bounces back, and technology companies already understand how commoditized first hardware and now software is becoming. Services is today's growth arena; experiences are tomorrow's.

In the nation's mid-section, storm clouds are brewing as Chicago's Magnificent Mile competes with the nation's newest and most compact Experience Hub: the Mall of America just outside of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Similar storms can be anticipated as competition heats up for the preeminent Experience Hub amongst country music fans – will it be the traditional Nashville, or will upstart Branson fulfill the promise of its self-proclaimed title of Live Entertainment Capital of the World?

Like these last two, a small number of isolated hubs continue developing in and around particular topical areas, including Washington, DC, for national heritage, New Orleans for blues and jazz, South Beach for adult Spring Break, and Sante Fe for wellness retreats and relaxing spas (and the latest converging twister: medi-spas).

One rather surprising hub – it has yet to appear on anyone's radar screen – may be in the early stages of development in and around Kansas City, but the details remain sketchy at this point. Look there for a combination of factors coming to bear – including how it's within a day's drive of 55 million people – and look here for more details on whither or not it develops into a full-fledged Experience Hub with all the elements of a first-class destination.

World Forecast

Experience Hubs are not new, they've always been around the globe. In the Old World past, however, they've primarily centered around the heritage of a particular place – think of canal-based Venice, cultural Paris, or musical Vienna. Increasingly, we forecast Experience Hubs will grow into a major whither phenomena across the globe, not just in the US. In this case, it's the tsunami of the Experience Economy wreaking havoc across the shores of developed nations.

Two places strike us as being at the fore of this front: Tokyo and London. Tokyo is a wondrous place due to the Japanese penchant for all things new (latest whither trend: food theme parks) and electronic (certain districts exceed even Las Vegas for neon per square meter). The city of London perhaps best exemplifies one whither pattern driving much of what we see by the way of growth creation in the Experience Economy: *retail tourism*, the winds of shopping and visiting all rolled up into one tornado of frenzied experience activity. For most people, visiting London is no more about understanding English heritage than visiting Tokyo is about immersing yourself in Japanese tradition. People go to collect experiences, baby.

Or look at China. Many high-level people there already understand that the

country's advantage in manufacturing labor will not last; the storm is already rising to develop new, more lasting capabilities. Indeed, we were surprised during a 2002 visit how receptive Chinese executives were to the ideas in *The Experience Economy* (and over 30,000 copies of the translation have been sold there). Its first Experience Hub is already developing off the east coast: Shanghai's Nanjing Road district, where the government is spending *billions* (that's in dollars, not yuan!) to make it a first-class retail tourism destination.



Forecast: Watch for a volatile mix in developed areas as heritage fronts collide with massive cultural storms. Elsewhere, experiences remain overcast by the need for more temperate political and economic conditions.

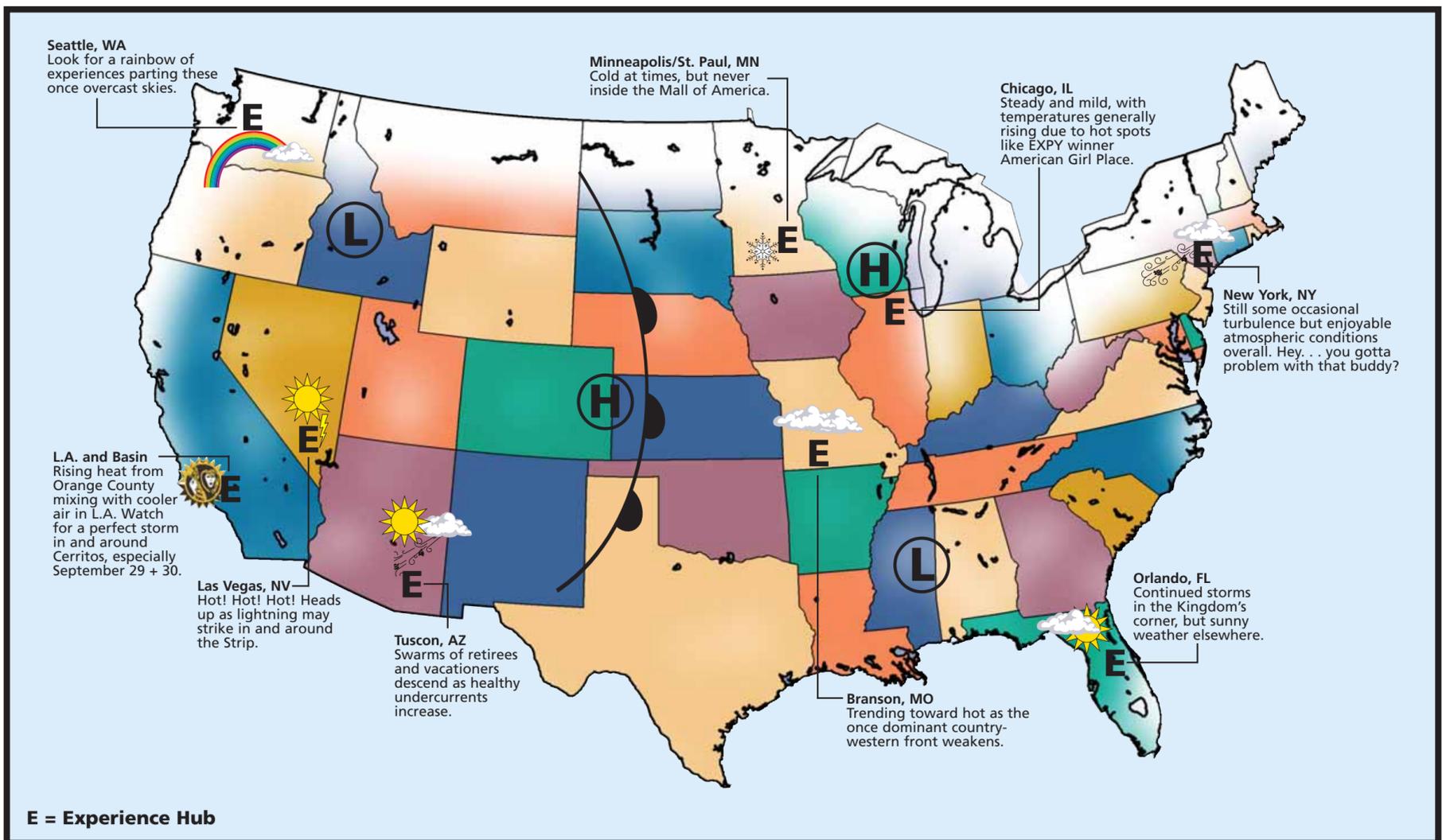
Other full-fledged hubs include Hong Kong (for its American-style theme parks alone), Singapore (of particular note: the island resort of Sentosa),

