



WIERSMA
EXPERIENCE MARKETING

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Harnessing the WOW Maximizing Your Events in the Experience Economy

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Welcome to the Experience Economy

How do you feel today? What event or experience has touched your life or your family? Where do you go and what do you do for fun? What is the WOW that captures your heart and mind?

In their book, welcome to the “The Experience Economy”, Pine and Gilmore introduce the fact that America’s economy is in a new phase. Called the “Experience Economy”, the authors highlight the change in consumer expectations from not only customer service to customized experiences. In this cluttered and fast-paced world, it is the style and flair of the message that makes the connection to the consumer even possible. It is the WOW that is the necessary component to success.

Finally the world has “named” what we activity directors and event producers have been doing for years!! We now have the world of marketing/advertising professionals and sponsors looking to us as the “guru” of the customer experience and the WOW. It is our time to shine and to raise the bar on everything we do!

WOW in the Events World

In a notable leader such as the WOMAD Festival, World of Music, Art and Dance, guests participate in learning the craft from a performer such as a dancer, thus “feeling the beat and experiencing the event”. In entertainment, the Blue Man Group involves the audience in a massive “toilet paper pass”, creating a web of white and engaging the guests’ hearts, energies and minds. In the theatre performance, Tony and Tina’s Wedding, guests are given parts as members of the family and actually attend the reception.

How do we take these experiences into our events? How do we engage the guests? What is our WOW?

Each of us are challenged to look at the opportunity to WOW our guests and to energize our sponsors. Each of us are challenged to harness the power of WOW.

Harnessing the WOW

So what is WOW and how can you harness its power for your next event? Here are some tips to jumpstart your thinking.

WOW Is Strategic

People need a context for the content. We as humans want to make sense of our complicated world and add order to the chaos. Begin with specific event goals and add to each measurements of success. Ask the hard questions:

- What do we want to achieve?
- How does it look when it works?
- How will we measure success?

Then with goals in mind, choose tactics that measure back to goals. For example:

GOAL: Increase concert attendance

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS:

*Number of tickets sold

WOW TACTICS:

- *Choose a popular national anchor act that fits your target audiences
- *Create a theme around the music style
- *Recruit a radio partner with a matching audience to add live broadcasts, promotions and prize giveaways

Strategy is the first step to WOW that WORKS! Ask that client WHY and hear their measurements for success.

WOW is Simple

Start with a BIG IDEA. Your consumers are pelted with thousands of messages a day. To break thru the clutter – simplify your message. A great example is the international charity “Clean Up the World”. Based in Sydney, Australia, this organization marshals 40 million volunteers in 120 countries to “clean up” their part of the world. Success is based on the BIG IMPACT of a very simple idea – each of us cleans up our part and the world benefits. “Clean Up” is easy to understand and a clear call to action. The measurements of success are evident: tons of trash collected, cleaner parks, cities and beaches, energized people.

Look at the Lance Armstrong LIVE STRONG bracelets.....yellow “rubber bands” that stand for standing up to cancer. Their goal was \$7 in sales.....at \$1 per bracelet.....they have to date sold \$47 million. NOW that is WOW!

**What is your simple message or call to action? What will cut through the clutter??
What is you BIG IDEA?**

WOW is Surprising

What creates a memory? Think about your own life and the moments that you remember. Notice the surprises that caught your attention. Now look at your events and inject some WOW.

A surprise at an event might be the creation of one paper chain link that your guests each create and it becomes part of a thousand-link chain that circles the main stage and is part of the show. It is the parade through the audience that gives hats and beads to guests and involves them in the fun. Or it’s the blue screen video system that puts your attendees into “space” to race down the ski slope or to the next galaxy.

How can you surprise the guests.....touch their senses and create a memory?



Ask the question “what will they talk about behind our backs” and fill the opportunity with event surprises.

WOW Is Satisfying

Think of the best event you have produced or attended.....and remember the details! WOW is the culmination of every spec of intention to make the theme flow, the color pop, the entertainment amaze and the overall impact stop them in their tracks! The last element of WOW is the amazing attention to every darn little thing....and big thing! The technical details must be perfect. The sound must be an appropriate level and the lighting should partner to excite the décor. The “story” must tie together and make sense: the context of the content must be easy for the guest to understand and experience. Surround the guest in the experience and let them relax in the creativity.

Just Do It

We are in the Experience Economy and the future of our events is in our hands. Begin today and evaluate the role of WOW in your growth and success. Set the goals and measurements of success, then choose the most creative tactics. Keep ideas BIG and concepts simple. Communicate clearly and exceed expectations. Surprise your guests and keep them coming back for more. Enjoy the opportunities as you harness the POWER of WOW.

BETSY WIERSMA, CSEP, is President and “Experience Expert” of Wiersma Experience Marketing, her training and consulting firm based in Denver, CO. A award-winning veteran of 22 years in the events industry, Betsy specializes in a systematic approach to planning and management and WOW results. She is a keynote speaker and trainer around the world and her book *Exceptional Events: Concept to Completion* is in its second edition and is available on her web site. Find out more about Betsy at www.betsywiersma.com.

WOW IDEA Product Showcase: SuperScreen Outdoor Movie Nights

www.superscreenusa.com

Looking for a new event idea that a sure hit with any age? Go to the web and check out SuperScreen USA and their three sizes of inflatable outdoor movie screens. Look on the site for event ideas and Success Stories and see how your next Alumni weekend can host your own on campus drive-in.....anywhere you have a field! Available for purchase or rental. A great fund and friend raiser! And each screen comes with a “How To” host a movie series event kit.

