

Communications Business Solutions

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Closing the customer promise gap

The urgency of the economic moment is clear. No one alone has all the answers. The 'Digital Tsunami' now upon us has created a massive disruption in the way that organisations relate to the people they serve, and amplified customers' demands for not only a personalised service but also the very highest levels of honesty and transparency.

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Meetings, congresses, and the canvassed opinions of planners!

According to a recent IACC (International Association of Conference Centres) report, the meetings industry continues to evolve and is developing at a rapid pace.

More than 180 meeting planners were surveyed, at the global level. Their assessment of possible venues is more critical than in the past.

Of course, we are living in an age where planners are under pressure to "do more with a smaller budget", but they also want high-level experiences for the participants.

When the general objectives of meetings held in the preceding year were examined, it was noted that they roughly matched those of earlier years. That is not the case for meetings today.



Offering video conferencing for use in huddle rooms

In the past few years, the audiovisual and video conferencing industry has been taking a strong interest in huddle rooms.

Nonetheless, many businesses and certain suppliers have not yet fully understood the real value of these spaces.

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The Digital Tsunami

Every company is faced with one commercial 'fact of life': The ability to build and maintain



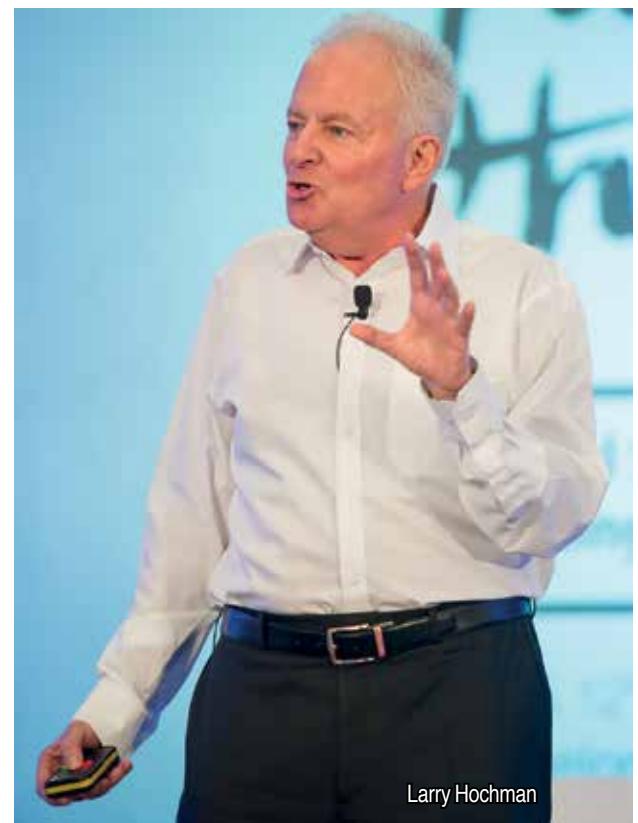
'successful customer relationships' remains the key to the survival of your business. This is the only place where 'Unique Value' is created, value that can seldom, if ever, be replicated by any competitor.

The companies that successfully ride the 'Digital Tsunami' will be the one's which have both the clarity and the confidence to focus on customer relationships to make their businesses unique, therefore creating 'Value for Life'.

The identification of 'Value For Life' must be your primary goal: Pinpointing where it exists, growing it, nurturing it, protecting it, sustaining it, and helping everyone who works with you and for you to focus on it and to see it as a key strategic priority – perhaps the most important of all priorities! Service and products based on simplicity, speed, convenience and control, brand value based on under-promising and over-delivering, customer relationships' which are not one-night-stands, but rather grow richer over time, where trust is built, earned and maintained.

For years, customers have been growing increasingly cynical about the gap that exists between the promises that companies make to them and the realities of what is actually delivered. Far from just cynical, they actually believe that companies (and governments) are lying to them when promises are broken. Technology has changed what they value, who they trust, how and what they wish to purchase, hardened their determination to punish when things go wrong, and social media has given frustrated and angry customers the perfect platform to tell 10,000 people and more how you have fallen short.

Let down, exhausted, felling out of control, they are seeking the stability of business relationships where companies feel loyal to THEM (the 'new loyalty'), where small kindnesses are practised, where recognition



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is commonplace, where simplicity and speed are the rule not the exception, and where more often than not promises are kept rather than broken.

Unique Value

What must be crucially understood is that almost everything in your business can be replicated. Competing on price isn't hard – anyone can do it, today, tomorrow, as they are reading this sentence. Competing on product is easy too – there are people in China and India waiting to take any innovation to pieces, and put it back together again, faster, better and cheaper.

The things that can't be replicated are the relationships you have with

your customers. The one to one interactions built over days and weeks and months and years, this is what is truly unique. It is within these relationships where 'Unique Value' in your company is created. These relationships are the key to sustainable business success. Like all relationships, however, the relationships that you have with your customers must be based on trust that is earned. Think of the closest, most important relationship in your own personal life – most likely it is the relationship you have with your husband, wife, partner or lover.

The Realationship

Those of you who have experienced the collapse of trust in a marriage will know this hard truth: the things that made that personal relationship uniquely valuable are hard to recover.

Often the relationship will never recover. Faced with exactly this kind of collapse in many of their businesses relationships owing to the lack of trust when promises are not kept, customers will now dump you faster than you ever imagined possible, and tell many other people why. In an era of 'Fake-News' customers want something authentic, genuine, tangible, real, and relationships with unprecedented levels of transparency, openness, accountability, honesty and delivery, in order to trust you in the future. This is a revolution – the 'Customer Revolution' – and they, we, us are now in control forever. This is the true commercial revolution that technology has created.

Customer relationships are also uniquely important and valuable because they are fragile. Again, like your personal relationships,

they can take years to work on and develop and grow. And yet, overnight, by just one bad mistake, one small indication that rather than valuing your customers you have contempt for them, or take them for granted, or lied to them, or over-promised and under-delivered, a customer might walk away and NEVER return.