Sydney (it's not just the Opera House anymore. . .), and, back in Europe, Amsterdam (more than the Red Light District, it's becoming a gateway for European experiences). Perhaps infrastructurally rich Prague will develop into the first Experience Hub of Eastern Europe.

Two surprising hubs can be seen today growing on the global radar screen: Dubai and New Zealand. With what has already become an icon for the United Arab Emirates – the Burj Al Arab hotel, gliding like a giant sail over 300 meters above the Arabian Gulf – Dubai is becoming a Mecca (if you pardon the pun) for those desiring a luxurious resort experience, or even for those who want their experiences full-time, given The Palm development with its homes built onto an island shaped out of whole cloth to look like a palm tree. And as for New Zealand, four words: *Lord of the Rings*.

Unfortunately, we see no change in the whither forecast for most developing countries in the third world. Still largely Agrarian based, most of these economies are stuck in place (if not worse) due to internal instability and political factors. Until basic human and economic rights are recognized (including property rights and a functioning legal system), there is little hope for an emerging manufacturing sector, much less a nascent experience sector (other than the occasional bout of eco- or politico-tourism that is more exploitive than constructive).

Whither the Experience Economy? Look to the Experience Hubs for ideas for your business.



Forecasts for Selected U.S. Cities

Branson, MO: Highway 76 is like the Las Vegas Strip in miniature, but look for the area in and around this formerly quaint southern Missouri town to continue adding new experiences every year, and for them to be less and less based on live country-and-western music as the years go by. Our favorite place recently experienced: Branson Creek Golf Club in nearby Hollister, the #1 public-rated golf course in the state. We concur.

Chicago, IL: The Magnificent Mile theme – brainchild of the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association – was birthed in 1947 but still has life in it yet. Look for more experience premiers (a la Niketown) and continued early expan-

sions (such as Starbucks). Always a magnificent environment for a stroll (of about a mile. . .).

L.A. and Basin: Universal CityWalk – designed by thinkAbout alumnus Jon Jerde – has added a vibrancy the city itself was sorely missing. Disney's California Adventure may be close to a flop, but Anaheim continues to be the happening place for destination experiences. And venues too numerous to count proliferate across a wide area surrounding the LA basin – including, of course, two of the world's latest experience firsts, the original Vans Skatepark at The Block at Orange and, of course, the new library in Cerritos. Indeed, in the land of two-word cities, this Experience Hub stretches from San Diego in the South, to Palm Springs in the East, all the way to Santa Barbara in the north. (As the Pacific Ocean in the West isn't a city, it doesn't count.)

Las Vegas, NV: Always sunny, and always a hotbed of experience innovation. Look for more in the way of educational experiences, as Las Vegas has already cycled through escapist (gaming), enter-

tainment (shows), and esthetic (themed hotels & casinos). Look also for continued enhancements to the *markers* of its experiences. The ways casinos have signified their places has gone from mere signs, to neon signs, to movable neon signs, to architectural wonders, to full-fledged (and in some cases, such as New York New York's roller coaster, even admission-feed) experiences unto themselves. Where will it head next? Whatever happens there doesn't have to stay there – you can extract out its principles for your own business.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN: Chartered planes will increasingly bypass the congestion at Chicago's O'Hare to land for the day at Mall of America, returning later that night with the overhead bins stuffed with shopping bags – and passengers stuffed with experiences collected that day. And as it's completely indoors, the forecast is for 70 degrees and ceilinged all year long, even in the dead of winter in the frozen tundra that is Minnesota. When a coming expansion comes into being adjacently to its north, look for growth to close to 50 million visitors per year.

New York, NY: With Toys 'R' Us flagship store situated there, one could dub it "The Center of the Experience Universe" – though in year's past it was merely the "eye of the porn". Some say it's lost its authenticity, while others respond, "Thank goodness!" No matter your opinion on its whitherness, we forecast over a million and a half people will pass through it *every day* for years to come (100,000 of them tourists!). It's a must-see on any Hub tour, which should be expanded beyond the Square to the rectangular Island for such new experiences as the second American Girl Place and the ING Direct Cafe on and off (respectively) Fifth Avenue and the Apple Store in SoHo.

Orlando, FL: No longer dominated by Walt Disney World, still everything in the area is influenced by its powerful patterns. Look for everyone who is anyone in experience staging to create a venue here, and for it to be bigger and better than any other instantiation. And for thunderstorms to roll by every afternoon in the summer like clockwork.

Seattle, WA: Nearly always cloudy, but a great place for selected but disparate experiences, from the world-famous Pike Place Market (one of our favorite examples of theatre in business) to the Experience Music Project with its new Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame inside. Look for continued innovation from Starbucks to be exported around the world and a new focus on experience computing at Microsoft coming to a Windows XP-enabled device near you.

