

# Speaking of **IMPACT**

WINTER 2011

**THE VOICE OF CANADIAN MEETINGS**

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**Is experiential learning extremely effective or just extreme?**

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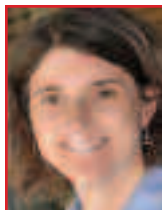
**416.532.9886**

**cathleen@speakersgold.com**

## feature contributors

Mary Breunig has been in the field of experiential education for more than 20 years and is president of the Association for Experiential Education. She has co-authored *Outdoor Leadership: Theory and Practice* and *Critical Pedagogy as Praxis*.

- [www.aee.org](http://www.aee.org)
- [mary.breunig@brocku.ca](mailto:mary.breunig@brocku.ca)



David Gouthro is a facilitator and consultant to private, public and not-for-profit organizations. He balances a professional, sharply-focused mind with a playful spirit.

- [www.davidgouthro.com](http://www.davidgouthro.com)



Cheryl Cran, CSP, is the author of four books including, *101 Ways to Make Generations X, Y and Zoomers Happy at Work*. She is the president-elect for the Global Speakers Federation 2012/2013 and is past-president of CAPS.

- [www.cherylcran.com](http://www.cherylcran.com)



Allison Graham is a keynote speaker and corporate trainer. She is the author of *Business Cards to Business Relationships: How to Build the Ultimate Network* and pens a column called *Getting Connected* for Sun Media.

- [www.elevatebiz.com](http://www.elevatebiz.com)



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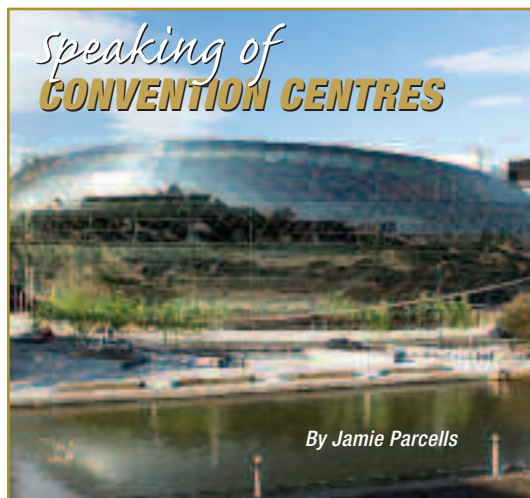
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## Find Your Edge



By Ravi Tangri, CSP

**T**hroughout this year, I've spoken about the need to go beyond what you've known to work and what you may feel is safe to meet the needs of the ever-changing marketplace. This need to adapt is simply not enough.

Far too often, you only focus on the challenges ahead of you – the things you have to do to move forward. What you fail to do, is make the time to appreciate your growth – all you've accomplished and all you've learned in dealing with those challenges. Only by doing that can you define the "edge" of your growth, learning and abilities, and see how you've moved this edge. This perspective, in concert with understanding what the changes and challenges are that face you in the months to come, help you identify the best opportunities for pushing your edge outward, producing better results as you go.

The end of the year is a wonderful time to invest time by yourself, with your team, or both, to review what worked and what did not over the past year. Look at what you did that was the same as what you've always done, what you tried that was new and what you learned from both. How have you grown in your skills, abilities and knowledge to better work in today's world? How have you increased your value to your clients?

Too many people think innovation is when a great idea works the first time. If something new that you tried doesn't work, you scuttle it and don't look back. You never invest the time to look at what elements worked and what you learned. That's not innovation.

There's only one thing you're guaranteed when you innovate, and that's more failure. If

you're not failing, then you're not innovating – you're just doing the same thing you've always done. The secret to effective innovation is taking what most see as a failure, identifying what worked, then addressing the elements that didn't to refine it. It's that refinement that makes innovation work – and that's the key to sustainable strategic innovation and strategic advantage.

If you can invest the time to learn from each innovation, refine it, and build on it, you will be moving forward, setting yourself apart from your competitors and adding value to your clients. Most of your competitors won't do that.

These are the things you want to identify in your annual review: what you've done to grow yourself, your team and your work to set yourself apart and add value to your clients. How have you moved your edge forward strategically over the past year?

Then you take in the information about the marketplace and your clients – things such as the needs of different generations in the workplace, as detailed in one of our feature articles. Take in new methodologies such as open space, world café, and experiential learning and see how they add value.

With all of this information, your strengths, your strategic growth over the past year, the trends in the marketplace, the options available to you to push your edge, you can start to identify where you will experiment and test new options to provide more value in the coming year.

Investing that time to reflect strategically on where you have come from and celebrating all you've accomplished will make you more effective, strategically, in moving forward and moving your edge forward. It gives you that breather and that time to appreciate what you and all of your team do so that you can move forward again with renewed vigour and passion to be the best you can be at what you do.

I wish you an amazing 2012 and a wonderful journey moving your edge forward once again.

Ravi Tangri, CSP  
2011 CAPS National President



THE VOICE OF CANADIAN MEETINGS

Volume 9 Number 1

Winter 2011

**Publisher**  
Jamie Parcells

**Editorial Board Chair**  
Beverly Beuermann-King, CSP - [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com)

**Editorial Board**  
Tami Ali - [www.bestfootforwardconsulting.com](http://www.bestfootforwardconsulting.com)  
Suzan Beattie - [suzan@suzanbeattie.com](mailto:suzan@suzanbeattie.com)  
David Gouthro, CSP - [www.theconsultingedge.com](http://www.theconsultingedge.com)  
Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF - [www.humoratwork.com](http://www.humoratwork.com)  
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Joel Sweeney - [www.professionallyspeaking.ca](http://www.professionallyspeaking.ca)  
Ravi Tangri, CSP - [www.Co-CreatingFutures.com](http://www.Co-CreatingFutures.com)  
Stacy Wyatt - [www.canadianspeakers.com](http://www.canadianspeakers.com)

**Contributing Writers**  
Barbara Bowes; Mary Breuning, PhD; Cheryl Cran, CSP;  
David Gouthro, CSP; Allison Graham; Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF;  
Sandy Leppan; Michel Neray; Jamie Parcells;  
Jackie Savi-Cannon

**Creative Director**  
Stan Michalak

**Advertising Sales**  
Andrea Geary, Christian Johnson, Arlene Nowicki

Produced four times per year by



Cutting Edge Communications, Inc.  
201-1200 Pembina Highway  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2A7  
Toll free 1-866-669-2377  
Fax 1-866-669-2336  
E-mail [jparcells@cecommunications.ca](mailto:jparcells@cecommunications.ca)  
Website [www.cecommunications.ca](http://www.cecommunications.ca)

Produced for



**Canadian Association of Professional Speakers**  
Suite 300, 1370 Don Mills Road  
Toronto, ON M3B 3N7  
Phone (416) 847-3355 Fax (416) 441-0591  
E-mail [info@canadianspeakers.org](mailto:info@canadianspeakers.org)  
Website [www.canadianspeakers.org](http://www.canadianspeakers.org)

**CAPS National President**  
Ravi Tangri, CSP

**CAPS President-Elect**  
David Gouthro, CSP

**CAPS CEO**  
Shari Bricks

Additional copies of *Speaking of IMPACT* are available for \$5.95 (plus applicable taxes) per copy from the publisher, Cutting Edge Communications (as above).