Your Customers want you to tell the truth

Several years ago, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software was heralded as a new dawn for business, a way in which important commercial relationships could be strengthened and maintained by the collection of information and data (sound familiar??), believing this was the road to perfecting the art of customer loyalty. Companies all over the world invested millions of dollars installing software to track and manage customers. Looking back, it's hard to assert this made any strategic difference at all to the way that customers felt about the companies they interacted with, or to levels of customer loyalty. Indeed, it may even have been corrosive to both.

The belief that loyalty could be sustained by the collection of information led to customers being commoditised, whereas the truth is that relationships are not that mechanical: that's what makes them scary and wonderful. There's no way to "de-risk" relationships through software, which was the basic (if unspoken) promise of CRM – all you can do is make sure that everyone in your company genuinely understands how important relationships are, fully understands how they link to the bottom-line, and works at



strengthening them all the time no matter what their job is. Many have been led to believe that everything can be measured and quantified. Yet a 'Customer for Life' is such a valuable thing that it's genuinely priceless!

Again and again, when people are asked whom they most trust to recommend a product or service, they come up with the same answer: 'someone like me'. That's not you, or your marketing team, or your advertising partner. That's their neighbour, their family, their work colleagues, and the other members of their on-line community. Your customers want you to tell the truth, they want you to deliver on your promises, they want their lives made less complicated not more; they want service and information at the speed of LIFE, their life, made easier by the products and services you offer.

They also want someone to say 'I'm sorry' and mean it when something goes wrong, and fix the problem FAST.

Nothing threatens the longevity of a relationship more than broken promises. Except, of course, lies. Broken promises betray trust: lies multiply the damage and the rot.

If you accept the basic premise that customer relationships are THE dominant factor in determining commercial success, then you must become obsessed with CLOSING THE CUSTOMER PROMISE GAP, which exists to some extent in every company – including yours.

It must be one of your 'forever' strategic imperatives.

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The new era in the provision of IT solutions and advice

IT partners have developed impressive support capabilities in a wide variety of key areas.

At the same time, distributors have begun to alter their approach and some have shifted their focus from sale, repair, installation and maintenance to the provision of solutions and advice.

One thing remained more or less constant: the company's IT services made the choices and decisions. Today, this purchasing process has been radically transformed, largely as a result of the tectonic changes wrought by the "cloud" and SaaS (software as a service).

65% of decisions are taken by the senior management

As Forrester recently pointed out, more than 65% of decisions are taken (or influenced) by senior managers. Increasingly, the senior management (sales, marketing, finance, human resources, etc.) is taking charge of the digital transformations. And more than 50% of management teams use their own budget to buy technology rather than have the purchases undertaken by the IT department. In fact, 29% of decisions are taken without the IT department being involved in any way, and the trend is accelerating.

Business managers plan and execute these solution purchases with little or no internal assistance but 58% of decision-takers choose external specialists to integrate the solutions, as well as for security, backup and compliance. Another, parallel trend: the purchasing behavior of business managers. 73% of them prefer to deal directly with the vendor. Here it becomes clear that making a profit margin on the simple resale of technology will increasingly become a thing of the past. This will lead to a sort of collapse of the traditional technology channels.

The victory of "solutions" over "technical characteristics"

And, from a practical perspective, this is only.... logical, as what we are seeing here is the victory of "solutions" over "technical characteristics". Formerly, the company manager consulted with his IT services to obtain a specific functionality and left the decision-taking to them. Today, he is much better informed about the existing solutions and makes a choice according to his needs and the use he wants to make of the technology. He simply wants things to work in the desired way, never mind the technologies employed.

This new situation makes it necessary for IT



companies to move away from an approach based on "technical characteristics" to one predicated on "actual functionalities". This means no longer talking the same way, and focusing on the results that can be obtained under real-life conditions, adapted to each particular case. To that end, the customer is "listened to" and provided with useful guidance, and any hope of selling him items of equipment with complicated names and nebulous functions is abandoned. One remains focused on the practicalities of everyday life within the enterprise. In short, the integrator's job (inside and outside the enterprise) is undergoing profound and necessary change, since the interlocutors and requirements are changing dramatically!

When the video conference descends into chaos

The adoption of video conferencing can cause severe headaches and its pitfalls can cause those who have experienced them to lose interest altogether!

This is the unmistakable conclusion of a recent study (conducted in Europe and the United States) that casts revealing light on what happens when video-conferencing turns into a real.... Tower of Babel!

The reason: wanting to "keep in step"

Let's not beat around the bush, it often ends in chaos. But why? In fact, companies that opt for several video conferencing tools can soon find themselves having to struggle with the enormous complexity that often ensues, with the result that employees no longer want to use anything anymore for fear of running into trouble. And indeed, this is the case for two thirds of the companies that employ multiple solutions. They initially choose this situation to keep in step with one or other of their partners that uses (for example) Skype for Business, and then to correspond with another partner that works with (for example) GoToMeeting or WebEx...

The result is that employees must perform a juggling act with platforms in the video confer-



ence rooms and users are irritated by an image quality that is not uniform. Eventually, the companies object vociferously to having to spend large sums of money on upgrading each of the chosen "solutions".

Faced with these increased costs and this irksome complexity, as well as the resulting loss of time, companies do not know which way to turn. Unanimously, they believe that the best approach would be to work with a single solution. The Americans: mainly in order to reduce

costs. The Europeans: with a view, above all, to ensuring good ergonomics.

A single collaborative solution is required!

The study also points to the time that is lost in training users to deal with a greater number of problems and test the different configurations on the terminals etc. Time is also wasted when communication needs to be established from the conference room and there is confusion with the identifiers. The "consumer" solutions fare no better, as they pose security and conformity problems. Moreover, when they are added to the mishmash of other solutions, the situation deteriorates further!

Using only one video conferencing solution resolves these weighty problems. It should be a collaborative "all-in-one" solution (a single vendor supplies the video conferencing software, the equipment - HD cameras and telephones - for using it, and the whole platform for the organization of meetings and the sharing of documents from the office applications, with maximum compatibility).