Tucson, AZ: Canyon Ranch started the whole destination spa trend, and look for it to continue its whirlwind growth in this dry desert environment. Massages aren't the only attraction anymore, but all things concerned with healthful living are increasing on the horizon, including spas combined with full medical treatments – the whole medi-spa phenomenon. For you twister chasers, if you've never seen the development of a new experiential industry, you might head here soon. If you do go, check out Tuscan-themed Renaissance from anti-aging practitioner and thinkAbout alumnus Greg Petersburg, M.D.

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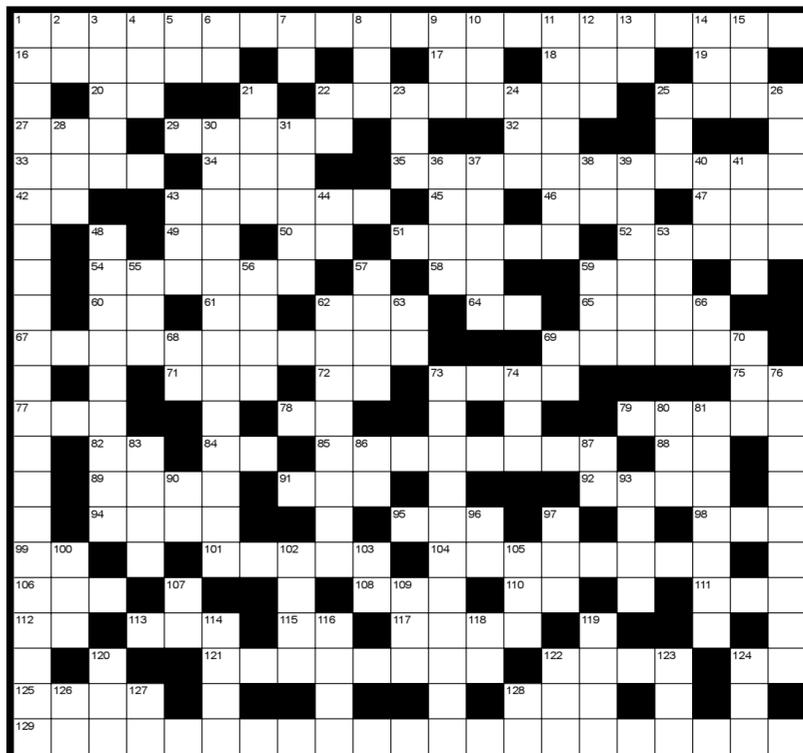
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|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| ACROSS | 45 Either-_____ sacrifice | 73 Rev. Jim | 104 Active-immersion realm |
| 1 These reduce sacrifice over time | 46 Viet _____ | 75 Alternating Current (abbr.) | 106 _____ Shrager |
| 16 _____ all five senses | 47 Sick _____ | 77 Pres. Reagan to friends | 108 I smell a _____ |
| 17 Five hundred meters in China | 49 Seventeenth letter in Hebrew alphabet | 78 Information Technology (abbr.) | 110 Objective case of we |
| 18 Social insect | 50 Spielberg's alien | 79 _____ing theatre | 111 Basketball official (colloquial) |
| 19 Prefix for two, both | 51 Oldenburg's Place | 82 Work _____ theatre | 112 Fourth tone (a long, long way to run) |
| 20 Symbol for silver | 52 Wants a cracker | 84 Twelfth letter in Greek alphabet | 113 Vehicle for 73 Across |
| 22 City/Walk to Huxtable | 54 Noah's Ark resting place | 85 Characteristic of commodities | 115 Social Security (abbr.) |
| 25 Iowa State city | 58 American Airlines (initials) | 88 Used to urge silence | 117 Newsman Brinkley, for one |
| 27 Silicon Graphics Inc. (abbr.) | 59 ARM | 89 ESPN _____ | 121 Passive-immersion realm |
| 29 Gaggle of _____ | 60 Rhode Island (abbr.) | 91 Cooking vessel | 122 Doctor (abbr.) |
| 32 Real Life (abbr.) | 61 Tampa Bay (abbr.) | 92 Activity for goods | 125 = people in theatre model |
| 33 Confidential (abbr.) | 62 Peter _____ | 94 _____go bragh | 128 Prefix for prior to |
| 34 _____ York | 64 Half a laugh | 95 Eureka expression | 129 Follows 48 Down |
| 35 Active-absorption realm | 65 After 114 Down, _____ that | 98 Argentina (abbr.) | DOWN |
| 42 Opposite of down | 67 Mix in _____ | 99 Resident Advisor (abbr.) | 1 Results from customization |
| 43 Tony Vera's theatre | 68 After 114 Down, _____ that | 101 _____ the experience | |

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 2 Half an em (dash) | 28 Republicans | 63 Symbol for sodium | 102 Opposite of west |
| 3 Repeat-_____ sacrifice | 30 Passive-absorption realm | 66 Experience Economy (abbr.) | 103 Emergency Room (abbr.) |
| 4 Scrap of cloth | 31 Hit the _____ spot | 68 Recreational Vehicle (abbr.) | 105 _____ 95% |
| 5 No Good (abbr.) | 36 Capital of Qatar | 69 Sinatra did it this way | 107 Keystone state (abbr.) |
| 6 Industrial Engineer (abbr.) | 37 Husband of Bathsheba | 70 Capital of CA (abbr.) | 109 _____ your part |
| 7 U.S. Soldier _____ | 38 Teaching Assistant (abbr.) | 73 Principle from Guttman's adventures | 114 _____ there, before 65 |
| 8 Lutron's Grafik _____ | 39 Theatre of Who's Line Is It Anyway? | 74 Gift of _____ | Across |
| 9 Unmost possible | 40 Zero | 76 You are what you _____ | 116 Aaron the _____ shine man |
| 10 Tagged-Image File (abbr.) | 41 TV's McBeal | 80 _____ and answer | 118 Ecuador (abbr.) |
| 11 No there there | 43 Day _____ at resort | 81 Work IS _____ | 119 Progression Of Economic Value (abbr.) |
| 12 North-northeast (abbr.) | 44 Phones home | 83 _____ through sacrifice | 120 Pounds per square in. (abbr.) |
| 13 Street (abbr.) | 48 _____ impressions with positive cues | 86 Utah (abbr.) | 122 Friday (abbr.) |
| 14 Big Blue co. | 53 Prefix for all | 87 Experience Mark (abbr.) | 123 Sung before K-E-Y, M-O-U-S-E |
| 15 Bye Bye Ms American _____ | 55 Blame It On _____ | 90 Symbol for nickel | 124 In NIH, Live Free or _____ |
| 21 Coors, for one | 56 Swedish music group | 93 Act this way at unwelcomed party | 126 Call Paul Simon this |
| 22 Second tone | 57 No pain, no _____ | 96 Computers _____ Theatre | 127 Trademark (abbr.) |
| 23 Pres. Lincoln to Mary Todd | 59 Much _____ about nothing | 97 Fuel for autos | 128 _____ Cruiser car |
| 24 Segment of circle | 62 Just say your lines theatre | 100 U.S. car group (abbr.) | |
| 25 Long time _____ | | | |
| 26 _____ Harrison-Pepper | | | |

