

Communications Business Solutions

N°66 October - November 2019



Integrated Systems Europe
the “must event for users of AV technology”

Mike Blackman, Managing Director of Integrated Systems Events, talks about ISE 2020 (Amsterdam February 11 -14), and why the show has become the ‘must attend’ event for users of AV technology as well as for AV industry professionals.

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Getting Out of Routines Dripping with Boredom

A meeting, a seminar, a conference, an event? Routine? No, that’s just what has to be escaped from like the plague, to avoid getting back to the usual “snores”!

What can we do to give them the pep they need, to ensure that these moments are memorable?

Of course, businesses have dedicated meeting places. But they also have other spaces, which can be developed to innovate and change things. These areas can be used to create different environments.

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How does the future of my association (a trade union in the Netherlands) look like? Does my association even have a future and what is the future of associations in general?

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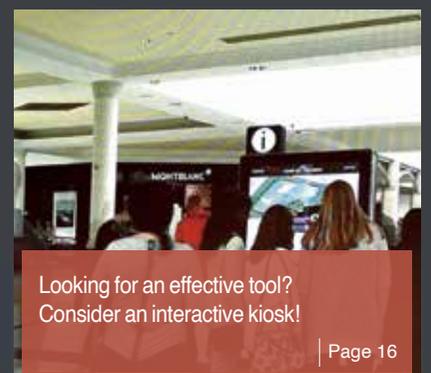
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How to be valuable for members

A new perspective on the association-member relationship

How does the future of my association (a trade union in the Netherlands) look like? Does my association even have a future and what is the future of associations in general?

This dominant question that is at the table of many decision makers in the association business drove me and many of my peers in the association business to join forces in a quest for answers. Last year a group of 50 associations, all affiliated to the Dutch association for association professionals (DNA), cooperated together in a co-creational trajectory called 'The association of the future'.

The results of this search were presented at the Associations World Congress & Expo in Gothenburg (April 7 – 9 2019) Communications Business Solutions was also present at this event.

This search for the association of the future lead to many interesting insights. In this article I would like to focus on one particular insight namely the focus on true member value. Essentially all associations (as well as organisations in general) are, or at least should be, focussed on creating value.

Although this might seem obvious, the practice at many associations is not directly focussed on this. Let alone that many associations don't really understand what the actual value is their members are looking for. Part of the problem here is that many of us don't understand the



essence of how value gets created.

Let me explain this to you by a simple example.

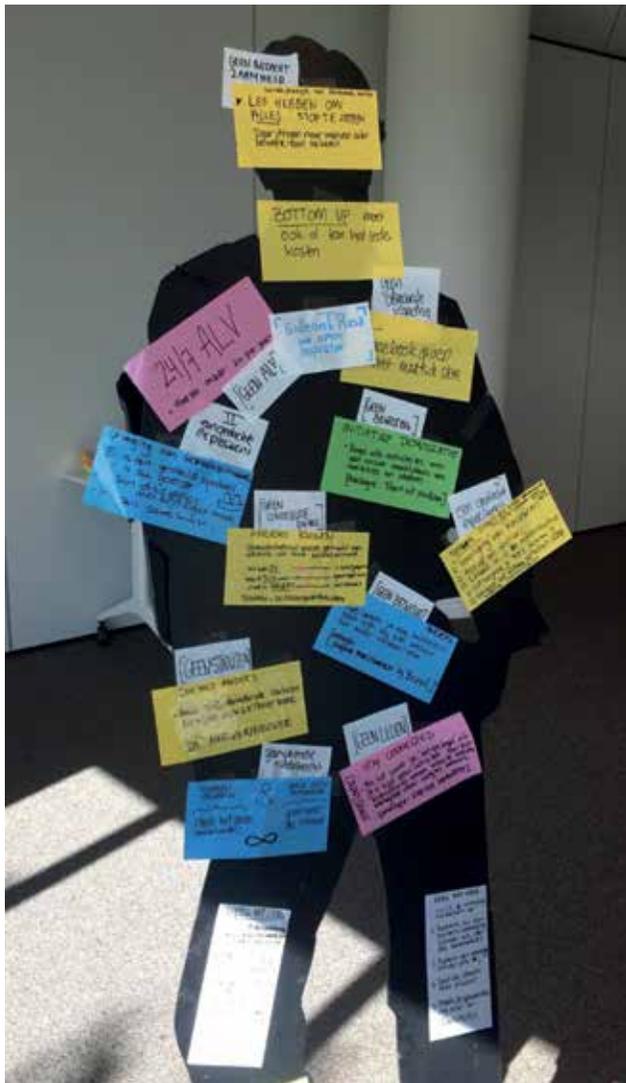
Imagine yourself being a customer in a hardware store standing in front of a rack of drilling machines.

A sales person walks up to you and tries to sell you the best drill he has. But off course it is not the drill you need, you need a hole in your wall so you can hang that nice picture in your living room. The value you are looking for in that hardware store is

sell the most appropriate drill for that task and provide instructions on how to do the job.

This example illustrates that the actual value isn't embedded in the product or service you sell but getting a specific job done with that product or service. For organisations in general it is therefore essential to understand what their customers, or members in the case of associations are looking for. In other words we can describe this as the 'Why' of the member.

This insight pleads for a member centric focus of associations. In academic literature we can find a lot on how organisations can become



not the drill but the solution: creating a hole in your particular wall. The sales person needs to be aware of this so he can ask questions like: "Where do you need it for?" "What kind of wall do you have?" And then

customer, or member centred. Essentially there are 4 main focus areas: Culture, Structure, Processes and Metrics. I will briefly address all areas in relation to the association business.

It all starts with creating a member centric cul-

ture. In such culture it is all about creating shared values that are aligned with the 'Why of the member' and a constant awareness of the wellbeing of your members.

All association employees should be constantly considering their actions, projects and investments in relation to the value that needs to be created for the members.

