THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT
May 15, 2013 | InterContinental Mark Hopkins Hotel

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

► Engagement is a hot topic, and rightfully so, but we’re overusing and misusing the term.

► We frequently use “engagement” to refer to our customers’ levels of activity or interaction. Those are good things, but they don’t tell you what’s going on inside of people on a deeper level. They don’t help you understand why your customers are your customers.

► Think instead in terms of resonance.

► Resonant brands exhibit purpose, personality and passion. They stand for something that matters, they articulate their values clearly and persuasively, and they aren’t afraid of polarizing people.

► Resonant conferences do the same, and are also great at two other things: building active, vibrant communities that people are drawn to, and delivering adult learning that’s experiential (and therefore more memorable).

► Flip the model—don’t be a meeting that’s trying to layer on a community, be a community that holds in-person meetings.

► The conference planner’s role in this is crucial. Find your passion and put it at the heart of your work. Be willing to put yourself out there. Be a catalyst. Lead.

► You won’t create something engaging unless you’re deeply engaged.
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RECOMMENDED READING

Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences by Nancy Duarte

Although this book was written to help presenters, it’s also rich with application to conference design. It changed the way I think about both the planning of program content and the staging of logistics and décor. And, if you do any presenting (even just to internal teams), it’s an invaluable resource for how to do it more persuasively.

We Are All Weird by Seth Godin

If you want to understand why mass markets are shrinking and smaller, specialized, tribe-like markets are on the rise, read this book. Plus it will help give you the courage to inject more weirdness (i.e., personality and character) into your offerings, because without them, Godin argues, you recede into mediocrity.

Ignore Everybody: and 39 Other Keys to Creativity by Hugh MacLeod

Hugh MacLeod has written (and cleverly illustrated) a manifesto on how to bring more art, creativity and humanity to your work—in spite of a risk-averse business culture that tends to squash those very traits. It’s a book about finding and unleashing your unique brilliance, and yet it’s also grounded in practical advice about how to navigate the realities of organizations. In other words, how to nurture your artistry without becoming so precious about it that you can’t get stuff done.

Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative by Austin Kleon

A rich and engaging book that Austin Kleon has penned—in words and playful illustrations—to his 19-year-old self, sharing practical wisdom about creativity and creative processes that he wishes he’d known when first starting out. (And, bonus points, you can read it in a single sitting.)
**How to Be Interesting (In 10 Simple Steps) by Jessica Hagy**

Jessica Hagy has a remarkable gift for capturing deep insights in simple, elegant diagrams, posted daily on her blog Indexed. Here she’s bundled those insights into a “small and quirky book with a large and universal message” about being courageous, taking risks, enriching yourself and putting your creativity on display.

**Different: Escaping the Competitive Herd by Youngme Moon**

A fascinating (and sobering) exploration of what it takes to create meaningful differentiation in your products—that is, difference that’s in any way discernible to the average customer. In many cases, it turns out, competition actually results in greater sameness between products, not difference.

**The Art of Non-Conformity: Set Your Own Rules, Live the Life You Want, and Change the World by Chris Guillebeau**

Based on his popular online manifesto, A Brief Guide to World Domination, Chris shares his own story and those of others who have successfully revamped their lives and careers—pursuing their passion (and making money doing it) rather than following a path prescribed by someone else. Even if “creative self-employment” isn’t what you’re after, this is still a great resource for helping you embrace adventure and break out of convention. And make the world a better place in the process.

**Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek**

Sinek makes a powerful case for using your organization’s purpose to lead, inspire and build a loyal following. Most companies sell the “what” of their products. Great companies instead sell the “why.” You can also get an 18-minute version of his ideas in his TED Talk.

**The Chairs Are Where the People Go by Misha Glouberman and Sheila Heti**

This is an intriguing, sometimes meandering but always insightful book that touches on a wide range of topics, from urban planning to group behavior to the physical and social dynamics of meetings. Misha Glouberman is a gifted facilitator and a fascinating thinker. (He is also—by his own claim, as yet unchallenged—Canada’s foremost charades instructor.)
You Are Not So Smart: Why You Have Too Many Friends on Facebook, Why Your Memory Is Mostly Fiction, and 46 Other Ways You’re Deluding Yourself by David McRaney

This is a book worth reading if for no other reason than it will make you more interesting at cocktail parties. It’s an illuminating, entertaining and sometimes cringe-inducing glimpse into how and why we form (and then rationalize) our decisions. In the rapidly growing field of behavioral science and economics books, this is one of the most accessible and well written.

ARTICLE LINKS

An Invitation to Engage, Convene magazine, February 2013

Emotionally Engaging Events by Design, MPI Perspectives, Summer 2012

Innovation Starts with Empathy: The importance of developing deep connections with the people you serve, by Dev Patnaik, Founder and Principal, Jump Associates
THE ART OF **ENGAGEMENT**

PURPOSE
PERSONALITY
PASSION

RESONANCE

**WHAT RESONATES WITH YOU?**
How I got here

1993

TSW

Fast 50

2006

PCBC annual growth

TED

PCBC

2006

TSW

Fast 50

1993
“Creativity occurs at the intersection of previously unconnected planes of thought.”

[ Dorothy Leonard ]

ARE YOU OKAY WITH FEWER, BUT MORE ENGAGED, CUSTOMERS?

1. CREATE VIBRANT, ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

RESONANT CONFERENCES DO TWO THINGS
MEETING → COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY → MEETING

COMMUNITY CHANGES THE SELLING PROPOSITION
Purpose
Personality
Passion

Consumer Choice as a Values Statement

Don’t Buy This Jacket

Stand for Something
Articulate Values
Be Willing to Polarize

“I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.”
[ Bill Cosby ]

ideas that do not risk offense, aren’t.
“A good product is not enough; consumers today are also looking for soul — and soul is one thing you cannot invent. It has to be authentic.”

[ Laurie Coots, TBWA\Chiat\Day ]

“Put yourself out there”

Purpose
Personality
Passion
2. **MAKE LEARNING STICKY**

**EXPERIENTIAL**

**EMOTION**

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**SURPRISE**

“People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

[ Maya Angelou ]

**WHAT’S EXCITING ABOUT THIS?**

**WHAT’S DAUNTING?**
**Winning Organizational Support**

**Define Success Early (and thoughtfully)**

**Win New Clients**
- Solidify Existing Clients
- Attract Talent
- Start a Movement
- Media Exposure
- Increase Book Sales

**Don’t Define Success by Dollars Alone**

**Identify Intangible Indicators of Success**

**Celebrate Who Joins the Party**
Edgy content is organizational R&D
Doing this on a budget
PCBC annual growth

1993
2006
2011

Fixed costs vs. variable costs

Fixed costs:
- Marketing
- Venue
- Speakers

What resonates with you?

Fixed costs
Marketing
Venue
Speakers

(announcing)
THE VINE SALON at IDEO

User-Based Design Solutions to Meet the Challenges of Community

Tuesday, November 17, 2009 - Palo Alto

11:30AM - 2:00PM: A day of workshops and collaborative “design thinking” led by IDEO’s SmartSpaces practice, followed by drinks, wine tasting and dinner at 5:30 PM. At IDEO HEADQUARTERS, 100 Forest Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94303

What resonates with you?
PURPOSE
PERSONALITY
PASSION

BE ENGAGING

BE ENGAGED