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Canadian publications mail product sales agreement number 40801507

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:  
Cutting Edge Communications  
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# ADVENTURE



## TRAINING

By Mary Breunig, PhD

Is experiential learning extremely effective or just extreme?

**E**xperiential learning and experiential education have become buzzwords within corporations and organizations and across university campuses. Alongside this trend, environmental issues and environmental sustainability, per se, are currently being debated at dinner tables, in popular and documentary films, in newspapers, books and magazines, in boardrooms and classrooms and within all levels of government.

Two recent books that seem to have caught the public's imagination, *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle*, describe the consequences of "nature deficit disorder" including: children's declining contact with nature and the simple, experiential pleasure of having dirty hands and wet feet. Additionally, recognition of global environmental degradation is on the rise and changes in the environment and its natural systems have emerged as a matter of increasingly urgent concern around the world. Experiential learning may be one form of pedagogy and philosophy to help allay this concern and provide clients and participants with a meaningful experience.

### UNDERSTANDING KOLB

What exactly is meant by the term experiential education or learning and how might it "fit" within goals of events? There are numerous published definitions of experiential education. The Association for Experiential Education (2004) defines it as both a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values. Clifford Knapp (1992), a prominent experiential educator, uses Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle to explain that experiential learning consists of four distinct segments

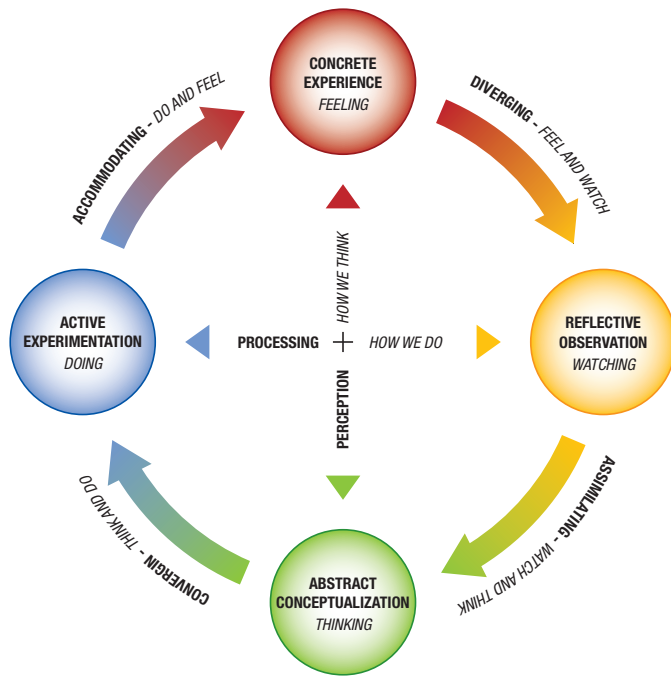
(SEE FIGURE 1):

- active student involvement in a meaningful, challenging experience
- reflection upon the experience individually and in a group
- the development of new knowledge about the world
- application of this knowledge to a new situation

This cycle helps illustrate how experience, reflection, new knowledge and application can be employed as a way of providing conference and event participants with the opportunity to take their learning to a new level. Many experiential educational initiatives are based on this learning cycle but do not prescribe an intended learning outcome or aim. In essence, employing the experiential learning cycle without an intended educational aim or goal represents experiential learning as methodology. Experiential learning which combines experience and reflection may not be educatively purposeful but the intent of experiential education is just that – an intentional, purposeful approach to teaching and learning, one that can help allay present day social and environmental injustices. When participants are provided the opportunity to learn while literally getting their hands dirty or hanging from ropes or figuratively through reflection and application of concepts, their experience has a greater impact.

### OUTWARD BOUND AND OTHERS

Experiential education represents one of the earliest forms of education in the Western world. In fact, examples of experience-based learning are found in some of the earliest forms of teaching, including learning being passed through storytelling and oral tradition. Johann Herbart, Friedrich Froebel, William James, Colonel Francis Parker, John Dewey, and William Kilpatrick were all dedicated to using education as a means for social change. While experiential education further evolved from these roots, it was in the discipline of adventure education that it really "took hold."



**FIGURE 1 - KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE**



How can we incorporate experiential learning in a practical way to enhance the quality of our events? We can learn from other educational initiatives. In 1941, Kurt Hahn established Outward Bound (OB), which represents one application of experiential education. Outward Bound, along with Hahn's other educational initiatives: Gordunston School, United World Colleges, Salem Schule and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, were all based on the notion that educating youth for the purpose of building moral character was just as important as training the intellect and that experiential adventure education was one means to achieve this. The founding of OB was a reaction to the fact that many young British men were dying in lifeboats during World War II. Hahn believed that "character" could be taught to these young men, and character development was what was needed for young people to withstand the harsh and close-quartered living conditions on the lifeboats.

Twenty-one years later, the founders of the Colorado OB School raised similar concerns about the character of Americans. Young people in America were seen to be increasingly apathetic and self-centred. The purposes of the OB school were to use the mountains as a classroom to produce "better" people, to build character and to instil a collective spirit into a group of individuals. How can we apply this to our events? Can our events contribute to "better" employees, teams and organizations?

As momentum built and successes were documented related to educating people experientially, other organizations and initiatives followed, including: Project Adventure, with its focus on low- and high-ropes courses to build strong teams; the National Outdoor Leadership School; therapeutic recreation programs; experience-based training and development initiatives, with a focus on corporate clientele; gender-specific programs; cross-cultural trainings; and, outdoor and environmental studies centres. There are many school sites that integrate this form of teaching and learning and philosophy as components of their curricula, including: Expeditionary Outward Bound Schools (in the United States); Service-Learning initiatives within classrooms and beyond the classroom walls; integrated Environmental Studies Programs (in Canada); Folks Schools and Quaker Schools (around the world); and public schools (with integrated curricula across subjects).