Huddle rooms are here to stay!

Collaborative work is increasingly becoming the norm in business. It might be said that “meeting culture” is evolving. It is in this context that huddle rooms have begun to flourish and spread.

“Collaboration” has largely ceased to be buzzword and has now become a way of conducting business, resulting in the need to equip these informal meeting spaces with communication technology.

Newly emerging needs

Numerous advantages are to be gained when workplaces become more collaborative, one of the foremost being that these meeting environments increase user engagement, resulting in greater efficiency and productivity. These benefits are a golden opportunity for businesses that have not yet modernized their office concept through the use of huddle rooms favoring short meetings focused on resolving a specific problem.

In addition to the huddle room concept, entirely new technologies have been developed to enable workers to collaborate even more efficiently. From traditional telephones through to video conferencing, there are countless software and hardware solutions that are all designed to take their own place in these new communication spaces.

A search conducted using the keyword “huddle room” in Google Photos will produce dozens of images of workers equipped with their laptops and mobile devices, all sitting around a central screen.

BYOD connectivity indispensable!

Huddle rooms are precisely designed to take advantage of the devices that users carry with them, which explains why the vast majority of these rooms are equipped

with a wireless display solution that provides BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) connectivity for all users. Indeed, the ability to share whatever you are working on, with complete transparency, and from your own device, so that everyone can benefit from it, is of paramount importance.

The wireless screen provides a platform by which workers can share the contents of projects and related ideas easily, without spending time dealing with a recalcitrant video cable.

But while BYOD connectivity is indispensable, the display solutions are not all equal. Here are some selection criteria...

Ease of use is crucial and there should be no limit on the number of connected users or on the volume of data that can be shared.

The wireless screen must be connectable to the business's existing network, and its configuration must be easy and trouble-free.

Of course, huddle room technology will evolve over time, depending on market requirements.

But as long as people continue to carry laptops and mobile phones with them, the sharing of content via a wireless screen will remain central to meeting-room use.

Finally, the huddle room's ability to catalyze previously untapped productivity coupled with its low cost means that it is here....to stay!



Big News for Small Spaces

Introducing the Mezzanine 200 Series

Mezzanine 200 is a compact, easy to install version of Oblong's signature enterprise collaboration solution that utilizes just two screens, making it easily deployable within the 45 million+ small to mid-sized huddle rooms located globally.

It provides the same powerful user interface plus integrations with popular ecosystems like Microsoft Exchange and Skype for Business, making it a better choice for enterprise-wide collaboration.

The rich feature set of Mezzanine is unparalleled in the industry, providing not just an engaging wow-factor platform for presentations but real utility for collaborators doing important work with visual information and complex data across the enterprise.

Oblong Industries

Website: www.oblong.com



Offering video conferencing for use in huddle rooms

In the past few years, the audiovisual and video conferencing industry has been taking a strong interest in huddle rooms.

Nonetheless, many businesses and certain suppliers have not yet fully understood the real value of these spaces.

Appearances can sometimes mislead. Huddle rooms are not smaller conference rooms with fewer seats. They are places where workers go to hold informal discussions or to take part in an ad hoc work session, in order to delve into and resolve a true problem in real time.

Inventory of fixtures

A huddle room is an informal meeting space that can accommodate at least six participants.

They do not have any specific shape or size and can be found in the corner of a large room, in open areas or on a patio. In fact, a huddle room can be understood as any place where a handful of persons can gather and work together. Generally, huddle rooms do not need improvements or special work, and they are available for use on a case-by-case basis.

Workers expect to benefit from three basic AV functions provided there: audio conferencing (making a phone call), presentations (ability to display content) and video conferencing (conducting two-way work sessions with remote users or with other meeting rooms).

Unlike traditional meeting rooms, huddle rooms are NOT designed for video, audio or performance. They focus on low cost, ease of installation and use, and availability.



Companies want to deploy video conferencing

Wainhouse launched a survey of 300 company decision-makers in August, 2016. It shows that around 50% of the companies are planning to deploy video conferencing in a larger number of huddle rooms.

There is no doubt that organizations are investing in their huddle rooms, but the deployment of video conferencing brings with it a new array

of challenges in many areas, especially as regards the choice of a camera system.
In certain cases, companies are going to use dedicated video conferencing systems (equipment).

Such solutions can offer an exceptional user experience but are generally too expensive for a huddle room.

What's more, they are not able to support the different types of meeting applications (such as



Skype for Business, Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc.). That is why many companies choose PC-based video conferencing solutions and, in this situation, the users must choose a suitable video conference camera to meet their needs.

Cost, image quality and camera angle

The first item to be taken into account is, of course, the cost.

Remember that there are around 40 million huddle rooms in the world and a single large company can comprise as many as several thousand huddle rooms. In these conditions, the cost becomes enormous for the company!

Fortunately, today there is a choice and the solutions range in price from around a hundred euros to as much as several thousand euros should you choose motorized panoramic cameras with adjustable tilt and zoom, or if you opt for the use of several cameras with advanced features (face detection, tracking of speakers etc.).

And then there is the problem of image quality.... This involves many elements that all need to be taken into account, such as video resolution (4K, 1080p etc.) and image frequency, the use of pixels (using them to capture faces has more interest than capturing the ceiling or floor), the quality of the zoom (which should be optical and not digital, otherwise the image quality is impaired), and light compensation (in the case of backlighting or difficult lighting conditions).

Room coverage by the camera.

Huddle rooms exist in different forms, and in many cases the participants are seated right near the entrance, which poses a major problem for the cameras by virtue of the fact that some persons are often located outside the field of view.

You should therefore choose wide-angle cameras (visual angle up to 180 degrees) that will allow you to increase the field of view. Otherwise the video conference will experience the



"teleabsence" of one or several of its participants!

Finding your way among the standards and connections

Standards and connections.... Today several options are available. There is HDMI (professional solutions), which requires the host device (PC or laptop) to have an appropriate input, which is not always the case, then leading to extra costs for adapters.