Ask yourself questions like "What does this project or action contribute to the well-being of my members? Does it contribute to the value my members are looking for?"

should stimulate a co-creational relationship with our members in order to really create a personal value-experience.

Why not allowing members to choose either to 'pay' their contributions with money or time. Providing their time and expertise into the association might be even more valuable for the collective than the relative small financial contribution of that particular member. Instead of complex and distant democratic processes we should



This awareness for member value can be stimulated by allowing all of your association's workers to go out and meet members in the context of where they use your association services or products on a regular basis.

When it comes to association structure, we should not be afraid of letting go the traditional structures with old fashion statutory regulations and strict hierarchical decision making bodies. Associations should allow for individual members to become more closely and directly involved in the course and actions of the association. In fact we

facilitate a membership structure where members can determine which subjects or issues are most

important to them and thus allowing to choose where they want to cast a vote and where not, provided they have a limited amount of votes to cast.

This can especially stimulate an association's member centric focus for associations with a mixed membership base like trade unions.

Last but not least metrics play a crucial role in a member centric association.

If you want to steer your association towards improving the well-being of your members and an optimal value experi-

advise to my members even before they pop a question.

There is a lot more to say when it comes to member centric associations and the association of the future in general.

But one thing is crucial and goes for all organisations who want to have a bright future: don't take your current insights on why your members are affiliated for granted.

Be really conscious on this matter and redesign your organisation aimed on this constant search for member-value.

Would you like to know more? Feel free to contact me.

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ence, you need to implement the right metrics.

Are my members happy? Proper metrics also allow an association to customize their services and communication.

How do the members prefer to be addressed? Via social media or via email?

Which topics are they interested in? In the case of a trade union I would like to know in which phase of their career my member are or will be next month.

Having detailed data on this might even allow me communicate an



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Communications Business Solutions is published 5 times a year. Online registration forms on our website will be considered for a regular free copy. Subscription Print: 55 € (Belgium) – 60 € (Europe), 85 € (other continents).

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Member ICCA
 (International Congress and Convention Association)



Communications Business Solutions is available in print in french and dutch and online in english, french and dutch.

Users No Longer Want “Useless Facts”!

The finding looks very much like a concerted attack on the communication that typically emanates from big brands: users are increasingly distrustful of the information that comes from “traditional channels”.

This situation leads to serious consequences: how can manufacturers continue to communicate with potential users while simply being... taken seriously?

From “square waves” to megapixels

A brief look back... which is still current in a certain press. Devices were then sent to the “test bench” where their strengths and weaknesses were identified.

In this exercise, the “tester” was the ultimate reference, the “sphinx”, and issued “objective” marks.

An ancient example that illustrates the case without shocking the practitioners of the current measures: Sound waves (the “square waves”) were sent to the audio recorders and their reproduction was analyzed after recording.

The devices were then ranked according to the level of distortion. Very good... except that no users listen to square waves, they prefer music!

The testers were functioning “in their world”, a thousand miles from the REAL use by users. Even today there are many of this type of tester. Their results are not wrong, but they do not generally correspond with the way “people” use their devices.

An example can be found in the world of TV where after HD came 4K and now 8K. We nitpick over extreme resolutions, we give awards



to the “best rendering of black” while the consumer is mainly looking for an “excellent image”, which was largely dispensed by “simple” HD.

The photo world is also distracted by megapixels, ever increasing in number, which requires the user to change his computer

hardware as well as the capacity of his hard drives... or manually reduce the number of pixels of the pictures he takes.

We discover the consumer does not believe anything anymore!

All these examples demonstrate “useless facts”, facts that users do not care about! Similarly,

communication is undermined, the impact of messages reduced, we learn that the consumer takes these assertions with a pinch of salt!

“Consumers” realize that reality is often very different from promises, and they become very suspicious of “reports”, “testimonials” where “users” discuss the desired products by praising them: one person’s experience cannot be generalized to others! And indeed, believing the same level of satisfaction can be achieved as the person testifying often leads to great disappointments!

The same applies with regard to “pseudo-tests” that proliferate on the internet

What about businesses?

As far as businesses are concerned, in the field of “technological solutions”, there are no unnecessary tests and truths (except in some highly specialized magazines, not read by managers), but the situation is nuanced.

Proposals to businesses frequently depend on the technological arsenal available to integrators, their “equipment portfolio”.

The choice is therefore limited, and, all too often, a given choice inevitably leads to a cascading series of others. Indeed, with material grouped together by “families”, choosing an element involves using its brothers and sisters in a certain line.

As for the abstruse and therefore obscure measures, these also exist, and they have tried to make the rule, of course, but they no longer have anything like the impact that they had in the past: today, it is the business leaders who decide and they have no desire to buy sight unseen.

Before choosing one solution over another, it is highly advisable to interview companies that are already using it to get their feedback. Of course, we must avoid moving towards “proprietary solutions”.