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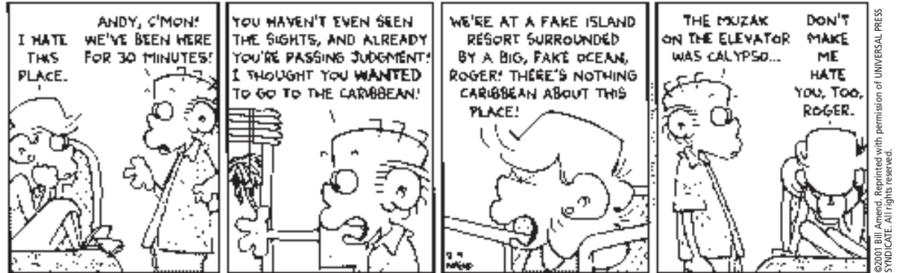
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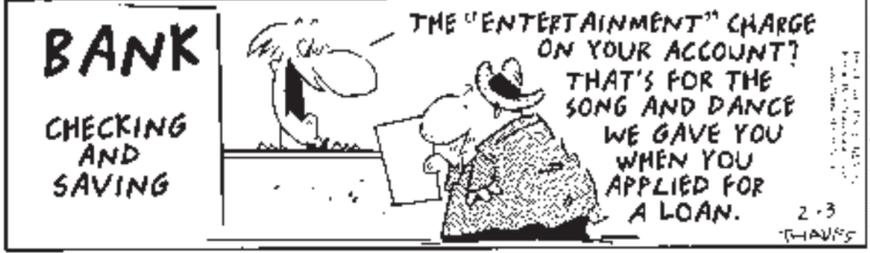
THE FUSCO BROTHERS by Joe Duffy



NON SEQUITUR by Wiley Miller



FRANK AND ERNEST by Bob Thaves



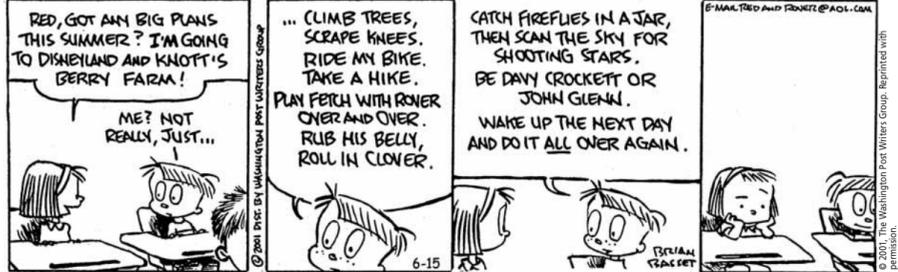
FRANK AND ERNEST by Bob Thaves



I NEED HELP by Vic Lee



RED & ROVER by Brian Basset



ADAM by Brian Basset



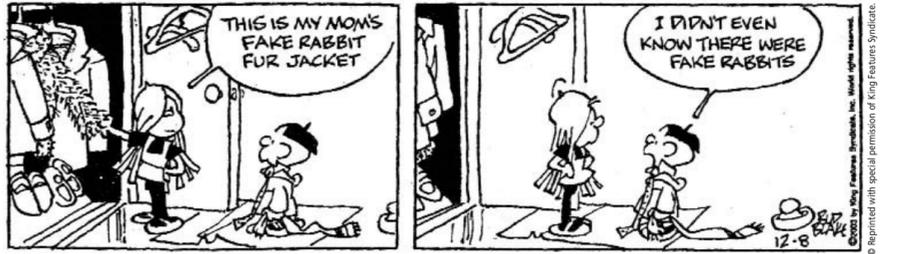
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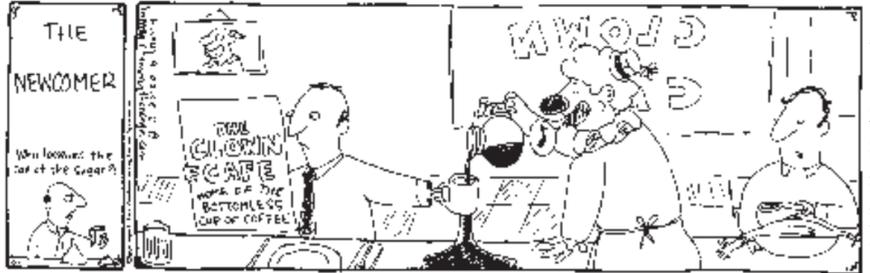
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TIGER by Bud Blake



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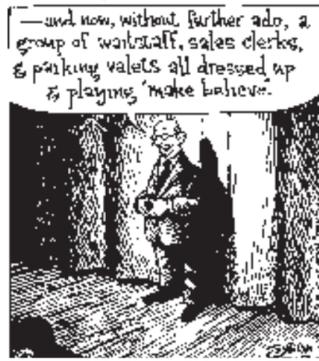
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Mindset for Executives in the Experience Economy

by Dan Carney



Cleveland, OH. As managers and leaders, we are fortunate to work during an economic age that is incredibly dynamic. Summarizing just the major trends that have changed

business over the past fifteen years would be difficult at best.