That is the reason why HDMI cameras are not the ideal solution for huddle rooms. Ethernet/IP cameras offer exceptionally good value for money, but they require a host device as well as host software, so much so that the support of IP cameras is not widespread in the video conferencing world.

There are also cameras that work according to specific or proprietary standards and that, by their very nature, impose limitations (they can

only be used with solutions that are adapted to them). Wainhouse therefore considers non-proprietary systems to be better suited to huddle rooms.

Further, there are USB connections. These combine performance and low cost.

They are supported natively and therefore do not need any special drivers, either under Windows or with Mac. They are accepted by all conference software and have become the de facto standard in the world of PC-based conferencing.

To put it plainly, all connection methods are valid. The only question is what type of connection is the most logical, for today and for the future. In this respect, Wainhouse recommends the use of USB cameras for huddle rooms.

Flexibility and control

Lastly, there is flexibility and control. To put it very simply: the ability to point the camera at a specific area in the room. Since, as we have already pointed out, huddle rooms exist in diverse shapes and sizes and the layout of their seating and tables is very varied, this functionality makes perfect sense.

Fixed cameras of the webcam type generally allow pan, tilt and digital zoom. Motorized cameras offer pan and tilt with digital or optical zoom.

Each system has advantages and drawbacks: fixed cameras offer exceptional simplicity, but their drawback is that they film only smaller areas and also that their digital zoom can affect the image quality. Motorized cameras allow you to zoom in and out, pan and capture specific parts of the room.

When they have an optical zoom, the image quality is not affected when you zoom into a specific person. Their drawback is easy to understand: they are more expensive!



The market for technology solutions for events: basing technical choices on needs and not possibilities

Every day, or almost every day, a new brilliant technology emerges that is suited to event planning and organization and that is touted as “the ultimate solution” for managing the details of an event, boosting productivity, collecting the registrations, and connecting the participants etc.

At the same time, the profusion of available solutions provokes a feeling of unease: right after having chosen one of these solutions, are you not overtaken by the fear that there exists another solution superior to the one you opted for? How should you decide?

The practices to be observed

According to event professionals, there are some practices to be observed...

First and foremost, you must describe the objectives you seek for your event. This obliges you to set and prioritize the goals you want to achieve prior to, during and after your event. This list will help you determine if networking or training will need to be organized.

Inform yourself about your audience and the kind of experience it is expecting. Many event technologies help organizers keep track of all the details, even the tiniest, while others are designed to simplify and improve the partici-

pants' experience. Once you have understood the expectations of your participants you can begin to evaluate the technological aspects and solutions that will have the most impact. A good way of doing this is to organize a simple online survey that will be sent to former participants or to persons on your marketing list.

You will also have to determine the extent to which your audience is familiar with modern technology. There is, in fact, nothing worse than compelling the members of a senior citizens club to wear virtual reality glasses or punishing a group of millennials by subjecting them to a monotonous PowerPoint presentation, when what they are expecting instead are walls of social media and charging stations for their devices. Segmentation by age is important. In any case, if expectations are high, engagement will be boosted with sophisticated ingredients like artificial intelligence. Knowing your audience enables you to find the right technology solution almost automatically.

Basing technical choices on needs

Technical choices must be based on needs and not possibilities. We know a child aged 10 who drank 2 l of Coca Cola and ate a large bag of potato chips at one go... He did not feel well for the rest of the day. His mother told him: "Having access to all that did not mean that you were obliged to eat it all". Similarly, the availability of a number of "cool" solutions does not mean that they should all be bought and used. The first thing you should do on learning of a new application, software system or program is to determine its added value. If you draw a blank here it is highly likely that the product in question is just a fad.

Take your previous experiences into account! Sometimes the most pressing need is to correct a deficiency or problem encountered previously. This is why it is very important to undertake a sort of debriefing after an event and to list all the concerns raised there. To get a clearer picture it is also a good idea to ask the participants for their opinion via, for example, a feedback questionnaire after the event.

Calculate your budget and the savings you are going to achieve with the technology. A reliable and complete solution always comes with a price tag, which can sometimes be considerable, but you should keep in mind that "free" tools are generally worth...their price! Three selection criteria: to what extent will this technological solution enable you to economize in other areas; how much time and work will it save you and, lastly, what added value will it bring the participants.

First, upgrade existing systems

You should also draw up a list of the functionalities and features you need to achieve your main objectives and use this list to determine what the different technical solutions for events actually offer.

Also consider the tools already used by your audience and rely on its already existing habits: less effort is needed to implement a technological tool with which your participants are already familiar and for which no adjustment on their part will be required.

Of course, the promises of new applications are tempting but it is advisable to first upgrade the already existing technology instead of successively buying new applications as they become available. You should therefore evaluate your existing solutions in order to determine whether an upgrade would not solve your problems. In any case, whatever the technology you choose, you will quite obviously have to adapt to it even if most of the current solutions are designed to be as user-friendly as possible. In spite of everything, a "learning curve" will still apply.



AppCraft develops custom IT solutions to facilitate the organization of events and to offer participants engaging mobile applications.

A 2-in-1 solution starting from €1,000 plus tax/event by annual subscription:

For the agencies and businesses, it is a web application designed to manage all aspects of your events thanks to the roughly fifty plug & play components available (<https://ptdrv.linkedin.com/ucq2lvw> non-exhaustive list)

For the Participants, it is an application on their smartphones (iOS - Android & web) ensuring a UNIQUE DIGITAL EXPERIENCE before, during and after the event!

Whether you are looking for an original solution (100% customizable by non-computer specialists) or a turnkey solution, AppCraft will assist you with your digital projects (a solution dedicated to exhibitions and conventions is also available).

AppCraft SAS

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Website: <http://www.appcraft.fr/events/>

Video link: <https://lnkd.in/e-FdsQx>

Judge a Production Company on its Merits!

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating". The adage also applies to audio-visual production companies.