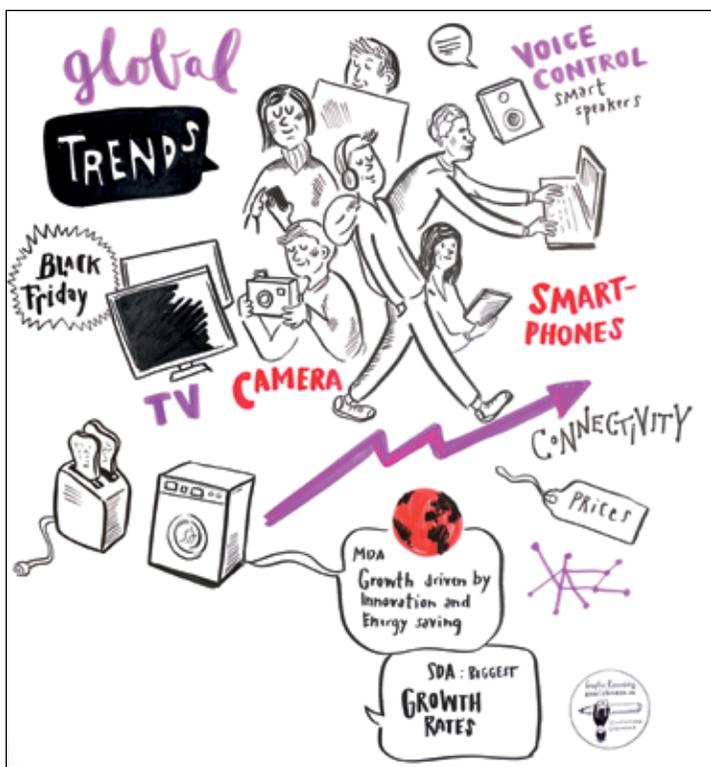


and on You Tube (among others) and also for “product placements”, a specialty of many video series where actors systematically use various brands for supposedly “subtle” promotion: they are paid to use the appeal of their celebrity.

In this era when “fake news” is being hunted down, everyone becomes suspicious of the hype and peremptory claims of excellence used by advertisers. These “false promises”, “fake news”, “false facts” are no longer swallowed by the consumer!

In fact, what remains and will remain is the true interaction, the real user experience of the person who takes the product in hand in the real world.

We have already written about it, but an excellent example of what can be done is to visit an Apple Store. There, the basic question is always the same: “How can we help you?” You are then shown “your” solution, and you are left to explore and experience it for as long as you wish, with no pressure!



How to Have a Unique Meeting Experience

To improve business meetings their content needs to be worked on, of course. There are many articles devoted to preparing a clear agenda and carefully cutting back the subjects addressed while taking care to stay within the comfortable timing.

But this time in terms of form, let's look for a moment at the setting where the meeting will take place. We must be aware of the importance of the environment!

Changing air, even in the company

Within the company, "between walls", there are different types of meeting rooms that need to be used wisely, based on the size of the groups. Large rooms should be reserved for large groups, for a rational use of the space. Small groups will meet in "huddle rooms", these small rooms that a team of reduced size (two to six people) spontaneously decide to use when the need arises.

So much for the theory, which makes sense. But meetings don't always have to take place in traditional rooms, certainly not automatically in the same place.

You have to twist your neck at the boring meetings that are always in "this big room with the U-shaped table"!

Change of scenery! This in itself creates an impression of novelty that positively reflects on participants' state of mind and motivation.

Weather permitting, why not use some welcoming and underused outdoor spaces such as lawns, patios and terraces? Just a little outdoor furniture will transform these spaces, make them welcoming and very usable!

Off to the hotel!

Still, the best solution to energize and renovate meetings is to use external providers and frequent hotels... but of a certain type!

Today, they know how to compete with ingenuity and creativity to offer innovating solutions that take into account companies' different expectations.

There are many advantages to speaking to hotel professionals. The "all-in-one" or "turnkey" solution ensures that the entire event will be taken care of: the technology will be there (and will work smoothly) for presentations where needed, snacks and drinks will be available at



the desired times, and specially designed networking spaces will be provided, which are of paramount importance.

Many hotels (even in the city) have, for exam-

ple, landscaped, central themes), and a specific atmosphere or even food which contribute to creating a special feeling among the participants. In this new perspective, a meeting room in a Brussels hotel will be quite different from another in San Francisco, even if it is the same hotel chain in both cases. Both will have made it a point of honor to "present" the peculiarity of their regions in the layouts, the decorative elements and in the general atmosphere offered.

With this new perspective, we are no longer in interchangeable "sanitized rooms". Each meeting room has its own character, which catches the eye.

Participants SEE and FEEL that they are in Brussels and in San Francisco without having to leave the room to have to be persuaded. Of course, in both cases, there is no question of neglecting the basic elements necessary for the smooth running of a meeting. Among other things, for example, audiovisual equipment is of high quality and fully operational, while the internet is available at high speeds.

Ultimately, each participant has the impression of having a unique experience.



ple, equipped roofs or enclosed gardens which they know how to benefit from.

And enjoy the place!

Hotels also are more and more offering facilities that are the opposite of the bland and generic facilities of the past. Today they are in tune with the culture and specifics of the place where they are located. They offer design (de-



Making a Meeting Less Costly for the Company

It only takes a few seconds of thinking about it to be convinced: meetings cost companies money!

And since they tend to proliferate, the key question is how to reduce their costs. We will explore some useful avenues.

Eliminate spectators

A meeting is expensive because it involves assembling several people (usually managers) in a given location for a relatively long time. During this period the company pays them, just as if they were going about their occupations.

The real cost of a meeting can therefore be determined relatively easily, by adding to it as well the use of company spaces that are not available for other purposes as a result.

To reduce the costs in question, the aim should be to only bring together those people who are really necessary to deal with the problem(s) and eliminate the “spectators” or “extras”. This seems obvious, but staff is very often added for “political” reasons, for example: “They are useful for decision-making, because they hold the same opinion as me”.

These are “loaded” meetings, shams, which have every reason not to exist. In this respect, the planned meeting must also be really necessary.

Eliminating unnecessary meetings is the best way to reduce their cost and everyone should accept this.

AV equipment in good condition

However, the longer a meeting is, the more expensive it is. Sometimes it has to be, but the golden rule is that any meeting should be as short as possible. It will be less tiring with fewer errors of inattention and the room will be cleared more quickly.

Of course, the length of an important meeting can be determined ahead of time with a relatively small margin of error. The method is based on drafting a detailed agenda that is sent to the different participants in advance. Determine in advance the time required to deal with each item and sub-topic on the agenda and... multiply the result by a factor of, say, 1.2, to take into account the inevitable contingencies.