Remember Reengineering? Two years after the movement's defining book was released, leaders everywhere were redesigning business processes. As we learned how to be more efficient, we soon learned how to "rightsized" our corporations and increase organizational flexibility. By 1999, we were learning how to conduct business in cyberspace and testing countless new Internet-based business models. Over the past two years, transparency has become the vital mindset as investors and boards increase their scrutiny of senior management and hold them to greater accountability.

Most of those trends lasted but a few years and then shifted out of sight, though

not always out of mind. Not so with the Experience Economy. Even though the book came out now over five years ago, this concept continues to drive change across a wider and wider spectrum of businesses. New skills and new attitudes, therefore, are becoming vital for success. Fortunately, early experience stagers demonstrate several qualities that should aid us as we delve more deeply into the realm of commercial experience offerings.

As you consider taking the plunge, here some attitudes you should adopt.

Viewing Yourself as the Host

Jim & Joe have advanced our thinking immensely about the nature of experiences and how to provide them. In the Experience Economy, sellers are stagers and buyers are guests. But sellers should also therefore consider themselves *hosts*. If you invite someone to your home for dinner, there is a mindset one has preparing for guests. Structuring the event is critical and attention to detail can never be too great.

"What a great host!" is extremely rewarding to hear because of its strong connotations of a rich and rewarding experience. Taking on the mindset of a host assures that customers feel like guests, and as hosts, our focus will be laser-like in making their experiences memorable.

Designing for Flexibility

Mass production, selling, and distribution systems are slowly being dismantled to address the increasing variety of cus-

tomers' needs, but experience staging needs processes with maximum flexibility to enable the ensemble to adjust real-time to the needs of its guests. How many times have you found yourself in a customer service line with a problem that was atypical of the norm and were disappointed to learn that the agent helping you had very little flexibility to address your problem in even a rudimentary way?

Managers in the Experience Economy will do well to design experiences with a core structure for the offering while allowing for maximum flexibility and decision making at time of execution. Concurrent with greater flexibility, managers must give the execution cast members the information and decision-making tools essential to maximize the opportunity to delight each and every customer.

Not Going it Alone

There are few organizations with the scope and scale to stage major experience offerings on their own as, say, Disney, Universal, MGM, and Carnival do. For smaller companies, partnering enables the smallest organizations to move actively into the arena.

Getting partnering right, however, is challenging at best, and with risks fairly high—nothing becomes a (negative) experience faster than bad service—teamwork skills will be one of a manager's most critical core competencies. Building on the principle that work is theatre, the Director's role is fusing collaboration and command, the essence of great team lead-

ership. Effectively coordinating the various roles in experience staging—dramaturgs, scriptwriters, set designers, prop managers, costume designers, stage crews, and casting director—both within one's own organization and across multiple partners requires the utmost skill.

Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, has said "leadership today is about building teams and placing others first. It's not about you." In the Experience Economy, nothing could be closer to truth.

Remembering the P&L

Customers have demonstrated they are willing to pay for compelling experiences. Each of the major experience stagers mentioned above charge admission for their experiences, as should you—even if you're in a corporate B2B environment. In the technology industry, I2 Technologies ran a user conference in the late '90s that was an industry forum for the best and brightest. Attendees paid admission and other industry players bought sponsorships. The event was a profit center and actually made money for the company even before considering the impact of the conference on the company's core business.

Managers in the Experience Economy must become adept at building experience-based *lines of business* that drive revenue streams, profits to the bottom line, and, ultimately, value to shareholders. Pricing should be based on the value to the customer, and long-term profitability will flow from repeat customer visits and solid cost management.

Empowering the CXO

In the late 1990s, every business imaginable was establishing an e-commerce venture or line of business. Some were born out of opportunity, while others out of fear that core businesses might be decimated by new competitors.

While the ultimate outcome of these ventures varied considerably, an important lesson learned was that each company's e-Business executive helped their company navigate the unknown waters of cyberspace. Most were charged with a P&L for specific on-line offerings and with additional responsibility to assist other line executives adopt e-commerce across their own areas.

Companies moving into experience based offerings would do well to consider a similar approach. Appoint a Chief eExperience Officer and empower that individual to lead the change effort across the company. Just as many e-Business officer roles proved temporary, the need for a CXO may recede as the broader organization becomes more skilled at providing compelling experiences. But in the short-term, the CXO will bring focus and accountability to a task that will ultimately change the nature of the company.

For no one can withstand the new pressures of the Experience Economy without transforming the organization—beginning with your own attitudes.

Dan Carney is a thinkAbout alumnus and Managing Director of a boutique executive search firm, Kesic + Company.

Making continued from page 14

Growth, and Community. We created a report card with key targets by pillar so all of our work was aligned with our purpose. We established rigorous measurement of employee, physician, and patient satisfaction and began to benchmark against national data.

We also knew that to achieve our goals we had to become a learning organization. The Sharp University was launched to focus on the education and development of the Sharp team. Educating and developing our 1,000 leaders was a top priority so we created quarterly leadership development sessions focused on skill building and hardwiring new practices into our every day business. Through inspiration, education and celebration, these learning sessions have helped transform the organization and the experiences we create. Homework is assigned each quarter via what we call the "Accountability Grid" because we believe that learning is an active process. It's critical to get leaders to actually do something with what they have learned.