The Halo Effect and the Best Indicator

The outstanding performance of smartphones and 'consumer' cameras comes with a risk: The temptation to produce your corporate audio-visual projects yourself! But beware: The lack of professionalism creates confusion! The viewer will think the company's products and services are equally mediocre as its audio-visual productions. It's the halo effect.

It is very difficult to change such an impression!

Be as professional with your image and your message as you are in your core business! Is turning to a specialized audio-visual production company the way to go? Yes. Which one? The best indicator of the future is the past! You

will get a good sense of what the audio-visual production company is capable of based on what it has already produced. Don't believe. Ask to see!

If they are happy with one of the audio-visual productions that concern them, your peers (and competitors) will be good advisors. There's nothing like word of mouth!

"They went above and beyond my expectations"

In this regard, Studio Durieux knows what to pay attention to. As well as offering a full range of audio-visual services, the studio is a renowned producer of corporate videos, in particular in the industrial field.



Just recently, the video that Studio Durieux conceived and produced for Lhoist – a global leader in the production of lime, dolomite lime and other minerals – made a strong impression at the 14th REFRA-Kolloquium in Berlin. The opinion of the clients: "The strength of Studio Durieux lies in its empathy, which enables it to perceive the implied expectations of its clients... and thus to sublime their wishes".

Ask to be impressed.

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From the illustrated business card to events, the corporate video is a must!

The corporate video enables you to communicate with very large audiences, within the enterprise or outside

of it. Its purpose is to inform, of course, but it can also be used to educate people and win them over.

The "company film" or "institutional or corporate film" displays the company's business card. It will present a review of its values, structure, know-how, products and personnel.

Length no longer considered a worthwhile investment

Today, length is no longer considered a worthwhile investment. The institutional film seldom runs longer than ten minutes and is often limited to about five minutes, the aim being to retain the attention of the viewers. It allows the presentation of a rapid, synoptic image of the company's key strengths. Further, the chosen brevity allows the use of a dynamic visual language. Formerly projected in the conference room of the company itself, the corporate film is well suited to broadcasting on the Internet and works wonders at trade fairs and other events organized by the enterprise. It is also successfully used in waiting areas and made available via links in emails that are sent to the company's existing/potential customers.

The product video, as its name suggests, concerns some of the company's products. In most cases, these videos show filmed demonstra-

tions that enable the consumers to understand how to use the products. This way of proceeding is infinitely more effective than the traditional instructions for use (which, moreover, nobody reads). Let's not forget the basic rule: people retain 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and....70% of what they see and hear!

Training and events

The same rule is applied in training videos, which are generally intended for use within the company. These videos enable, for example, the perpetuation of gestures and expertise stemming from workers with a wealth of experience, so that this experience is not lost forever when they retire.

Another advantage is that these training videos are permanently available as they can be posted on the Internet, where they can be viewed at any time.

It should be noted that training cannot be LIMITED to the simple showing of a video. Needless to say, it will be necessary to meet with



trainers afterwards, but the bulk of the work will already have been done and it will then only be a question of doing the fine tuning, explaining details or ensuring that everything has been perfectly understood.

The event video allows viewers to be present virtually at the appropriate venue and thus to participate remotely. The event can be viewed live and/or as a recording at a later date. A live presentation allows real-time participation while the pre-recorded version will consist of edited footage (and will therefore be more dynamic and shorter) covering the key milestones of the event.

Meetings, congresses, and the canvassed opinions of planners!

According to a recent IACC (International Association of Conference Centres) report, the meetings industry continues to evolve and is developing at a rapid pace. More than 180 meeting planners were surveyed, at the global level. Their assessment of possible venues is more critical than in the past. Of course, we are living in an age where planners are under pressure to “do more with a smaller budget”, but they also want high-level experiences for the participants.

When the general objectives of meetings held in the preceding year were examined, it was noted that they roughly matched those of earlier years. That is not the case for meetings today.

The objectives

Indeed, the adoption and use of new technologies, new meeting space design, networking and the greater emphasis on experience creation have had an impact on the assessment criteria in force today. There is also a greater emphasis on participant engagement and personal development.

These latter objectives necessitate personalized experiences that call for the integration of a more interactive technology, the organization of networking sequences and networking opportunities, and modification of the meeting format itself.

The trend is to invest in creativity and the generation of ideas while playing down the “pure productivity” aspect.

It must be said that 77% of the people surveyed believe that creativity will become a core professional competency and that 76% feel that emerging technologies are going to change their work.

What is concerning is that only half think they are creative at their job while being aware that every job demands creativity!

Emphasis is placed on personal development

Training objectives remain crucial for meeting planners, but personal development has gained



From reading a study entitled “The neurosciences in behavioral economics” and dealing with employee commitment, one learns that conferences and meetings produce some very real results that improve the organizational growth of the company. Among other things, this study explains that human decision-making is very much more emotional than rational. Placing greater emphasis on emotional decision-making constitutes a solid driving force that enables the achievement of personal growth.

The new interactive technologies favor individual engagement by providing a more personal experience. Nevertheless, they are evolving rapidly and their upgrading can prove expensive.

Mobile devices allow permanent connection to the outer world with the risk of a “brain drain” during meetings, that is, flagging attention as a result of external stimuli (emails and chats). Organizers must take this in account by increasing networking times and favoring co-working.

Creating networking opportunities can even begin prior to the event. As delegates are arriving at the venue, meeting planners can create gathering or co-working places where the delegates will be able to open their notebooks, meet and talk with other delegates. In the case of larger events, applications can provide pre-event communication

between delegates.

The technology allows the organization of hybrid events, which are attended and experienced by the participants in the room and also by remote participants. This is a phenomenon that is destined to enjoy widespread popularity, and it enables the total audience to be expanded considerably.