**TODAY'S APPLICATIONS**

There are growing numbers of organizations integrating experiential education initiatives into their retreats and work activities. Project Adventure, the Cradlerock group, Peak Performance, and Corporate Adventure Training (CAT) group, among others, employ experiential activities to enhance organizational team performance. Peak Performance, for example, suggests that groups come to them for one of three main reasons:

- They want an incredible special event like a retreat or outing
- They want to learn and practice group effectiveness skills
- They want ongoing staff training

CAT reports that corporate adventure training can be an effective means to develop teams and employs experiential activities to build strong teams and to promote transfer of learning and skills back to the workplace. These experience-based training and development initiatives assist companies with establishing (and improving) corporate culture and have been shown to impact the motivational work climate.

The Association for Experiential Education is a member organization that serves as the primary source for experiential education praxis. Many of the schools and organizations mentioned above are accredited by this association which sets the industry standards for everything from engaging in experiential best practices to ensuring that the program you select is up to risk-management industry standards.

Experiential activities are commonplace at any number of events, from kids birthday parties to global initiatives, including Right to Play and Play for Peace that incorporate unity games to promote health and well-being and to promote citizenship. It is an exciting era given this diversity and breadth of experiential initiatives; yet, there is work still to be done in promoting this valuable method and philosophy, particularly with a view toward the ways in which experiential education, within the boardroom and beyond, can help allay some of the present day environmental issues and concerns, enhance conference experiences and bring people back to nature.

**Sol**

**SEE MARY BREUNIG'S FEATURE ON OUR INTERACTIVE BLOG AT [WWW.SPEAKINGOFIMPACT.CA](http://WWW.SPEAKINGOFIMPACT.CA)**

**W**hy would someone want to break a mold? Why take a chance on something that has been untested or unproven? The only answer that makes sense is because it is in the best interests of your client and the outcomes they're looking for. And, by extension, it is in your best interests, too. However, breaking the mold requires courage.

What is courage? Everyone has acted with courage at least once and most people do so on a regular basis. In fact, there are lots of opportunities for each of us to act with courage on a much more frequent and conscious basis. Let's examine the notion of courage and identify opportunities for meeting planners to exercise it. The following is a non-dictionary definition of courage that I offer for your consideration:

Courage is an inner quality that becomes evident whenever one takes action where each of the following three criteria are met:

- A. There is an uncertain or unpredictable outcome;
- B. An emotion or feeling is present that ranges somewhere between mild concern and terror (based on the perceived consequences of failure) and;
- C. A positive value or belief consciously or unconsciously dictates the "right" action to take.

We have a sense of what we hope to achieve in a meeting, but there's no guarantee we'll do so. Consequently, we have an emotional response to the thought of taking a risk. If the consequences of failure seem slim, we may experience mild concern or a touch of anxiety. If failure might result in the loss of current or future business, reputation damage, or physical harm, our feeling might be closer to fear or terror. So what drives us to act in spite of the uncertainty and accompanying discomfort? Simply put, it is our values. When we have a strong belief about the "right" thing to do, we're compelled to act, possibly without even making a conscious decision to do so. This may happen any time

you, as a meeting planner, stray outside your routine offering to do what is believed to be in the best interests of your client.

From a personal perspective, we may leap into action or speak up when we

- see an opportunity to help another person in distress;
- observe an individual abusing a young child or animal;
- witness an accident;
- feel an intense love or compassion for another human being; or
- sense an injustice is being done.

Granted, these may be infrequent and extreme examples. So, what about the everyday circumstances for acting with courage in the context of planning and executing a meeting? When might the three criteria mentioned earlier come into play?

Depending on your personal experience and values, the following could very well require courage to act (please think about your current "mold" that dictates how you respond to these situations):

- Telling a client you have gone over budget;
- Hiring a speaker you have never worked with before;
- Booking a new venue where the construction is supposed to be completed well before your event;
- Telling your client that you are not the best qualified to run the type of event they are looking for;
- Partnering with a new supplier or vendor;
- Trying a large group intervention (Open Space, World Café, The Conference Model, Future Search, Real Time Strategic Change)
- Hiring a new employee;
- Firing an employee when you are already short-staffed;
- Leaving the "mother ship" to go out and start your own business;
- Telling the truth when it would be easier to say nothing;
- Speaking in front of a large group of potential customers (internal or external);

- Expressing what you believe will be an unpopular opinion;
- Spending time with someone whom others dislike;
- Moving to a new home, neighbourhood, province, country or continent;
- Expressing emotions openly when you do not normally do so;
- Taking on an assignment where you (and others) are aware of your shortcomings;
- Addressing a long standing and unspoken conflict with a client or colleague;
- Jumping into a leadership role, even though it is not your job; and
- Kissing a spider... or a frog.

All of these circumstances include a certain element of unpredictability. We each have a unique set of skills, experiences, desires and values that come into play in dealing with them. What requires a great deal of courage for one person may require little or none for another. Is your value of client service sufficient to help you move beyond the initial uncertainty and accompanying fear of breaking a mold? If so, as you gain experience, predictability increases (you realize it is much safer and therefore less risky to break a particular mold than initially imagined); as a result, your anxiety decreases with each attempt. So the courage required to do something different the tenth time is less than the first. By the hundredth time, the notion of courage may not even be relevant!

Courage: sometimes conscious, sometimes not. We have an endless supply of opportunities to become clear on what we really value; understand our own basis for determining right and wrong; and be willing to take the right action for the right reasons. Acting with courage more consciously and more often is a wonderful source of fulfillment and satisfaction. Succeed or fail, we can't help but gain as individuals while providing inspiration for others to act with courage, too. Which molds will you choose to break? **Sol**

# THE COURAGE TO BREAK THE MOLD

**Taking a chance on the untested and unproven**

By David Gouthro, CSP

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# MULTI-GENERATIONAL AUDIENCES

How demographics are shaping learning and meetings

By Cheryl Cran, CSP

Cheryl Cran, CSP, recently sat down with David K. Foot, PhD, author of the best-selling *Boom, Bust & Echo: How to Profit from the Coming Demographic Shift*, to discuss how changing demographics are redefining the needs and expectations of the meetings industry.