As a result, every leader has learned:

- How to interpret employee satisfaction data and roll-out the results to staff in a prescribed, action-oriented fashion
- How to assess and improve patient satisfaction
- The core steps to service recovery
- How to create service maps and touch point analyses
- How to develop Signature Moments
- How to "round" on staff and patients for better outcomes
- The value and use of key words at key times (scripting)
- The fundamentals of service
- How to re-recruit the winners
- Factors for physician satisfaction
- Process improvement methods
- How to conduct crucial conversations

The Results

Our relentless focus on making health care better has already started to pay off.

By applying the learning from leadership development sessions, the health care experience at Sharp is changing. From using the right words during patient and co-worker interactions to applying the fundamental steps to service interactions. From improving and streamlining complex processes to creating memorable, signature moments for patients and families.

Now, when patients visit the Sharp Metropolitan Outpatient Pavilion for a colonoscopy, they encounter something entirely different from the norm. Special attention is paid to personal privacy and dignity. After the procedure juice and crackers are served on a silver tray with stemmed glassware and special mints. And after discharge, all patients receive a phone call as well as a thank-you note signed by each of the caregivers—including the physicians! The experience is so different that now we have patients recruiting friends and loved-ones to have a colonoscopy. Patients often say that having a colonoscopy was the best health care experience they've had—now that's something to thinkAbout!

And as Joe Pine told us during one visit, "If you can do it in colonoscopy, you can do it anywhere!"

Since 2001 we've seen a dramatic improvement in employee, physician, and patient satisfaction. We've reduced turnover and been recognized for the past two years as San Diego's Best Place to Work. We've experienced unprecedented improvement in overall consumer awareness and perception of Sharp HealthCare, and have been honored with an Emmy award for our thirty-minute television documentary—an unscripted and unrehearsed look at The Sharp Experience from the patient and caregiver perspective.

We hope that by making the health care experience better at Sharp we're helping to make the health care experience better everywhere—because we believe that every patient deserves a positively memorable health care experience each and every time.

Sonia Rhodes is Vice-President of Customer Strategy at Sharp HealthCare. She is a four-time thinkAbout alumnus.

Marketers continued from page 12

they chose to simply associate themselves through advertising with a shift in consumer values. And while awareness shot up, there are very few consumers who really believe that MasterCard makes life more meaningful.

No Higher Purpose

In order for MasterCard or, say, Coca-Cola, Kaiser Permanente, Best Buy, Disney, or whomever to be real in the hearts and minds of consumers, they can't just advertise that they are real. (In fact, advertising is probably the fastest way to send just the opposite message.) They need a message and a product that are so well intertwined that people can simply feel the reality of the brand experience. Some quintessential examples of a real brand experience are American Girl, Inc., the Dyson Company, and Sundance.

Pleasant Rowland built a multimillion-dollar doll company by blending traditional American values with direct mail and compelling stories about girls. James Dyson's vacuums have become the gold standard for cleaning equipment, and his story about how he took on the big brands has made Dyson the new real thing. Robert Redford's Sundance was once a ski resort. Now it's a media phenomenon and the authentic source for independent films.

These companies have commonalities. They all started with a higher purpose than simply making a profit. They were guided by a vision of how the world should be, at least as far as their markets were concerned. And their marketing respects consumers' ability to create their own meaningful experiences. Consequently, each brand enjoys tremendous trust, loyalty, and value.

Companies that have these qualities have *Brand Truth*. That is, when consumers hear their message and experience their product it rings true because the offering is about something purposeful, deep, significant, or heartfelt. For American Girl, the Brand Truth is that

girlhood should be prolonged. Everything that American Girl does builds upon the idea that girls shouldn't have to grow up too fast and that girlhood is important to American culture. Sundance, which has both for-profit and not-for-profit entities, exemplifies the brand truth that an independent lifestyle creates better art. When you attend a Sundance Film Festival in the mountains of Utah, you feel like independent film is a precious art form. By you being there, you are doing good work—and it's a blast!

Film festivals and doll companies, okay. But vacuum cleaners? Yes, even vacuum cleaners can have Brand Truth. The story of James Dyson is one that rings true with consumers today. He buys a vacuum that promises impressive suction, takes it home and realizes that once the bag gets dust in it (which is the whole purpose of vacuum), the suction is dramatically reduced. Angry, he sets out to build a better vacuum. And guess what—he does it. And it's wildly successful. The Brand Truth is that the people should stick it to the corporate brands by making their own innovations.

Ouch. That Brand Truth hurts.

Consumers today not only expect the promises made by marketers to be kept, but they also demand brand experiences that stand for something—a difficult thing for brands that have never stood for anything to pull off. And, consumers expect to play a significant role in the production of the experience. It feels more real when they are involved.

Models of Consumer Behavior

You can't really blame our profession. Consumers, after all, weren't supposed to behave this way. We were first taught that stimulus demanded a response. Then we were told that consumers followed a rational process of developing a consideration set, narrowing their choices, and picking a product based on certain criteria.

Now we're continually told that it's all about the emotional connection. Consumers buy because they connect with your brand emotionally. If that's the case, why is it that in almost every

product category consumers are buying based on price?

Perhaps the root of marketers' struggles to be real is grounded in how we often perceive the people our products serve. Are they a demographic? A psychographic? A share of wallet? It's hard to see the need to be real if you don't see your target audience as consisting of real people. And even if you feel a connection with the people your products serve, if the frameworks that explain who they are don't account for what makes a brand real and meaningful, you're stuck.

One of the best models of human behavior (along with Maslow's hierarchy of needs) is Pierre Bourdieu's work on how individuals accumulate meaningful experiences. A sociologist and ethnographer and a tremendous thinker, Bourdieu demonstrated that people in modern societies accumulate two types of capital: economic capital (money) and cultural capital (meaningful capacities). He showed that one can determine things like tastes, political concerns, belief systems, styles and behaviors, and attitudes based on the types of cultural capital that people accumulate (and their income).

But most importantly, Bourdieu showed that the more cultural capital that's associated with an experience, the more meaningful that experience will be to the individual. This is good news for marketers since it suggests you can actually measure the cultural value created by your offering or your marketing efforts.