Controlling the environment

Meeting planners are still aware that meeting environments influence the way participants learn and communicate, and that a good environment will favor productivity and motivation. According to findings derived in 2016, the flexibility of meeting rooms, access to interactive



more importance over the last five years. The trend is towards the seeking of personal experience, a personalized service, and content supplied according to personal preferences.



technology, and networking spaces are among the most important venue elements. It is no surprise that planners see these elements gaining increasing importance over the next five years. They also criticize the management of time in meetings, which is in keeping with the “doing

more with less" idea (mentioned above). Here, companies have realized that meetings are rather time-consuming for attendees and are considering a reduction in their length - even if this means seeing fewer of them during the year - so that their delegates are out of the office for shorter periods of time.

Memorable experiences are wanted

We also notice that participants are looking for experiences that are memorable and have a strong impact on them. 80% of planners take this into account, while also agreeing that experience creation will be a criterion of growing importance in the future. They also point to the demands of incoming generations as the primary driver of this trend.

These new generations are attracted by the increased integration of new technologies (mobile connectivity in particular), a host of opportunities for interaction and collaboration, sessions that are shorter and quicker (and therefore more lively) than the current, often very long, presentations, and the emphasis on creativity.

More than ever, the organizers and managers



of meeting rooms must work hand in hand to create these sought-after "experiences". Organizers notice that room managers are more open to collaborating than in the past, and therefore more ready to share in the responsibilities and planning of meetings.

Attendee productivity and networking are two strong trends, so much so that they are generally used as the basis for evaluating the "return on investment" that provides justification for the expenses incurred by the attendees.

The "big names" are to be recommended!

It seems clear that big brands (Hilton, Marriot Hyatt, etc.) have a beneficial impact on the success of meetings. When meetings are held at big-name venues, planners believe, the design of spaces, the personnel, the flexibility and the technology are all finely attuned, and the high quality of the food and beverages is guaranteed. On the other hand, unsurprisingly, these big brands have no influence on creativity.

It should be noted that while a big name is an important incentive, planners do not automati-

cally decide in its favor. They always carefully evaluate the offers and the capabilities before making a choice, adopting an approach that is becoming increasingly "holistic" (in which the offer is considered as a whole, with all venue elements being viewed as part of an experience to be created).

The technical aspects

At the technical level, the availability of a broadband connection is indispensable. Another important point for planners: the lighting in the meeting room, which impacts the overall quality of the meeting.

A lot of importance is also placed on the acoustics of the room and the necessity of having plenty of networking spaces outside of the main meeting room to provide for informal gatherings.

It is important to have the flexibility to change layouts in meeting rooms.

Planners know that portable technologies can be used to supplement or compensate poor lighting or inadequate Wi-Fi coverage. The same applies to sound and video. On the other hand, it is extremely difficult to rectify poor acoustics (unless you put headphones on everybody!), and background noise, reverberation and echoes can have a devastating impact on the experience of attendees.

As for the Internet, it must not just be high-speed, it must also be able to "handle the traffic", that is it must bear the burden of massive use by participants. Many planners believe that Wi-Fi should be included in venue rates or that it should even be free. They consider it a "must have"!



and sharing are welcome.

For large meetings with numerous rooms operating simultaneously, planners want the use of wayfinding.

It should be noted that numerous studies show that natural light aids memorization. And an interesting detail: when organizers have to choose between a clearer view of the screen and natural daylight, most of them opt for the latter.



A novel idea...

Lastly, a novel idea: planners reported receiving numerous requests for areas outside of the dedicated spaces.

The idea is that these outdoor areas will dispel the monotony of the meetings and boost attendee productivity. It must therefore be possible to use the sometimes remarkable natural surroundings adjacent to venues for the enhancement of creative abilities. Neuropsychology shows that memorization in unexpected surroundings triggers the release of dopamine in the hippocampus (the part of the brain that creates memories).



Data security is an issue that it should be possible to address.

Apps for networking, planning, communication

IACC is the only global professional association which represents small to medium sized venues focused on meetings, training courses and conferences. All members conform to a comprehensive global set of criteria and standards.

IACC serves its members by being the global thought-leader in the meetings industry and currently has 385 members in 22 countries in the Americas, Europe and Australia.

Obtaining some wonderfully vertiginous pictures!

A large company or association is holding its convention at a place with beautiful natural surroundings. This evening the closing-night dinner will be held, and the 450 guests have donned their evening dress for the occasion. The venue is a large hotel or convention center that has a lovely garden with a splendid view of the surrounding countryside.

Here's the scene.... We see the convention center, viewed from above and afar, with all its charms revealed. We can make out the tables set for pre-dinner drinks and also see the first buses arriving with delegates, some of whom are already gathering in a sweeping arc on the large lawn area. The setting sun floods the scene with a magnificent orange light. The photographer must have scaled a nearby mountain to capture this superb image!

And now the photo comes to life!

But now the picture moves, the "photo" comes to life... The photographer, who has become a film cameraman, seems to be descending the mountain while holding his camera perfectly steady. Even better, he seems to be flying! As if he were in a helicopter, he circles the group of guests and then comes to a halt a few meters above their heads, in order to get a perfect close-up...

Click-click goes the camera, and here's a remarkable, well-composed group photo in which everyone will be able to recognize themselves after the event.

Behind the scenes... it is a seasoned pilot who is at the controls of this special helicopter, so special that it really isn't one. In reality, it is a professional drone, equipped with both a film camera and a high-resolution still camera.

But the pre-dinner drinking has just started and the device will continue to circle the group for some time in order to garner some really exceptional images!

During this time, a "normal" photographer is taking photos of some amusing and charming scenes, as is usual during this type of event.

Professionalism and precautions!

That was a small illustration of what a professional drone controlled by a licensed pilot can do. Of course, the service comes at a price, but this is not comparable to the cost of chartering a real helicopter.

Obviously, as many precautions as possible should be taken: imagine, for a moment, the drone suddenly spinning out of control and crashing into a group of delegates! Experience, know-how and professionalism are essential and flying directly over participants will be prohibited for safety reasons.

It hardly needs pointing out that, without a



drone, the "traditional" photographer would no doubt have been very hard put to accomplish a group picture of so many people, because in normal circumstances he would not have been able to find an elevated position from where he could take a picture at a plunge angle steep enough for everyone to appear in the picture.

And at the very center of the meal!

