

How to make your event an experience

Earlier this year, I spoke with Scott Diament, the founder of a number of jewelry, art and antiques events, such as the Palm Beach Show. On doing my research for this article, I was quite impressed in the technology on their website, and realized that Scott was indeed inviting those who were perusing the website as a first exposure to the event to take part in an experience.

Many of the good events are becoming(or have already been) experiential, and since I am a HUGE advocate of events as experiences, I was interesting how Scott and team created an experience out a non-technological subject(art, antiques and jewelry).

How does Scott get the 'experiential job done'?

1) Read magazines outside of your field

Having been in the events for over 17 years, I see a tendency to do 'what worked last year', which can kill a brand. If you are not already reading magazines from other industry sectors, you should be, as they may give you ideas to heighten the creativity of your own events.

2) Attend events outside of your industry

In the same vein as the last point, make sure you are looking at other events to borrow ideas for your own events . I find it very refreshing to attend events if only for the standpoint of knowing what it's like to be an attendee to look at such things as:

- Ease of registration
- Ease of finding conference rooms and trade show floor
- Networking opportunities
- Value for money spent

3) Look at every aspect of your event production

Every customer touch point is important, whether it be the website, any email or direct mail to sponsors and visitors. Don't do what every other event company is doing in your messaging, be creative and invite the reader to a 'new world'.

In the materials for the set up of the event and during the exhibitor set up itself, create touches of the 'adventure yet to come' for the event and heighten delight and expectations.

Of course, if you are starting with a fixed budget, you'll have to prioritize what you do when, but make it a point to have a long term plan to transform your event to something which both exhibitors and attendees can't wait to enjoy.

4) Pipe music into all events to create ambience

Make sure that the music of the event matches the tone that you want to create for the event and make sure it doesn't clash with conference talks or presentations on the expo floor as appropriate. If you've ever been to DisneyWorld, you know how this works with uplifting music as you enter in the morning and soothing music as you leave.

5) Evaluate regularly

In your attendee evaluations, make sure you add questions about what the attendees, sponsors and stakeholders feel about your efforts and update as necessary. Don't be afraid to change your plans radically if necessary

Scott has clearly has clearly made strides in making his events a joy to attend for all attendees. Here's to hoping that you can do as good a job as he is, and good luck in your efforts!

PS For another resource in creating 'experiences' check out The Experience Economy by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore.

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