



A journey through the customer economy: Do not create commodities, but life-transforming experiences.

© Expodata

NO BUSINESS WITHOUT SHOW BUSINESS

TEXT: URS SEILER EXPODATA

Trade shows like the HANNOVER MESSE are crucial steps for your export marketing. But remember: Your customers do not only visit the show and your booth in order to look for new products or services. They are looking for a brand experience. One that changes their lives.

Congratulations. For taking the time to go on an explorative journey on what a brand is all about. It shows, you are searching deeper. Now what is an experience? We share many beliefs with Joe Pine, author of the seminal "The Experience Economy. Work Is Theatre & Every Business is a Stage". Some people in our industry have an understanding of a customer experience as an episodic show act, de-

signed for a special event and do not see an experience as a customer interaction with a lasting value. This of course is a false interpretation of brand entertainment. In an interview with us Joe Pine argued that companies – theme restaurants, most any retailer – give away the experience to better sell the goods and services they have on offer. Eventually companies have to align what they charge for with what custom-

ers value, and that means charging explicitly for the experience. For it is that experience that creates value within customers. Because goods and services are mere commodities. Joe Pine says: "Even more lasting value can be gained in recognizing that experiences can indeed shape our lives – they can become life-transforming experiences." There are people who really believe that fairs exist to exhibit products for,

say, ten days; deliver, unpack, exhibit, dismantle. But at fairs there is also the issue of demonstrating the growth of production, management and knowledge in an entertaining way. Fairs are more suitable for demonstrating this complexity than other events or forums. Even in-house fairs can never be a substitute for the pulsating market place of supply and demand. There are numerous examples as to why com-

GLOBAL BUSINESS FORUM: GLOBAL BRANDING

Friday, 25 April 2008
12:00-14:00, Hall 6, Stand D40

The HANNOVER MESSE is a unique opportunity to see and experience branding concepts designed for global markets. The guided tour begins in the Global Business Forum with a short introduction in the conceptual design and implementation of international brand philosophies. A visit of some excellent global brand locations selected by the partners of the guided tour will follow. In a panel at the Global Business Forum the decision-makers and service providers discuss branding concepts and deliver insights into their international activities. The guided tour especially addresses companies and agencies that seek to be active on HANNOVER MESSE's global platform.

Workshop with: Dr. Urs Seiler, Brand experience consultant and author, EXPODATA

panies renege on attending fairs ... because competitors have withdrawn. This view reminds us of Henry Ford's old chestnut that whoever stops advertising to save money might as well stop his watch to save time.

Attending fairs simply to demonstrate products is however the old way of doing things. Even specialists want to be entertained these days, but in an intelligent and novel way. In attempting to

entice the youth of our hedonistic society towards new technological subjects, the image of the sometimes rather derogatorily treated "bag collectors" at fairs must be redefined, as these people are often the customers or engineers of tomorrow. Even if they are wearing trainers today.

HOLLYWOOD AS AN EXAMPLE

We have always been amazed at the levels of energy, staffing and money in hardware used by exhibitors on their fair stands and how little creativity is used in entertaining their customers. At an emotional level, the customer does not quickly forget an entertaining experience. Emotional entertainment is the greatest potential for real encounters which evades other forms of marketing communication such as advertising, public relations or e-mailings. And the quantitative value of visitors to an event is largely untapped. The average number of visitors to fairs is far larger than any theatre director dare imagine even in his wildest dreams, even though he offers, as a rule, a more professional and emotional act.

The automobile industry is one of those industries which does not only set standards with its products but also in terms of its designs for fairs as the leading industry for brand management. And this is no coincidence as for around a century it has focused on the successful dramatic examples that Hollywood uses for its successful formula dream factories over and over again. One of the world's leading stage managers of fair exhibitions and theme parks, Xavier Bellprat, explains how his customers General Motors and Opel use such Hollywood-style examples. "It is a question of telling an emotive story following all the rules of a drama. There is a type of magic formula which comes close to the perfect Hollywood story: You must be able to discern the plot within the first seven minutes. The climax comes twelve minutes before

everything is wrapped up in a happy ending. This is the typical storytelling format for a blockbuster."

This means that car fairs are nothing more than a place where a story is told, just as in a theatre or cinema. To work out more precisely who is involved in this scenario, the agent has undertaken research to find out exactly who the visitors to car fairs actually are and has come up with nine classic profiles: ranging from "events butterflies" to brand pilgrims.

A theatrical design has to be constructed for these types of visitor. The brand is treated as a person with a soul and character and the different models of car are involved in a family drama as if they were actors in a play. They have to be immersed for a while in another reality, participate in a story which affects them personally and they want to have a happy ending.

WHAT IS BRAND ENTERTAINMENT?

Almost every company has to secure its future market success with a business model that goes beyond the core product because products and services have become exchangeable at their high level of perfection. The so-called product is frequently merely the material embodiment of yesterday's business model and needs added value. The added value lies in additional benefits or is tomorrow's "current" business model.

We are convinced that the new business model is brand entertainment. We understand this to mean all different types of dialogue that engage and involve the customer and gives him the opportunity to participate actively and creatively in the business process. Being active and involved are the only valid yardsticks for experience marketing, everything else is just chit-chat on the subject.

Business entertainment in this philosophy has nothing to do with superimposed, staged events but is more to do with focussing on real customer

thinking. We also talk of customer economy. In other words: A company can only be successful in the future if it is not only concerned with its own success and does not just offer its customers "a product" but is also involved with a solution to make it more successful.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF INTERACTION

It is obvious that the traditional forms of so-called live communication such as fairs or events are intended to meet the customer's needs because of all the marketing tools these allow the highest level of interaction in terms of dialogue and customer activation. As traditional stages of live experience, fairs, events, seminars, conferences and roadshows have a particular affinity for business entertainment. And we mean a big future too.

Are you experienced? Then why not give the author of these columns your feedback on your brand experiences?
urs.seiler@btconnect.com <

THE AUTHOR

Urs Seiler is brand experience consultant and journalist in Zurich, Switzerland and Sussex, England and author of the long-seller Trade Fair Management – Success lies beyond the m² (Messen Messbar Machen in German language). His forthcoming book "Brand Entertainment. Erlebnismarketing in der Kundenökonomie" is published in German language in November 2008. Visitors of the HANNOVER MESSE and readers of the Global Business Magazine can order it for the subscription price of EUR 14.25 (price on Amazon: EUR 18.25) at: urs.seiler@btconnect.com