Audiovisual equipment available in the room plays an important role. An effective meeting must be based on equipment in good working order and efficient. A pro-

jector that goes haywire, a videoconference that freezes, uncooperative microphones or problematic wireless connections significantly lengthen meeting time and increase exasperation!

Finally, participants must respect a “code of conduct” and not consult their smartphones, for example. In terms of people management, the facilitator is almost asking for the moon: he has to blow the whistle on employees who are constantly holding the floor and encourage timid people to express themselves.



Researchers Define the Vade-Mecum of Meetings

Meetings in companies follow one another without any real relaxation. We are talking about an average of six hours a week, with much higher peaks for senior management.

We also know that many meetings can be described as ineffective and that they come at a colossal cost to the company.

Using “rich” technology

In response, researchers at the University of Nebraska and Clemson University have compiled 200 scientific studies to analyze the phenomenon and look for opportunities for improvement. The results contain the following recommendations.

Some are common sense, but it all provides a very interesting “vade-mecum”.

The first question is whether a meeting should be convened: can problems not be solved in a different way? The length of the meeting should be planned according to the objectives pursued and meetings that are too long should be avoided. Only people whose knowledge or experience will really help should be invited.

It is important to use “rich” technological solutions for remote participants (videoconference). Make sure the technology works before the meeting starts.

The meeting’s agenda will be disseminated in advance

An important indicator of commitment to the work

When the time comes for the meeting, you need to arrive early. The meeting must begin on time. At the meeting, it’s important to avoid complaining, holding the floor and digressing off topic. Multitasking during the meeting should be avoided as well as distractions.

Make sure that all participants are involved in decision-making processes. If an option has already been chosen, everyone should be informed. When interpersonal communications are dysfunctional, it is necessary to intervene, because it must be remembered that much of what we think and do is influenced by the social context and the behavior of others. This means that the success of a meeting will be largely dependent on those around us.

Research also shows that the actions taken after the end of a meeting affect participants’ feelings about the success or failure of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting and the steps to be taken immediately after the meeting should be circulated. Ask briefly and immediately for an opinion about satisfaction with the meeting.

The satisfaction of participants with respect to meetings is not only helpful in improving the effectiveness of meetings. It is also an important indicator of job satisfaction and employee engagement at work.



Integrated Systems Europe the “must event for users of AV technology”

Mike Blackman, Managing Director of Integrated Systems Events, talks about ISE 2020 (Amsterdam February 11 -14), and why the show has become the ‘must attend’ event for users of AV technology as well as for AV industry professionals.

ISE has enjoyed year-on-year growth since it began. Will ISE 2020 be the biggest and best yet?

Unquestionably. At the last ISE, we had over 81,000 visitors – and we expect more in 2020. In 2019, we had 56,100 sqm of net exhibit space, and that will increase in 2020 by over 800 sqm.

Two important changes for the year 2020 are that the Hall 5 extension has been made larger and permanent, while Hall 14 will be the home of a new Innovation Zone – a specially designed area for companies that are new to ISE to showcase their technology. The ISE Main Stage theatre will relocate to Hall 14, and will offer a full programme of free-to-attend thought leadership and best practice sessions.

Following the success of our spectacular projection mapping on the nhow Hotel during ISE 2019, there will be another exciting projection showcase on another part of the RAI complex. And we have a dynamic and thought-provoking Opening Address lined up; we will announce the speaker when registration opens at the start of October.

What’s new in the way of conferences and professional development?

All the conferences held at ISE 2019 will be back in 2020 – covering smart buildings, digital signage, XR (virtual, augmented and mixed reality) digital cinema, hospitality, visitor attrac-

tions, stadiums and pro audio, plus AVIXA’s two What’s Next... conferences, focusing on enterprise and higher education. In addition, we have a couple of new ones – the Control Rooms Summit and the CE-DIA Design & Build Conference. Like in 2019, many of the conferences will be held at the Hotel Okura, near the RAI, which proved very popular with our attendees.

What are the challenges presented by the event having become so large?

One of the biggest is ensuring that visitors can easily locate what they’re looking for – and relevant exhibitors can easily be found. One of the ways we’ve addressed that is with the creation of six Technology Zones – for audio and live events, digital signage and DooH, education, residential, smart buildings and unified communication. The Technology Zones mean that visitors can quickly locate the part of the show where they’ll find the technology and product trends that are most relevant to their interests.

The ISE app has proved a big hit with visitors, and its wayfinding features are a key part of that.



Mike Blackman



How has the average ISE visitor profile changed over the years? Back when we first started, our audience almost exclusively comprised systems integrators and other AV channel professionals. Increasingly, though, the show has become a destination for end-users; our exhibitors want to engage directly with them, as well as meeting their existing and prospective channel partners. Today, ISE has become as much of a ‘must attend’ event for end-users as it is for the channel.

How have you made ISE more attractive to end-users?

We’ve added substantially to our conference programme over the years, because end-users have told us they get enormous value not just from the opportunity to talk directly to manufacturers and to find out about the products and technologies that will shape their companies’ AV strategy – but also to network and to learn from industry ex-



them, the two associations provide a wealth of market intelligence, guidance and education initiatives, as well as many entertaining and thought-provoking opportunities for development.

What trends in technology should visitors to ISE 2020 look for?

I think we'll start to see AI permeate a number of AV applications. It's already being used in digital signage, but many see opportunities for it in other customer-centric applications, such as hospitality. AI is also being used to improve the quality of meetings and collaboration.

With the move to Barcelona in 2021, ISE 2020 will be the last one at the RAI. How do you feel about that?

The RAI has been a great venue for us for over a decade now, so of course, there's some sadness: I'll

leave with many fond memories of our time there. It's served us very well, and has been part of our rapid growth to become the world's largest professional audiovisual event. The downside is that we've become too big for a convention centre even of the RAI's size and facilities.

leave with many fond memories of our time there. It's served us very well, and has been part of our rapid growth to become the world's largest professional audiovisual event. The downside is that we've become too big for a convention centre even of the RAI's size and facilities. However, I'm also excited. The Fira is a fantastic facility and a much larger space, located in a very attractive destination. The move isn't simply about growing the numbers: it's about delivering a better-quality experience to our exhibitors and visitors.