David K. Foot, PhD

**CC** Thanks for taking the time for this interview. I read your book, *Boom, Bust & Echo*, when it first came out, and it has impacted my business in a big way. How do you see demographics affecting the meetings industry?

**DF** Before I answer that question, let's be clear on how I define the age groups. Baby Boomers are in their late 40s 50s and early 60s (45-64) and this age group comprises the senior managers.

In my book, I call the generation after the Baby Boomers the Bust Generation, which I feel are incorrectly referred to as Gen X. They are born in the late 60s and 70s (31-44) and are your middle managers.

After the Bust Generation is the 20-somethings Echo, otherwise known as Gen Y's. The Y stands for youth (late teens to 31) these are your newer hires.

Rather than focus on generations specifically, I think we need to focus on who is in the audience as far as roles in the company. You need to look for the relevance of what they do within the organization. When giving a presentation, the meeting planner needs to inform the speaker so that they know whether they are speaking to senior management or to the whole of the workplace, where you will have all three generations. Attendance is going to determine the nature of the presentation.

There is research that shows there are multiple learning styles attached to each generation. A small percentage looks for mathematics, some absorb information verbally and about 75 per cent learn conceptually or visually. I find that the use of videos and visuals are more of a personality preference versus a generations approach.

**CC** I agree with what you are saying. From a meetings industry standpoint, we need to be looking at where people are at in regards to their stage of life versus just their age.

**DF** If a meeting planner is working to attract massive attendance at a meeting from the Bust group, they need to make sure the meeting is geared to the realities of someone in their 30s – having a young family and needing to balance work and family. You need to offer a time frame that works, multiple accesses to the information at the meeting and high content geared to the needs of that demographic. If all three groups are attending then an appeal to the realities of each of the stage-of-life attendees would need to be taken into consideration.

**CC** With the recent recession and global challenges, what do you see coming up for Baby Boomers and work?

**DF** I don't see the recession having as much of an impact on Baby Boomers rather than aging and changing preferences. Baby Boomers will continue to work because they want to keep building a bigger nest egg. Plus, they are experiencing increased life expectancy and better health. The whole notion of mandatory retirement for Baby Boomers is no longer relevant, and we can expect to see them stick around much longer. The recession has caused them to want to keep working – but not full time. Their preference is for half-time for half salary or three days a week for 60 per cent salary.

Baby Boomers are now grandparents and/or have their kids leaving home, so they have the opportunity to travel and play. The shifting allocation of time from focusing on raising children has freed them up and they want to keep working but work for less time.

A solution for the workplace is for Baby Boomers to work 60 per cent of the time for 60 per cent of the salary. This can create workplace renewal to release salary to hire more young people. This could create

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POPULATION NUMBERS COURTESY OF STATISTICS CANADA, BASED ON A TOTAL CANADIAN POPULATION OF 34,482,800 AS OF JULY 1, 2011

more jobs for young people which, I feel, have been more affected by this recession in regards to finding work.

Gen Y or Echos are experiencing more competition for jobs. Those who looked for jobs in the early 2000s did well, but this last group is finding it difficult to catch up. I am in favour of Boomers stepping aside and companies using half the Boomer salary to pay for the younger people's salary.

**CC** From a meetings industry perspective, this is fascinating because I do see that there will be more collaboration across the generations in regards to planning meetings and ensuring all needs are met.

**DF** Right now the meetings industry, like other industries, has mostly Baby Boomers and Gen Xs. It could benefit from more input and participation from Gen Ys.

**CC** How do you include Global information?

**DF** People want to know about information that impacts future opportunities for their kids and information that they can use to positively live their life. Over the years, I have learned that people are customers and employees. A great presentation applies to business and personal life. I try to answer the question: "What's in it for me in my work and in my life?"

Having more than one hook is crucial as is keeping material up to date. I will use local demographics of places I go to show the relevance of the data to them and their community. For example, when speaking in Moncton, I will show Moncton demographics. I will also show global statistics because this always provides perspective for the audience. I will use data from the six largest countries (China, India, U.S., Indonesia, Brazil and Pakistan). This gives you a large array of countries to talk about in the middle of a presentation. It's also eye-opening; it puts the demographics in perspective.

I will also put in information on industries that have relied on Baby Boomer consumers. For example: cars. Baby Boomers have gone from three to two and then down to one car. When presenting to the automobile industry, I show how the need for cars will diminish. They don't want to believe that change is happening, so I will show data from other diminishing industries before I confront the industry in the audience.

**CC** What do you see as the future in regards to technology and how the different generations will respond?

**DF** The younger generations have been and are the champions of new technology; they are bringing new technology into the workplace.

I like to say that those who reach the age of 30 have the reality of a mortgage and kids. They are focused on using existing technology to get the work done. When the Baby Boomers in the 1980s were starting families and were scrambling to balance work and have a family, they didn't have time to keep up with technology. In your 30s 40s and 50s, you maintain technology, but you are not advancing.

Senior managers are the last ones to embrace technology, yet they are making the decisions about technology in the workplace. This is a workplace challenge right now that senior managers don't see the same need as those in their 20s see in regards to the latest technology.

There is a barrier between new technology and Boomers deciding on which technology will be picked up. I see that we are currently in a technology adaptation challenge, not a generations challenge.

In regards to meetings, again, we must ask, "Who is in our audience?" If you have more 20s in the meeting, you must be using the latest technology to drive home the points. Note that those that are in their 20s attending meetings are busy tweeting, texting and typing while the meeting is going on.

I am an academic and I work with those in their 20s, and I have learned to set my technology expectations. The expectations with those in their 20s is all-access text and email with instant responses. I let them know I will get back to them, but on my own schedule. I will meet them part way and they need to meet me part way. I remind them that the real world out there has lots of Baby Boomers just like me, and compromise is expected.

**CC** Yes, the meetings industry is adapting to the technology issue by providing audience interactive tools. What do you see as opportunities in the meetings industry from your demographic research?

**DF** I see opportunities for adaptability. For example, if you are addressing a group that is primarily Gen Y, you must adapt as a speaker to the fact that they might be tweeting how excellent your presentation is and then suddenly you may have 30 more people in your room. You may need to be flexible enough to circle back the information to ensure everyone is included.