Later, high up in the dining room, you will notice, if you pay careful attention (because it is inconspicuous), a taut cable along which a motorized picture-taking system travels. This apparatus is equipped with a zoom and can photograph and film in all axes. It is going to take some impressive overview pictures as well as some great tracking shots... and also immortalize all the tables, one by one, while the guests, kept well informed by the remote-control equipped photographer, will look up and smile at the appropriate mo-

ment.

Note that one could just as well have stretched out an almost invisible net, above which the above-mentioned drone would have whirled. And since the fitted camera would operate using a large aperture setting and a lightweight telephoto lens, the above-mentioned net – with a large mesh size – would not be visible in the images!

Here too, the "conventional" photographer, just as he did outdoors, will work as usual. There is no "cannibalization", the images will complement one another and coverage of the event will be perfect!

It is thus clear that a professional drone can perform some very valuable services during conventions and other events.



When different hotel services get in each other's way!

The communication between different hotel services should be the number 1 priority of their managers!

The departments of a hotel are part of a whole. For the latter to function properly, it is necessary to understand that each department does not work as a fully autonomous unit. What really makes a "hotel" a hotel establishment is team work, smooth and trouble-free communication, and collaboration.

Counter-productive dynamics

It is this free-flowing communication that creates the "magic" that emanates from a hotel and that guests can feel upon entering its doors. It is this that ensures the best possible customer experience (which, it is important to remember, is one of the key priorities of a hotel). In this respect, a study has found that some departments are inclined by nature to work seamlessly together, more so than other departments. The sales and marketing teams, for example, cooperate readily and exchange ideas on a daily basis and, although they are not always in agreement, these disagreements lead to constructive discussions from which more refined strategies emerge.

In contrast, some departments experience constant friction and problems of communication and mutual understanding that, if not corrected in time, can lead to games fraught with rivalry and criticism between the two teams when something starts to go awry.

The relations between reception and the housekeeping department are probably the best example of these counter-productive dynamics. We shouldn't forget that these two departments

are literally the active heart of the hotel: the managers can take a few days off for a vacation, whereas without receptionists and chambermaids the hotel's operations would break down immediately!

A (very) poor quality of communication

The problems encountered all stem from the poor quality of communication between these two services, which are directly involved with attending to the guests' needs. A receptionist cannot provide a guest with a room until it has been cleaned, and a chambermaid, for her part, does not know what room should be treated as a priority if she has not been given this information by reception.

Based on interviews with the personnel of several hotels, it seems that each hotel works differently, which means that the main problem lies in the lack of standardization of the procedures concerning communication between these two services.

One of the big problems that prolong the time needed to clean a room is the sometimes disastrous state in which certain guests have left it. This can increase the cleaning time considerably.

Reception, for its part, affirms that its biggest problem is the difficulty of contacting the



housekeeping service in emergency situations. And one can easily understand the frustration of having twenty guests at the reception desk without knowing if the rooms assigned to them are ready or not.

One hotel manager said that he had adopted a clever ploy: the rotation of staff between the two teams. He does this once a month, in the course of a day, so that each employee understands the problems of the other party and takes them into account once he or she has been moved back to his or her regular duties. This seems to work well....and can serve as an example to follow.

It seems that each hotel has tried out different approaches to resolve this problem, but none has been entirely satisfactory.

For example, the use of smartphones, WhatsApp and Snapchat groups and walkie-talkies, as well as pagers from the 90s, has been tested!

After careful consideration, the vast majority of hotels have come to believe that their salvation depends on technology, but this should be a technology that is truly adapted to their needs, via specific software... which, at present, is not yet available on the market!

So this matter should be followed!



The TV set must be discarded so that television can be revived!

Television is struggling to gain a new lease of life. A game-changing technical innovation or "WOW effect"

is needed to breathe new life into the medium and make consumers want to replace their sets!

Senseless babble

Game-changing technical innovations that occurred in the past, as well as their effects, are known to us in many forms: the introduction of color and then LCD technology, large "slim line" screens, and HD. With each new innovation, sales soared.

What then followed (3D, UHD, Smart TV, K4, 8K, OLED, QLED, etc.) in each case was a matter of details, with no resulting boost to sales, no more so than as a result of price cuts.

What we observed at the recent Berlin trade fair therefore comes as no surprise: the TV sector, formerly a medium of entertainment, is facing something more serious than a temporary slump in sales - television is no longer at the "heart" of the fair. Of course, consumption habits change. Tablets, smartphones and connected products occupy a place in viewings, but the "big screen at home" continues to attract a large following.

Ultimately, this sluggish situation in the TV market is logical: try to explain to people why they should replace their set with a UHD (4K) set, when there is practically no "soft" in this new format! Or that they should replace their sets



because prices are falling or the 54x model has changed to 54z and its facade colors can change. This is nothing but senseless babble! In reality, people are happy with what they have and the TV market only serves the purpose of "renewal".

Elimination of the "large useless black rectangle"

There is no way of getting around it. Something really new and "sexy" must be INVENTED to encourage TV owners to make the leap! In this

regard, the "laser TV" offers considerable advantages. It will not be available immediately (2018 is being talked about) and the announced starting prices are astronomical (around 15,000 euros), but the rapid price cutting in this sector is well known. But what is a laser TV?

To put it (very) plainly and (very) simply, a laser TV is a small box that is placed at a distance of approximately 20 cm from a wall and that projects onto this wall an image whose size is adjustable and that can be gigantic (up to 100 inches measured diagonally). The brightness and resolution of the image are sensational. Of course, as a substitute for the wall, buyers will opt for a screen (a retractable unit, for example) with the dimensions of the TV screen desired. It is therefore a technology comparable to that of a video projector, except that the projection distance is considerably reduced, and no sacrifice is required in terms of brightness and resolution!

It is easy to envisage the aesthetic advantages: no longer any permanent large screen, total discretion, visual freeing of the room when the TV set is not being used. And, at company level, you must imagine the meeting rooms rid of the large "useless black rectangle"!