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Location:

RAI Amsterdam
Europaplein 2-22
1078 GZ Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Show opening hours:

Monday 10 February 2020

Pre-Show Events and Conferences

Tuesday 11 February 2020

10:00 – 18:00 hrs

Wednesday 12 February 2020

09:30 – 18:00 hrs

Thursday 13 February 2020

09:30 – 18:00 hrs

Friday 14 February 2020

09:30 – 16:00 hrs

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Technology Makes It Possible to Do More and Better with Less!

Technology has fundamentally changed the way businesses work.

It has made it possible to literally break up the “office” in its old sense, by eliminating the handicaps inherent in a permanent physical presence. And not only that...

“Task enrichment” is being practiced

Today’s technologies are profoundly changing the way people work. In the past, the distinction was made between “life at work” and “life outside work” and the attempt was made to keep them free from any interference.

Today, this boundary is more blurred than ever. When this is intelligently integrated into the worker’s life (the younger generations excel in this!), it generates more satisfaction and free time.

Big data has changed the business landscape: information collection and storage are increasingly being done in an automated way and these developments are crucial for workplace design, management and strategy. Indeed, information is no longer static, it makes sense, and valuable lessons can be learned from it.

In terms of personnel management, recruitment and training are also being done remotely. Even if the selection process ends, and this is only normal, during a “face to face” interview, skimming the dross saves a lot of time. On the other hand, there is no need to stress the value of training on a computer or a tablet, which will remain available for as long as it needs to

achieve its goals. Employees are much better informed about what’s upstream and downstream of what they are doing. We are in the middle of the era of “work enrichment”, leading to greater responsibility and motivation for workers. In fact, in the past, we worked “with blinkers on”, mostly ignoring what was upstream and downstream of the work we were doing.

No need to get physically bloated anymore!

Thanks to technology, companies can do more with... less! Optimizing resources reduces costs and makes the most of the gains.

We must realize that four generations of employees coexist in today’s businesses, and that each of these generations takes a different view of technology. This should be taken into account in explanations that are dispensed and, as well, in always choosing the most straightforward systems to use (and therefore understanding).



An essential and excellent resource is the physical size of the company. When the business prospered, the old reflex was to increase its physical size so that it could accommodate all employees. Given the situation we are in today, where land and the square meter are becoming more and more expensive, this is an essential issue.

With the advent of mobile technologies, it is no longer necessary to grow physically. In-

deed, many people will be working remotely, sales forces will communicate from wherever they are, videoconferencing and conference calls will be used intensely, and all staff and resources will be combined with optimization that enables, once again, doing more with less!

In addition, there is software that optimizes the physical number of offices and meeting rooms. In this regard is the very significant success of huddle rooms, which are perfectly adapted to the needs of today’s workers.

Gaining Responsiveness and Enhancing Relationships

Videoconferencing is a huge hit. Companies are promoting this interactive means of communication which saves a lot of time in decision-making processes.

This responsiveness allows them to be more efficient and to deal with current situations that cannot afford any delay.

“Welding” teams

On a human, psychological level, videoconferencing allows reconnection with interpersonal contact at a much richer level than telephone, email or instant messaging, which are effective tools but neglect “non-verbal” messages such as mimics and postures.

As a result, videoconferencing brings teams together much more and enables the development of more complete relationships with clients and company partners.

At an operational level, videoconferencing offers the enormous advantage of being able to eliminate the distance separating the different locations where it is implemented. Connections between (for example) Europe and the United States are a simple click away and for reasons of convenience only have to take the time offset into account. This is a boon for companies that have branches around the world!

A wide range of possibilities

A short while ago, cost was the “snag” for implementing videoconferencing. It required ex-

pensive equipment and software that furthermore would be installed in specific rooms. Since then, its scope was broadened considerably. Videoconferencing always deploys its splendors in dedicated rooms.

This is the “high end” that corresponds to what is called the “immersive telepresence”, where participants really have the impression of physically meeting, since there is a high sense of reality. The equipment is permanently installed in the room and carefully chosen and calibrated in the light of what is best in terms of performance and fidelity.

But today videoconferencing can take place in the office, at home or even ... on the road! The range of possibilities is very broad! Single user hardware and videoconferencing software for desktop computers and mobile devices now allow anyone to participate in a meeting at any time thanks to good quality audio and video that can have excellent definition.

And these “itinerant” participants (let’s call them that) can naturally connect and communicate



with those present in equipped rooms.

Two deployment solutions... plus a third! For business implementation of videoconferencing architecture there are two possible solutions.

The first is to build a platform on the company’s local network. This is ideal for a large company that has dedicated staff that can control everything.

The second is to use a SaaS (Software as a Service). In this case it is a service provider who manages the system on the cloud. The company’s equipment (cameras and software) is connected to the cloud over the internet. This requires less equipment and there is great “scalability”. In addition, there is no need for dedicated staff.

A “hybrid” solution can also be added where the two solutions co-exist in a “unified whole” where, depending on the circumstances, the company chooses either the “on-site” installation for quality reasons or the SaaS for reasons of flexibility.

Getting Out of Routines Dripping with Boredom

A meeting, a seminar, a conference, an event? Routine? No, that's just what has to be escaped from like the plague, to avoid getting back to the usual "snores"!

What can we do to give them the pep they need, to ensure that these moments are memorable?

Set up to innovate and make a difference

Of course, businesses have dedicated meeting places. But they also have other spaces, which can be developed to innovate and change things. These areas can be used to create different environments. Even kitchens, if intelligently designed, can lend themselves to activities or demonstrations, and not just culinary ones.