Adapting your material to the audiences is a huge opportunity; continual customization and relevant data is needed. I am still on the speaking circuit with one book. Fifteen years later, I am continually adapting new research and new material to keep it fresh.

I see a gradual adaptation to new technology in meetings, but there will not be a big, sudden change to virtual meetings. There will be a gradual change in regards to overlapping of meeting delivery. Remember how we have progressed from flip charts to overhead projectors, slide projectors, PowerPoint and now Keynote.

The future of meetings and how they are delivered will be continued as a gradual adaptation because the dominant demographic is still the Baby Boomers. However, at a younger audience conference you have to more thoroughly adapt to their needs and technology. **Sol**

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# Fascinate OR Fail

Capturing attention these days is a matter of pulling the right triggers

By Allison Graham

**W**hat do sexual attraction and flirtation have to do with planning meetings? On the surface, one would think not much. Usually sex is not a priority consideration for most organizers, but when it comes to planning conferences and wow-ing audiences, the very primitive functions that drive human flirtations can be adapted to ensure satisfaction for a wide range of appetites. Imagine creating an environment that will fascinate your participants.

For conferences to be considered memorable, attendees need to think, feel or believe something differently than when they walked into the room. This is not an easy task for organizers to achieve.

According to Sally Hogshead, author of *Fascinate: Your 7 Triggers to Persuasion and Captivation*, it is possible to craft more persuasive events. "If planners and the speakers who serve them want to stand out, they need to fascinate participants." Using the triggers, Hogshead shares insights into what makes people tick. Before speaking at a conference, she has the entire group complete a three-minute, F-Score survey to give organizers (and herself) an understanding of the audience dynamics. Plans can then be tilted to ensure wide-spread satisfaction.

"The seven triggers force people to think creatively to generate maximum fascination." Once you know the triggers, and assuming there's a mix of all seven, here are some hints to accommodate accordingly.

## LUST

This trigger is about creating warmth in humanity and attraction. Great presentations make people feel passionate about the topic; they don't just provide rational information. One needs to heighten all five senses so people can interact with the material.

## MYSTIQUE

Ah, the pinnacle of curiosity. Done correctly, it'll make people lean in a little closer and pay attention because there is an element of suspense. Hinting at something early in the speech or conference and not giving the answer until later will keep people on the edge of their seats.

## ALARM

These people respond to the threat of negative consequences. The key to ensuring they'll stay in their seats is to set the stakes high right from the start. Communicate the severity of the problem and that the solution will be presented by the end of the presentation.

## VICE

Creativity is key. To satisfy this trigger you'll need to push the boundaries and change the game. Find ways to surprise attendees by tweaking traditional approaches to events. Out-of-the-box locations, unusual introductions, or unique activities in between sessions can provide a fresh experience for these feisty-folks.

## PRESTIGE

Respect and exclusivity make these people tick. The phrase "keeping up with the Joneses" applies to this trigger, but it's just as likely that the Joneses are trying to keep up with them. Simply having an event at an exclusive hotel helps, but isn't enough. Elements of scarcity are required to appease the prestige category. Consider qualification for attendance, holding the event every two years instead of annually or having a non-disclosure agreement before entry. Whatever you do, make them feel like the experience is rare and that they are special.

## POWER

Think authority and strength. The stage, sound quality, slides and speakers need to be impressive, crisp, clear, high-quality and running on time.

## TRUST

This is the most important trigger; it's also the most difficult to satisfy. Unlike the first six triggers that organizers can elicit in a single interaction, trust takes time. Build a consistent, quality brand presence for long-lasting relationships. Rather than approach events or speeches with a one-time spike in promotion, activity and communication, repeat and retell the story throughout the year to provide consistent exposure.

As an international, award-winning branding expert, Sally has helped world-class brands such as Coca-Cola, Aflac, Target and Jagermeister use these fascination principles to ensure their marketing campaigns emerge above the rest.

Whether you're a speaker or an event organizer looking to entice, engage and evoke a positive reaction from your audience, there are definitely insights to be gleaned from Sally's work. Gone are the days of in the box thinking and planning. It's time to step out of that box, get creative on all seven fronts and raise the level of experience for crowds. This is especially important given society's short attention spans that are best served in tidbits of 140-character tweets. In the spirit of being short, basically, we owe it to audiences to not just deliver, but to fascinate.

**Sol**



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# Why Do You TEDx?

Looking for people with authentic, transparent intentions? It's time you met TED.

By Jackie Savi-Cannon

A respected colleague introduced me to TED in 2006. I quickly went to the site and began exploring. I felt I had come “home.” It was a space where the most forward-thinking people of influence were sharing their ideas. TED became the “fix” for whatever you needed: you were educated, inspired and blown away all in under 20 minutes. Fast-forward to 2011 and, thanks to the iPad commercials, people are discovering TED as an organization that represents the future of learning and innovation, not a guy named Ted.

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design. The conference started in California in 1984 and has now loosely grown into a global movement of “ideas worth sharing” as noted by Peter Kuitenbrouwer (*National Post*, Sept 2011). Some refer to the events as “brain spas” for the “intellectually hungry.” Today, conferences are organized on a worldwide basis or locally, organized around a theme or idea which is both socially responsible and relevant and has a global reach. The local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program. Subject to certain rules and regulations, once approved, the local conferences are offshoots of the TED events.

As a multimedia presenter, my own TEDx event was a great opportunity. TED facilitates the student and teacher in us. I used the interactive website to learn and grow. As a teacher, I experiment freely with that knowledge.

Jackie Savi-Cannon, B.Ed, CYT, is the director of programming for JSC Lifestyle Management Inc., creator of the JSC Lifestyle Health Portal which gives users instant on-demand access to HD video and audio modules on stress reduction, time management, communication and conflict resolution.



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Event planner or speaker, TED and TEDx are challenging us to evolve and reach out in non-traditional ways to translate and communicate our passion, art and teachings to new audiences who share and process information in novel ways.

On October 5th, 2011, the world suffered the loss of visionary genius, Steve Jobs. He not only changed the way we interact, obtain information and music, he taught us the most important life lesson of all: to create and innovate without fear of constraint or failure. This is probably his most valuable legacy. I believe currently TED and TEDx are the vehicles driving the vision Jobs introduced to the world.

With my own TEDxWindsor events, I have chosen to work around their live video-streaming, while other TEDx organizers choose to organize specific to their own events and dates. I love the collaborative experience of interacting virtually in real time with people from all over the globe, while experimenting with many formats. At our most recent event, guests arrived expecting a stuffy presentation on creativity but, instead, became the art as a conceptual flash mob erupted to welcome them. I can't say I have that same freedom working with old-school companies.