As more and more consumers in developed countries continue to transition from the accumulation of stuff to the accumulation of meaningful, real experiences, the companies that will be most successful are those that know how to identify what makes an experience meaningful, how to access the cultural capital associated with an experience, and how to produce Brand Truth. It truly is time to get real.

David Norton is Vice President of Research & Experience Strategy for Yamamoto Moss and a four-time thinkAbout alumnus.

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W W W . Y O U R N E X T M E E T I N G . C O M

Letters to the Editor

Beyond Experiences and into Authentic Transformations

Conjuring up my experience at thinkAbout U a few years ago [2002 in *Mountain View - Ed.*], one memorable discussion concerned itself with what makes an experience authentic. As a physician, the importance of authenticity in the patient experience did not escape me. The context of the discussion revolved around authenticity of products and services. It isn't so much what was said that stuck with me but rather what did *not* receive comment. What is required in order for an experience to be authentic when the customer is the product?

Renaissance is in the transformation business. My specialty work is about preventive-aging medicine. Individuals who seek out Renaissance aspire to transform toward optimum health and renewed youthful vitality. At Renaissance, then, our customer is the product. They desire to avoid, delay, or minimize aging-related declines. Successful aging is about choosing optimum actions - physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually - that are also sustainable. The interpretation and approach for all of this is unique for each individual. When the customer is the product authenticity takes on added complexity.

The facilitator of experiences has several dimensions of authenticity to tend to when the customer is the product. This necessitates going beyond creating authentic experiences in a general sense. At Renaissance we begin by helping individuals articulate their aspirations in ways that are congruent with who they are - authentic to their true nature. Next, the experiences we create and guide must also be true to the individual's nature.

The personalized healthy-aging pro-

gram Renaissance creates for each individual aspirant is literally a life-plan. It involves every dimension of the aspirant's life. To be successful the life-plan we offer must itself be designed and presented in ways that ring true for the individual. It cannot be a canned program applicable only to the non-existent "average" individual. Otherwise it is unlikely aspirants will fully integrate the program recommendations into their lives permanently.

Health care providers can facilitate healthful transformation for patients through guided experiences. For experiences to transcend being memorable to become transforming - when the customer is the product - it is fundamental that the experiences connect individuals with their true nature and inner truths.

Gregory W. Petersburg, D.O.
Renaissance
Oro Valley, AZ

Of Doors, Discussions, and Distinctive Ideas

Working in the creative industry, ideas are my daily bread. So when a client suggested (they were clearly not happy with the quality of my ideas at that point. . .) that I should take part in the 2002 thinkAbout in Mountain View, I was looking forward to a couple of days of brainstorming and bouncing ideas off other likeminded individuals.

I wasn't quite prepared, however, for the encounter that awaited me. In line with their preaching, Pine & Gilmore had prepared an experience that started long before my arrival at Mountain View. From emails asking about hotel room requirements to an inspirational interactive invitation, everything was prepared

to free the mind. Choosing my own fate (schedule) I moved from group to group with differing challenges and discussion subjects, and was introduced to new mind-opening techniques. Massages were even provided to relax and digest the information.

The ideas really started to flow on the second day when groups of three wandered around the hotel scribbling down sparks of ideas for every participant's issues posted on their hotel room doors. The discussions, exercises, and sparks of ideas really helped with solving the issues posted on my own hotel room door. The overall experience was unique as promised and very inspirational.

Manfred Abraham
Reinventor
Wolff-Olins
London, England

Experience Design Leads to Teen Mini-Medical School

A looming shortage of health care professionals has inspired Baystate Medical Center to think and act creatively around recruitment and retention efforts. At the same time, our organization determined that our neighborhood residents were underrepresented in our professional ranks and we began to look for ways to get more local students on a health care career track. Using Experience Design principles learned at thinkAbout and elsewhere, we set out to influence early health care career planning among high school science stars.

Baystate Medical Center is a member of Baystate Health System, and the Western Campus of Tufts University School of Medicine, in Springfield, MA. As a teaching hospital, it was logical for

us to design a *Teen Mini-Medical School* experience for local students. The marketing department for our 650+ bed, academic tertiary care hospital, in partnership with the local physician faculty, put together this one-of-a-kind experience.

In *Teen Mini-Medical School*, students - high school sophomores at the head of their class in science and math and hand selected by area biology teachers and principals - are given great exposure to the inner workings of the medical center and attend ten hours of lecture given by the lead faculty of the institution. Onsite at Baystate Medical Center students tour operating rooms and observe a live surgery, see one of the country's busiest emergency departments in action, tour one of the country's top 25 laboratories, and explore their CSI curiosities in our morgue. They are also linked up with our Recruitment Department and real medical students and residents upon graduation.

Teen Mini-Medical School has grown out of an existing, wildly successful program for adults which has hosted over 300 participants to date. Forty-seven students graduated from the program with a mini-medical school diploma and a fresh set of scrubs in hand.

The overall goal of our *Teen Mini-Medical School* is to encourage inner city youth showing academic potential to stay in school, go to college, and come back to Springfield as health care professionals.

As for results, it's too early to tell. The first class hasn't yet graduated from high school, but we are working with the area guidance counselors to track their interests and progress. If the spark this program has ignited in students causes them to pursue health care careers, it would certainly be win-win for our hospital and the community.

Candace A. Quinn
VP for Strategic Communications
& Marketing
Baystate Health System
Springfield, MA

A-HA! Moments - a thinkAbout Review

I have attended two thinkAbouts so far, each radically different from the other. Here are my personal impressions and memories of each experience:

thinkAbout 2002

The Magazine Model - EXPY Winner Chip Conley CEO of JDV Hospitality shared his "magical formula" - the magazine model. There were only six of us in

his session and he invested insights and took us through the whole process of using magazines to generate five governing adverbs or adjectives to theme his hotels. The magic is the guests would use these same words to describe themselves.