The halls too – sometimes all that's needed is to change the arrangement of the chairs and couches. No more table separating groups, no more physical barriers to communication!

To go one step further, we can put everyone in green space, as long as the weather allows. Lawns, natural spaces, outings in the woods, picnics on the grass, everything can happen, and this solution is particularly well suited for teams and other small work groups.



A beautiful story that holds in suspense

In addition, and especially at work, this time in an equipped room, it is possible to amaze and change the "usual game" by using two

very effective means: the intelligent use of audiovisual techniques and the work on the substance of the speech, on the content that will be disseminated.



like days without bread and are dripping with boredom, because they are fabricated by "repetitive systematic mechanics".

Rather innovate: video, freehand drawings, animations, even video-conference and the internet, oh yes, mix it all up, aim to

You need to get as far off the beaten track as possible and move away from "traditional visuals". Consider PowerPoint "slides" as the example of what not to do: they are chopped up

surprise.

As for the content, remember that it outweighs any other consideration! For the messages to be effective, they must meet the expectations of the audience, be easily understandable and, in the best cases, be enhanced by a beautiful story that will hold audiences in suspense! Designing an attractive message takes a lot of time (often much more than the actual meeting) but it's well worth it.

Like stage performances!

Originality of the place and originality of the message can be associated together, of course. A dynamic presentation can be imagined in the company's redeveloped premises followed by networking in an outdoor country setting.

Experience these highlights of corporate communication like so many stage performances, prepare them as an actor repeats his role or as a rock star builds his singing tour.

They should never be treated casually, never allowed to slip into routine! This is the price of success!



The Great Mix of Generations Around the Table

Whether we like them or not, meetings happen and even tend to multiply.

In our world where everything is going faster and faster it is essential for teams to decide together to take joint action in unison.

Four or five generations in the same room

A new situation is having a strong impact on the conduct of meetings: intertwined generations. The workforce is currently more diversified generationally than it has ever been in the past.

It used to be that there were more or less two or three generations of workers at a time who made up the active labor force.

Today, it's the first time we have seen meetings where four or even five different generations coming to work alongside each other!

Here are the four largest groups, ranked according to their dates of birth: the baby-boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964, Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1979, Generation Y born between 1980 and 2000, and Generation Z born after 2000.

These groups differ in their view of work. The new generations (Y and Z) are looking for something new, often changing jobs, employers or moving to another region. The concept of a group is essential, with a desire to collaborate within a team. Work is experienced as a tool for socializing, in order to get to know other people and make friends. Personal development plays a very important role among young

people (training opportunities, working abroad, etc.). However, these generations are reluctant to make sacrifices in terms of schedules, because they want to keep the time for other occupations.

For their part, the baby-boomers are the most engaged in their job and feel concerned about the company and the customer they work for. Honesty is a strong value for them, as is the notion of respect. They don't count their hours, but are used to being judged on results. It should be emphasized that stress related to hierarchy is less important than when using new technologies...

The rules of successful coexistence

And all that has to coexist! Management has to take into account these characteristics in order to meet these different expectations in the daily work as far as possible.

It's still true that in meetings there is a great mix of genres and that everything sometimes leads to tense situations.

First and foremost, the different groups must recognize the particularities of the other groups. Mutual respect must emerge, based on real complementarities: each group has to learn from the other groups.

The elders have experience, the young people have energy and the Zs are extremely comfortable with new technologies.

Everyone needs to benefit from their relationships with others.

And talking about experience doesn't mean also talking about slowness. We can be quick on the ball and choose the best solution out of all available, not by instinct but simply because an analogous situation has already been experienced and we remember what we chose at the time, having first weighed the pros and cons.

Energy and new technologies don't mean technology at all costs! The particular sensitivity to "high tech" can be channeled and sublimated into effective advice given to others, for use of specific equipment.



Personalization and the Store Experience

We live in an era where personalization is in full swing. First of all because technology allows it.

Then because the people, the consumers want it.

Of course, it is mainly the smartphone that has profoundly changed consumers' trends, behaviors and desires.

Before they were just looking and now we give them offers!

We had a very early stage where people actively sought information about the products they were interested in. These back-and-forths have increased and, over time, artificial intelligence software and Big Data has made it possible to move on to the next stage.

Today, Amazon, Facebook and other Netflix's focus as closely as possible on everyone's interests and desires. Their communications are more and more personalized, based on personal search history.

So we have come to a point where we are making personalized suggestions of products and services that have a high probability of pleasing.

And it works! Statistics show that almost 50% of consumers bought a product they did not initially intend to buy, after receiving a personalized recommendation.

There is a lot of talk about protecting personal data, but the figures show that 90% of people are willing to share their behavioral data if

purchases can be made less expensive and easier.

There is therefore every reason to believe that personalization is a consumer EXPECTATION. Everything happens as if the potential customer is constantly expecting to be amazed, attracted by things he had not thought of and that will delight him!

Having "a great in-store experience"

Personalization will become more and more effective, which means that "recommendations" will become more desirable. They will increase the likelihood of the consumer moving to a purchase, taking the personal data collected even more into account.

But don't be thinking that this personalization is limited exclusively to virtual space!

Globally, more and more major brands are creating physical retail stores in places where cus-



tomers want to be (Alibaba, Amazon, Apple for example). According to Google statistics, 61% of shoppers prefer to buy brands that also have a physical location, rather than those that only have an online presence.

Psychologically, it is reassuring for the consumer – the chosen brand is present "here", which is a source of trust.

In fact, the personalization we have just been talking about is also the desire to have "a pleasant in-store experience", which is very pleasing to the consumer. Just think of Apple's pleasing demonstration with its Apple Stores.

To each his own language!

Ineffective marketing presentations are a dime a dozen. Yet it seems as if there should be nothing to complain about: the technicals worked well, the projected visuals displayed the product's features, the whole presentation was not even too long... But it didn't work.