As speakers and event planners, TED is

challenging us to stay relevant in a conceptual world. Rah-rah speeches are no longer sufficient. Following 2.0 culture, TED looks for people with authentic, transparent intentions.

If considering your own TEDx event, determine the amount of sweat equity you are willing to invest because you are truly not getting a platform for self-promotion. Instead, look at it as an opportunity to collaborate with other humanitarians from an endless pool of ideas.

Past TED videos and events give examples of topics and experiences to provide your audience. We know innovation and creativity are the hot topics, so it is up to us to provide experiences that facilitate these subjects. Look for the unconventional but remember, not everyone needs a canoe in their boardroom. In other words, Google is Google. The instinct is to copy but the whole point is not to. Fear is holding back innovation. TED, like Steve Jobs, pushes us to celebrate our differences. One-directional delivery from a podium no longer warrants the large investment.

TEDx is providing a platform for like-minded speakers and planners to bring their wildest ideas to life and get away with it. When I was approved for my first TEDx license, I was amazed at the ideas and planning support we received. TEDx is set up for mutual success instead of predictable competition. TEDx is about giving people who have great ideas a platform to share them. There literally is no structure. TEDx is monitoring your intention more than your subject matter, pushing us to come up with new ideas and concepts to reinvent conventions and events. Events should be fun to plan and exhilarating to attend.

TED is not only a thinking tank, it is a way of using technology to bring people together on a universally human level. These events are one way of knowing that the global village is a working reality. The affordability and accessibility of technology make it possible for everyone to break through the borders and permit widespread sharing and communication. The innovative vision of individuals such as Marshall McLuhan and Steve Jobs, combined with momentum created by organizations like TED, pushes us to test our own boundaries. Time is currency. Make your event worth the biggest opportunity cost of which Steve Jobs so profoundly reminded us. **Sol**

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# Speaking of **CONVENTION CENTRES**



Like a steel and glass airship, nestled in its landing berth next to the Rideau Canal, the new Ottawa Convention Centre has redefined the term *unconventional*.

## Build it Better and More Will Come

EXPANDED CONVENTION CENTRES A MAJOR DRAW FOR CORPORATE AND ASSOCIATION MEETINGS IN CANADA

BY JAMIE PARCELLS

Canada is in a unique position with its meetings industry success, but it is also part of a larger rotation. An event will be held in one part of the world one year and in Canada the next. This cycle has a way of knitting the Canadian industry into broader issues.

Governments everywhere are realizing that convention centres are not just vehicles for filling hotel rooms. They are ideal for driving all things relating to economic recovery and growth. This realization is newer and more of a priority than ever before as the majority of convention centres around the world are government owned, and governments are being extraordinarily careful about where they are making their investments, asserts Rod Cameron, executive director of Convention Centres of Canada, an organization representing the 20 largest publicly- owned convention facilities in Canada.

“Whatever governments do, they need to ensure that their investments will have an exceptional chance of generating longer-term economic benefits for the communities that

they serve,” he says. “This is why there has been greater interest in growing and diversifying convention centres across the country.”

In the past, there was a focus on the role of convention centres in generating incremental visitor spending, but Cameron suggests that simply isn’t enough under today’s economic conditions. Governments, he suggests, are investing because of the broader benefits they anticipate will come to their respective local economies. “It is hard to understand why all this expansion is going on in a period when the global economy – to which the meetings industry is linked – is not looking exactly promising,” he says. “But the real thinkers and decision makers in government are saying, ‘Look, we have got to have the capability of having the kinds of facilities that are going to let us have an edge in terms of re-growing the economy.’”

He continues, “Typically, this comes down to government leaders who can distinguish between an expenditure and an investment to generate economic prosperity – which, in turn, allows you to make the expenditure – as

opposed to the path of least resistance, which is to not invest in a facility that will help grow the economy.”

True, Canada did much better compared to the U.S. and the UK during the period of global economic chaos, and this is largely attributed to the diversified business base to which Canadian convention facilities prescribe.

Canadian convention centres are increasingly seen as a middle ground, both geographically and politically, for international events on rotation and they are strategically located to take advantage of the desire by U.S. planners and delegates to locate in a foreign destination that has a familiar feel, particularly amongst organizations looking to demonstrate their international nature by rotating out of the U.S.

Still, Canadian convention centres can only access so many international and U.S. events so, they tend to be a lot more diversified into national, regional and local business combined with, to a lesser degree, international and U.S. business.

So, when the U.S. went into economic

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downturn, the impact on Canadian centres was lessened by this diversification. Canadian supply during this period was more stable, and the industry didn't experience numerous organizations (particularly corporations) pulling their events due to budgetary cut-backs as they did in the U.S. In addition, business from associations and professional organizations remained strong.

Donna Melnychuk, director of sales with TCU Place in Saskatoon agrees. "We've been doing well at the national level where 90 per cent of our business is association business, and we do about 40 conferences (local, national and international) throughout the year. This represents an increase for us over last year's numbers and our delegate numbers remain about 500 per event," she says. "There was a time when we hardly had any national conferences. We hosted four in 2009 and 10 this year with a forecast of 13 for 2012. Whether it's issue related or adhering to the demands of its membership, associations want to go national."

While associations business has remained strong in Saskatoon – a situation undoubtedly enhanced by the current upswing in the provincial economy – Melnychuk suggests that she has noticed changes in terms of advanced bookings. "It used to be that they would book five years in advance. Now, we're seeing a lot more short-term bookings. Just when you think you have your yearly convention business planned, you find yourself having to add a couple of national events – that was unheard of years ago," she says.

#### WHAT'S IN AN IMAGE?

During the economic downturn, there were those who questioned the value of conventions and incentive programs. "Citizens were seeing their tax money put into corporations – and at that point, they said, 'Hey, it's our money and we want a say on how it's being spent and we don't want it spent on the archetypical type of convention,'" says Cameron. That perception really enhanced the problems with corporate business in the U.S. as reflected by the negative impact on the Las Vegas meetings industry.

While still pervasive in the U.S., this "image problem" didn't exist in Canada because there wasn't the perception that public money being was being put into corporations that were spending it in ways that were perhaps inappropriate. The supply and demand in Canada during this period was in a better balance, while the U.S. had been on a 10-year spree of facility construction, which eventually slowed.