The ideal tool for internal communication

Sometimes, business managers are not fully aware of the advantages a digital signage solution for their internal communication would offer them.

Yet digital signage is a wonderful tool for communication with employees. Certain companies use it to reinforce their corporate culture and values, and others to publicize local events or broadcast the latest news.

For... getting the message across!

The way a company communicates with its employees has a significant effect on their productivity: one study found that this can increase by as much as 25%!

The means of communication used by enterprises are varied. They include emails (99%), which quite often "get on the nerves", especially when the "send copy" function is used. Other methods are face-to-face discussions as well as the Internet (files in the "cloud" as well as in Dropbox or Google Drive), the social media, and paper posters. Digital signage is employed by only 50% of companies.

And yet...

And yet, instead of endlessly pointing out to your employees the value of customer relationships, you can get the message across by simply using digital signage to broadcast what customers say and think about your company (emails, RSS feed, comments on Facebook

etc.)! It is a wonderfully effective method.

It is true that, historically, digital signage was initially used for top-down communication, but there are ways of reversing the tendency and achieving real involvement.

Get your employees involved!

You can also encourage employees to share their experiences via Facebook or Twitter and display the feeds on screens in the cafeterias and during breaks.

You can also use SMS surveys via several sites (including Polleverywhere). These offer the advantage of learning how employees feel about one or the other company-related topic or subject. The results can then be displayed online to boost involvement.

Digital signage also enables transparency: the sharing of important key figures to increase employee involvement. It is a fact that everyone looks for information to increase their



sense of belonging to their company. Digital signage can also be used to reward your top performers! A McKinsey study found that official recognition is the simplest way to increase worker engagement. You can also use digital displays to keep your personnel informed about new developments in your sector, including those originating from your competitors.

As can be seen, it is a great pity that using digital signage to communicate internally is a solution that is sometimes neglected!

The best option for finding your way

Wayfinding is part of signage. These special signage systems are designed to help people find their way in a given physical space. They are used by large businesses, shopping malls, airports, and exhibition centers with multiple halls.

Their purpose is to help individuals get from point A to point B, smoothly, quickly and efficiently, while eliminating any stress induced by the feeling of being lost. Historically, this was accomplished using paper, pictograms and voice guidance. Today, wayfinding can make use of digital technology.

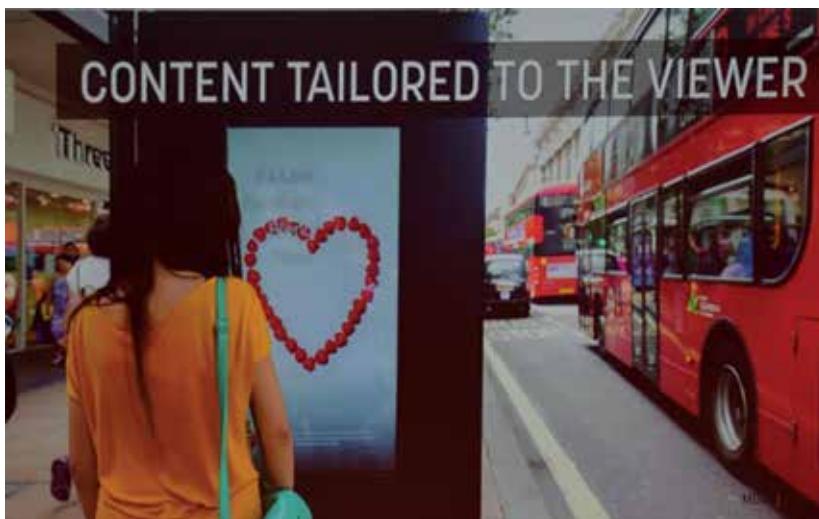
Traditional signage and kiosks

Here large screens are used that display maps and directions. It's a modern way of helping visitors get to their desired destination. But there are different methods.

Traditional digital signage uses non-interactive screens. These are placed at strategic points throughout the business premises and display a map marked with a "you are here" arrow. Their advantage is obvious: the equipment is cheap and nothing needs to be programmed or encoded. It's the almost perfect solution for smaller businesses. On the other hand, there is no personalization of the visit.

The interactive kiosk, a more expensive solution, offers a navigation option that is finer and much more specific to the desired routes. It includes directories (e.g. of rooms, events, departments and personnel) linked to the maps that will be displayed. Visitors select for themselves what they want and will also be able to select (why not?) their language. Of course, the location of toilets, stairs, elevators and fire exits can be

added. The visitor can also see the visual path to his or her place of destination. The touchscreen display simplifies handling further. Obviously, these kiosks will need to be programmed and experienced designers called upon for this purpose. Once this encoding is com-



pleted, every update of rooms, events or personnel undertaken in your database will be taken into account instantly! An interesting option: inclusion of the SMS function. The visitor enters his telephone number on the screen and the kiosk transmits the information. QR codes

can also be added so that the visitor can download maps and directories from the Web.

Here the experience is personalized and therefore contributes to a high-quality "visitor experience".

The "great game": the reactive mobile site and apps

Another solution that may be used in addition to the kiosk and that, to some extent, derives from the aforementioned QR code, is to create a reactive mobile site that is available on the Web and that can be read on any personal screen (computer, tablet, smartphone).

Consumers will take to this like a duck to water as they are accustomed to using their mobile devices for many other things.

The addition of this functionality will likely mean that fewer kiosks will need to be deployed. The advantage is that visitors carry their own route plan with them.

The drawbacks are that the addition of such a solution entails supplementary design and development work and visitors need to have Internet access.

This reactive mobile site can be replaced by a full-fledged wayfinding application - an autonomous application designed specifically for smartphones. Here the visitor downloads the app from his App Store. Using GPS and Bluetooth, navigation is effected smoothly and efficiently, without the slightest hitch.

When making the choice, you should first and foremost observe this golden rule: whatever the solution that will be retained, you will need to focus on the visitor experience!

You can best achieve this by putting yourself in their place! This is a surefire way to identify their needs and to be able to anticipate them.





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