But a successful presentation that achieves the goal that has been set beforehand is not out of reach. It could even be said that everyone is capable of it, provided they respect a fairly simple and rather obvious rule!

The client is neither an engineer nor a student

In fact, the magic formula is this: have you met the client's or prospect's expectations? Or, in other (more eloquent) words, have you given your client the means to solve any of his problems?

Can't answer the question? Evidently you have addressed a client without knowing who he is and without knowing what his environment is!

If your presentation was unsuccessful (if it didn't have the desired impact) and you are still satisfied with your performance, it's probably because you promoted the features of your product and limited yourself to that.

However, your client is neither an engineer or a pupil, nor is he a student who wants to know technical characteristics. And, especially, he is not planning to do the intellectual work of sorting through the characteristics concerned to

find the consequences beneficial to him!

It's up to you to choose from your product's (or your services') features which ones will really be useful to your client.

To do this, you first need to analyze your client's activities, interview him and find out where you could be involved by presenting your product as the SOLUTION.

Turn into an "ingenious Colombo"!

It's a simple rule, but implementation is sometimes difficult. There is a method available, however, but it takes some time and also requires that you are able to become a careful detective, an "ingenious Colombo" and conduct some serious research before meeting the client. Whatever their field of activity, it is quite



easy to think of the different processes and use search engines to learn more about and to discover the profession's particular problems. Once face-to-face, you will gain a lot of credibility by showing that you know the profession and the challenges it faces. Question the client and, most importantly, listen to him!

You will then focus on the product's/service's benefits to help overcome obstacles, provide better profitability or ensure superior work.

A typical example and out of context, but eloquent: if you speak to a restaurant owner, you will surely have to talk about investment and profitability of the equipment, and

if you talk to the chef, it will be more about respecting cooking times and guaranteeing the quality of the dishes.

To each his own language, after all!

How Much Does a Digital Signage System Cost?

Digital signage is all the rage! This tool allows businesses to communicate effectively and plan their communication by making it extremely responsive.

There is a wide range of digital signage solutions in existence today. Prices have really come down, but there is still quite a wide range.

Beware of base prices

You have to be careful not to be tempted by base prices. You need to take the equipment into account, of course, but also the installation, development of the content and updates.

Of course, you can “do digital signage” at unbeatable prices, from Android and Chromecast systems. But all these low-cost systems are more likely to break down, and warranties expire sooner.

Here as elsewhere, you always get what you pay for and “price shopping” paradoxically means ending up with higher costs.

Installation will also have an effect on the total bill. Indoor installations are less costly than solutions that have to work outdoors.

In the open air, reinforced frames are needed, providing safe routing for electricity and requiring more energy to deliver adequate brightness. Similarly, it is also necessary to look into

any permits required. A preliminary study is essential.

Content, maintenance and replacement

We've said it and repeat it again: Content is King! It must therefore be developed carefully and, of course, kept up to date. Several options are possible here: the company either decides to create these developments internally by assigning staff to these tasks, or uses a specialized agency. Note that updates are generally included by providers in a subscription package. To be cost-effective as well, then.

Maintenance needs to be taken into account, although it is difficult to really see it clearly. Will technicians have to travel, will it be necessary to send equipment to the manufacturer, does the system allow “self-diagnoses” that reduce travel times and therefore the bill? Here, moreover, the price must be gauged by the time it takes to carry out these actions, because if a



screen is not working it is not fulfilling its role and in a way is losing money by reducing return on investment (ROI).

In the long term, the equipment will obviously need to be changed. The “end of life” exchange may or may not be planned from the outset, depending on the contract.

It is only after completing these analyses that an informed purchase decision can be made. It can now be understood that a low initial investment could be a less interesting option than a long-term contract.

When Digital Signage Adds Noise to the Noise!

We could be deliberately paradoxical here and encourage companies not to invest in building up their digital signage facilities.

The paradox would be quite obvious... It is based on a simple truth: only solutions that work should be promoted... and sometimes digital signage facilities are used improperly. Under these circumstances, doing more of the same would only make things worse.

A king who is treated like a second-rate servant

Content is still the big problem. Content is king, but it is often treated like a valet, like a second-rate servant... In fact, it is often snubbed and messages are broadcast as pieces of string and in bits and pieces that feel completely amateurish.

We still feel as if we have done some good publicity, because without feedback we imagine that the audience is already aware... so you have to start from a blank piece of paper and assume that the audience knows nothing!

Digital signage does not have a monopoly on these poorly crafted messages. Television, radio and advertising are full of ads and messages that leave you wondering what they really mean. Under the guise of aesthetics, stripped down objects (often dark) are presented, the opposite of their use. How many TV commer-

cials are there where the screen is turned off (black), how many empty meeting rooms are there without any attendees present, how many unfounded claims?

In the field of digital signage, if the audience watches a screen for more than a few seconds without getting a clear idea of the message, they turn away and move on. Which doesn't mean there is no interest.

So it is understandable that putting up more of this type of screen could only make people more impatient.

The right PLACE

Another important pitfall is the location. Care should be taken that these sources of information in a specific place do not compete with each other. Otherwise, we are only “adding noise to the noise” (visual, sound or both) and the result is also disastrous.

To determine the appropriate location for a digital signage system, accurate tracking is required and sometimes trial and error, undoing what was done before and redoing it elsewhere, after testing the installations and the results obtained from them.



If it is really impossible to find appropriate spaces you may have to “make do” and work subtly. For example, in a noisy environment AND where the screens are ideally located and visible, use strong colors and images, without broadcasting any audio message. Messages can then be broadcast visually that refer to the ambient hubbub and noise pollution by recommending a particular product or suggesting an internet link.

But this is only a second-best solution, with the best solution still being to find a place where the target audience is not appealed to from all directions.

On the other hand, if there is nowhere for visible placement of the screens, it's best to... just not do them, quite simply!