Canada continues to experience stable growth in terms of association and corporate events in the convention marketplace. "In

Canada, there hasn't been any major reductions that haven't been offset by some other business enhancements amongst convention centres," Cameron asserts.

There is a much stronger business case for convention centre growth in Canada, he says. "Halifax, for example, said, 'We can't compete for the kind of business that we want with our existing facilities. In order to be competitive, we are going to have to get in there and invest in order to make it happen.'"

The federal government has committed \$51.4 million for a new convention centre in Halifax. "If we build it, they will come," said Defence Minister Peter MacKay of the convention centre, adding, "Building the convention centre will take the 'no' out of 'Nova Scotia.'"

The provincial and municipal governments have agreed to financing for their portions. The province will assume property tax, but each level of government will pay capital costs of \$56 million amortized over 25 years, and split \$2.9 million for operating expenses. The new centre is expected to open in 2015.

Major expansions have taken place throughout Canada and planners have taken note. Kevin Spragg, CMP, suggests that expansion is a direct sign of the times and notes that today's facilities are being built with a real competitive element in mind. "They are like beacons in the meetings industry and their designs have become very advanced. There is no question that corporations and associations planners are taking note of these enhancements when booking venues," he says. "Convention centres have always been ideal for their ability to accommodate multiple types of events, but I am literally seeing events ending and starting minutes apart."

The Vancouver Convention Centre recently tripled its size to cover 1.1 million square feet (or four city blocks) for a combined total of 466,500 square feet of pre-function, meeting, exhibition, and ballroom space. The facility now offers the ability to hold multiple simultaneous events, each with their own separate access and space.

Built over land and water, with floor-to-ceiling glass throughout that treats guests to phenomenal harbour and mountain views, the new West Building is a masterpiece of design, inspiration and sustainability. The facilities commitment to green technology can be found in every corner: the "living roof," sea-water heating and cooling, on-site water treatment and even fish habitat built into the foundation.

The new Ottawa Convention Centre opened in April 2011, after a redevelopment project that built Canada's Meeting Place on the site of the former Ottawa Congress Centre in the heart of downtown.

Its seven-storey high, sweeping window

façade faces the Rideau Canal UNESCO World Heritage Site and is steps from major Ottawa attractions, hotels, restaurants and shopping. The facility is directly linked to the 180-store Rideau Centre, the 495-room Westin Ottawa and ample indoor parking. The new centre features an environment-friendly design, sets new standards for sustainable practices, serves guests with advanced technology and provides a landmark setting for memorable meetings.

#### NICHE IS STILL NICE

With facility expansion providing magnetic appeal throughout Canada, it's interesting to note that certain mainstays still remain valid in the Canadian meeting industry. Today's planners are looking for unique venues, but they also like the convenience of having it all in one location – especially if you are doing a conference in February in the North.

"As soon as delegates hear that a conference is being held here, they want to come," asserts Mary Ann Ferguson, sales manager for Westmark Whitehorse Hotel and Conference Center, a facility featuring 180 guestrooms, 4,000 square feet of meeting space and catering to events of up to 250 people.

Ferguson is quick to point to the diversity of her meetings mix for her facility's overall success and relative immunity from negative impacts associated with the downturns in the economy. "There are certain types of natural and wildlife associations that like to come up here, but we are seeing others, most notably the Canadian Physiotherapy Association and the Canadian Bar Association," Ferguson says.

She says that isolation, although intriguing for today's delegates, is somewhat of a misnomer as it relates to her facility. "We've spent years trying to dispel the notion that we are isolated from the rest of the world. We are considered isolated in that we are in the North, but we do have five flights a day into Whitehorse from Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary." She asserts, "We don't feel as though we are all that remote. We are accessible, affordable and very competitive with facilities in other parts of the country." **Sol**



Jamie Parcels is the publisher for *Speaking of IMPACT*.

• [jparcells@cecommunications.ca](mailto:jparcells@cecommunications.ca)

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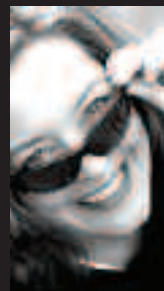
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# Dr. Strangebomb...

## ...or how I stopped worrying and learned to deal with failure

By Michel Neray

In a perfect world, every meeting would come off without a hitch and you would never have heard of anyone called Murphy.

However, we don't live in a perfect world and, statistically, it's simply not possible for every event to be a success. Few people openly admit it, but every once in a while, a meeting bombs.

I remember one such experience personally like it was yesterday. The knock-knock joke I told went over like a lead balloon and the audience just stared at me and fidgeted in their seats. Fortunately, my kindergarten teacher was gracious about it and helped me and my classmates survive elementary school without any permanent emotional trauma.

Fast-forward 50 years or so, and here I am researching tips on how to survive the bomb. There's plenty of information on how to plan a successful event, but I can't find anything on what to do when an event turns out below expectations.

So, I asked some of my more experienced friends in the business – people who have seen it all – and I asked them a simple question: "Imagine you were giving advice to a newbie event planner or bureau agent, after the event he or she just handled bombed. What would you say?"

Christine Beaumaster, president of Keynote Speakers Canada, puts it bluntly. "There is (almost) no way to recover from the damage done when a speaker bombs."

She goes on to explain that the meeting may bomb for one of two reasons: a mismatch

Michel Neray helps companies and individuals communicate their greatest value. It's what he calls their "Essential Message." He also has a full head of hair and hasn't bombed since he was in Kindergarten.



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in either the speaker style or the presentation content.

"Look," she says. "It's not a chicken or beef luncheon choice. It's so important to resist the temptation to just be an order-taker and book a speaker without asking enough questions. Instead, it's important to take the time to discuss the audience, the theme and goals of the event, timing and if there will be any late-nights and alcohol. Everything that might affect the program must be considered."

It's a subjective business but strong communication, due diligence and trust will always guarantee best results.

Theresa Beenken, VP of National Speakers Bureau says pretty much the same thing. Being one of the largest bureaus in Canada for more than 35 years, they've got the pre-planning process and speaker selection down to a fine art. I believe her when she says it almost never happens that a speaker bombs. Her credibility goes up even higher when she says, "But every once in a while, a speaker might not hit it out of the park."

What then?

"We have been able to turn a bad situation into a better one by finding out what was missing from the presentation and then offering that content in a different form – like a follow-up article for the client's publication, or books, etc., to help give more value/content from the speaker," says Beenken.