Stories are authenticity - YAHOO!'s Tim Sanders taught us that stories relate authenticity. And taught us an easy guide to engage people. On a scale of one to ten you'll score a four if you tell someone a story about someone they don't know, a six if you tell your story, an eight if you get them to tell their story, and a ten is when you tell a shared experience.

Memories of 2002

- Hanging out in the hotel hall until 2 A.M. and having smart conversation.
- Smoking cigars with Tom McGehee and Brian Owen in the hot tub at Hotel Avante.
- Watching adults act like kids as we checked out and got to pick a superhero lunch pale with all the executive toy inside.
- Making Miranda Moss laugh and share her beautiful smile.
- "Braindorming" with Dan Sundt and Katherine Dockeril and then continuing the cerebral high as we shared a cab to the airport.

thinkAbout 2003

Real-Real-Fake-Fake from the morning session to the Learning ExcursionSM to the lively debate. It was an immersion in real.

Memories of 2003

- Having an out-of-body experience as we walked Times Square with our headsets on. It was like we weren't there, watching from afar.
- 7 A.M., standing outside the GMA Studios in my khaki shorts and t-shirt, drinking a Starbucks and watching the tourists (fanny packs and all) so excited and thinking, it isn't my New York, but they're having fun. So real-real-fake-fake and the like, for me I learned authenticity is about perspective.
- Sitting in the Marriott revolving lounge watching the city go by as we brainstormed.
- Falling off my seat laughing at *The Producers*

Why do I attend thinkAbout?

I've met the most amazing people at thinkAbout. It's like being back at college, but everyone is an honor student. When one of them sends me an email or calls me on the phone, I'm energized by the connection. And because the thinking doesn't end when it's over - it just begins.

Jeff Kallay

Experience Economy Evangelist
Atlanta, GA
<http://experiences.typepad.com>

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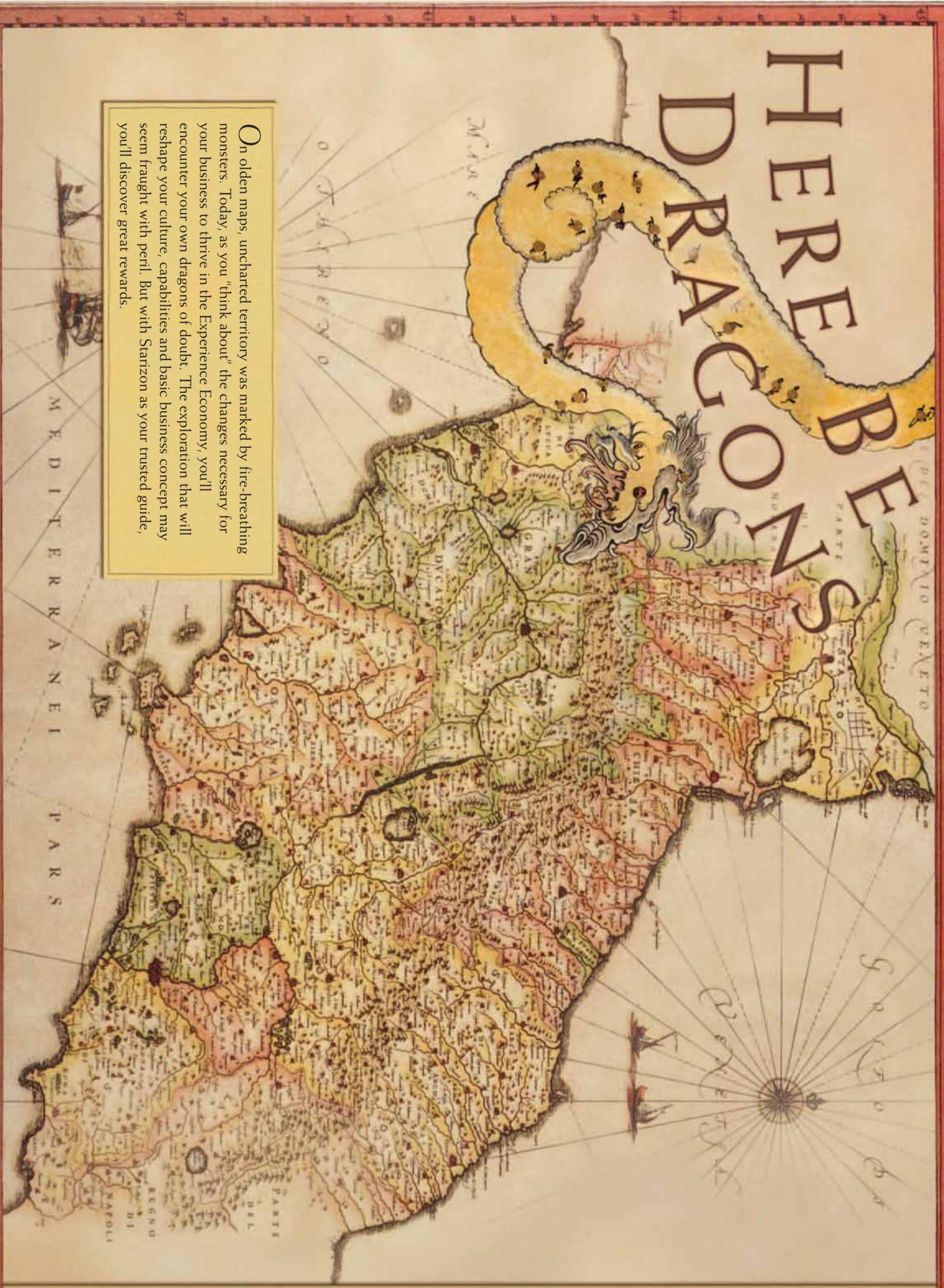
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"We were into things, but now we're into experiences."

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