Spotlight on Personalization and Customer Experience

The Digital Signage Summit Europe (DSS Europe), dedicated to digital signage, was held in Munich at the Hilton Airport Hotel, under the auspices of Integrated Systems Events.

Close to 500 participants were present to listen to some fifty experts who presented the latest developments on the digital signage market.

“Communicating with consumers like never before!”

Florian Rotberg, Managing Director of invidis consulting and Stefan Schieker, partner, presented the biggest trends of the market and current market figures. The global widescreen market has grown 18%, a value of 14.6 billion euros in 2018.

The EMEA grew by 14%. In the EMEA area, Germany, Austria and Switzerland represent 16% of the market, an increase of 13%, followed by the United Kingdom and Ireland with 14% (+ 3%) and by the Nordic countries with 12% (+ 13%).

In the exhibition area, close to 25 companies attended to present their latest digital signage solutions.

Let's listen to Florian Rotberg: “There is no doubt that the digital signage market is flourishing – and that has been confirmed by those who have made presentations as well as those who participated in the DSS Europe show this year. The theme this time was, ‘How our industry is becoming more focused on the customer and how it offers more one-on-one meetings in the era where personalization, experience and artificial intelligence (AI) have become essential’. Technology allows digital signage to communicate with consumers a way that engages them like no other media can do – and we see the results: the digital signage market is in full growth.”



multi-channel retail business. It has shown that many retailers are working hard to change the store's role from a transactional space to a true “hub of experience”.

This year's key topics also included the customer journey and experience, market consolidation, the emergence of the first digital experience platforms (DPX) which are expected to gradually take over traditional digital signage content management systems, the growing importance of LEDs as a screen technology and, finally, the situation we will experience with rapidly falling screen prices.

Networking and digitization of retail sales

For his part, Mike Blackman, general director of 'Integrated Systems Events, said: “We have mixed the various elements that participants have always appreciated with new initiatives... And, knowing that networking opportunities are an invaluable part of the DSSE, we have launched a free MeetToMatch service to arrange meetings before the show. For its part, the Hilton Airport Hotel has always been a big favorite of participants due to its location, ease of access, atmosphere and world-class facilities – we were delighted to be able to return when the hotel added supplementary space. Our decision to return was fully justified because the conference was a great success.”

Nino Bergfeld, director of retail business for Salesforce, « Go to Market » explored the digitization of retail (physical) sales and the changing role of the store. It is a priority today for any



Selecting the Right Partner for Implementing Digital Signage

A digital signage system? Easy, information is disseminated and the results are excellent!

Except that it's not so easy to deploy digital signage. Indeed, there are many variables to consider!

Epecially not just a supplier!

Right from initial purchases. It's not just about choosing a supplier but a true partner. You need someone who not only seeks to sell the equipment but who can support you throughout the process.

This is valuable help. A true partner doesn't just deploy screens but researches together with you the most appropriate locations to place them, so they are the most effective. To achieve this he will ask you about the goals you are seeking in order to refine the potential choices and above all he will make you benefit from his experience.

And this is not all: we know that a digital signage system is nothing but screens and that therefore the whole thing will fade out if there is a lack of appropriate content. A true partner will enlighten you in this regard and will develop a strategy for regular updating of the content. At



the same time, he will provide the necessary tools to continue the work undertaken.

He will also take care of training people who will then interact with the system.

A true partner will want you to be successful and not simply sell what equipment he has in stock.

Nothing's burning, "hair is not on fire"

He will also caution you about beginner head-

aches. When the time comes to choose, it is easy to get lost in the products' technical characteristics (choice of LED or LCD screen, content managed on site or in the cloud).

This is why the partner will ask you about your intentions ("what purpose do you want your digital signage system to serve?") and will offer different possible solutions and explain their differences. As for content, you will steadily learn to integrate the increasingly sophisticated solutions that today's digital signage systems deliver. You will get to know AI and IoT tools and come to understand what this terminology is all about. Finally, nothing is burning, "no one's hair is on fire" as some say, take your time to plan everything, this is the key to success!

Looking for an effective tool? Consider an interactive kiosk!

Interactive kiosks are highly effective tools! Retailers, businesses and hotels make no mistake when investing in these "jack-of-all-trades" that are always ready to respond to the slightest request!

They are becoming increasingly popular, and boost the customer experience while providing loyal service!

Kiosks generate trust!

In sales areas, these zealous assistants inform the customer in more detail about a particular product, locate the desired material and can even carry out financial transactions using debit or credit cards. They increase sales opportunities, answer frequent questions and free staff who can devote their time to other activities, including customer service, naturally.

With a kiosk, there are no waiting lines when seeking information, which is always available. Interactive kiosks generate trust and therefore consumer loyalty when they realize that this is a very advanced technology.

They also excel in highlighting brands and logos, and when not being used make small sounds that attract attention while broadcasting moving visuals that catch the eye.

A communication solution in its own right

They do the same for businesses, such as finding a specific company employee, showing the path to his office and can even broadcast short videos or short tutorials.

In its sophisticated version, the kiosk can also interact with the smartphones of visitors who so desire. In this way some piece of documentation can be downloaded or the business card of the person being seen. The interactive kiosk is a fully-fledged communication solution with an enticing return on investment.

No more traditional stopping at the receptionist!

In hotels, kiosks radically change the way guests check in. It's the end of the traditional stop at the receptionist, with an accelerated, simplified and sometimes personalized process.

Customers are delighted. It must be pointed out that they are already quite used to bank ATMs and enjoy finding the same efficiency



when they arrive at the hotel. Reception staff can then take care of more complex cases that require human interaction.

One technique among others: the guest registers in advance with his smartphone, taps his arrival time (so maintenance staff can do the housekeeping at the right time), and receives a barcode that he scans at the hotel kiosk, which then displays his room number. He then specifies the number of "keys" required and the machine ejects the required cards.

Mini-kiosks are present in the elevators to replace defective key cards, if necessary.