"We also recognize we have three parties with a vested interest: the event planner who booked the speaker, the audience who experiences the speaker and the speaker," she says. "Each will have his or her own view of the experience. Our goal is to constantly improve

and help everyone through the process. We know we can only do that if we get a holistic view of what happened."

Martin Perelmuter, president and co-founder of Speaker Spotlight – another leading bureau, with more than 13,000 speaking engagements arranged for clients in over 30 countries worldwide since 1995 – concurs with the diagnosis.

An experienced bureau knows how to ask the right questions in order to match the right speaker. An experienced bureau does its due diligence. An experienced bureau treats its roster of speakers with the same respect and trust that it has for its event planner clients. An experienced bureau is focused on building relationships for the long term instead of looking at event engagements as individual transactions.

So what happens when an event goes off the rails (even though it almost never happens, of course)?

"By all means, learn from the experience. Talk to the speaker and get his or her perspective," says Perelmuter. "Review the audience feedback forms to see if there's a consistent or pervasive thread. If there is a genuine issue, chances are the audience will not want to give the speaker a second chance – so free books or a follow-up speeches won't help no matter how 'free' they are."

He goes on to say, "Find out what the client wants. Maybe the client wants the fee refunded; maybe the client wants an apology; maybe the client simply appreciates the effort we make to resolve the issue; or maybe there's nothing anyone can do. Then, all we have to draw on is the trust we had previously built up in the proverbial trust account."

Which brings us back full circle to what Christine Beaumaster told me at the outset, and it makes me wonder if all my interviewees secretly got together and agreed on everything they were going to say to me.

Or maybe, just maybe, the more experienced bureaus have their own unique style and personality, but all follow the same golden rule, which can be summed up in the phrase "Just do the right thing."

Good advice.

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## Leverage Your Energy

Sometimes, inspiration can come from the most unexpected sources

By Barbara Bowes

Imagine being picked up by a shuttle bus operator whom you believed was simply part of the annual National Speakers Association (NSA) convention. First, he asked our names. Next, he asked where we were travelling from. Then, he informed us of the contest he was offering during the drive with the winner taking home a U.S. quarter. Like it or not, we were all on board!

The driver then proceeded to ask each person an interesting quiz question about their country or city. He gave five seconds for a simple question and 30 seconds for a more difficult question. As you might have guessed, the entire ride was full of fun, energy and cheers as each passenger tried to best answer his question. This man was utterly amazing. He was a speaker and he was an entertainer. Quite frankly, he was the energizer bunny!

Before we knew it, we arrived at the convention hotel, all primed and excited about the conference. So what's the moral of this story? The driver was not from NSA. Rather, he was simply one happy driver with an excellent sense of customer service. He was someone who loved his job. His attitude, his approach and his skill in getting people motivated and energized was remarkable.

Keeping your audience energized and engaged is certainly one of the keys to speaking success. Yes, it is important to hire a proven, energetic and interactive speaker, but that is only part of the challenge. The other key challenge is organizing and coordinating

Barbara Bowes is an accomplished writer, radio host, speaker, trainer, coach, professional strategist/consultant and president of Legacy Bowes Group.

• [www.legacybowes.com](http://www.legacybowes.com)



an event so that participants continue to feel energized as they flow through the day.

I paid attention to the various sessions at the recent NSA conference and sought out the advice of a panel of western Canadian meeting planners who willingly shared some of the success strategies (Ron Mark, Ready Events; Shirley Tilley, STA Inc.; and Donna Spence, Spence Events).



- Work with the planners to be sure the theme/topic streams are well organized and do not represent an overwhelming number of choices; trying to satisfy too many people creates a situation of no focus; this does not bring bigger attendance, it brings confusion.
- Have a well-designed conference booklet with tabs for different days and colour codes for different themes or topic streams to help with participant selection and flow; provide a clear map of rooms, programs and exhibitors; enthusiasm is sustained when people know where they're going.
- If the conference is based on a theme, place theme-related props on the guest tables for participants to pick up and surround the conference with items and articles that reflect the theme. Make people feel welcome.
- Include a set of creative questions in the nametag holder. Throughout the event, atten-

dees must ask these questions of other attendees while also gathering their names and contact information. When the form is filled, participants can drop it off for a prize draw.

- Get people to sit in the front of general sessions by taping off back rows; open the rows up as the front seats fill up; use a greeter to help with the flow.
  - Interactive sessions require supportive spacing of tables and chairs. Use round tables rather than rows of chairs and limit the number of participants. If there are too many people, then there will be no interaction and people can't get engaged.
  - Maintain consistency with session timing. There is nothing more disengaging than finishing one topic but being late for another topic of interest; people get frustrated by sessions that overlap.
  - If networking is part of the program, then create an activity in the session rooms to prevent people from sitting too soon instead of networking; provide several visual distractions of some kind to get conversation going.
  - Involve volunteer greeters at the door of every session to welcome participants and distribute handouts; involve volunteers for a "buddy" system to help new attendees feel welcomed and shepherded through the conference.
  - Schedule longer coffee/nutrition breaks with plenty of stations; include couches and chairs for relaxing and networking; avoid serving tea in thermos pots as this will taste like coffee and literally take the joy out of the break.
  - Employ servers to offer elegant snacks during coffee breaks – people will feel special, will enjoy their networking and be energized.
  - Consider offering some different activities during coffee breaks and immediately prior to the session. These could include a harpist in one corner and a clown in another.
  - If people have been sitting for some time, plan to feature a yoga or fitness demonstration, which involves everyone getting up from their chairs to engage in an activity to awaken their minds and spirits.
- The job of a speaker is to entertain, energize and teach, yet, the working environment must also support this goal. Success means emulating the shuttle bus driver. Be innovative, creative, and responsive to the needs of the attendee.

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# Travel Apps Lighten the Road

Wish you could have a 24/7 assistant to help you travel? You can.

By Sandy Leppan

**D**ownloading applications to help make travelling smoother has become something of a digital revolution. Originally an iPhone phenomenon, travel apps are now available by the thousands on all brands of smart phones. There are apps for everything from basic trip planning, finding attractions, hotels, restaurants and even available parking spots (PrimoSpot) to avoiding speed traps (Trapster) or locating a restroom in a hurry (SitOrSquat).

We asked some frequent travellers for their suggestions of apps that could make travelling less stressful and allow your participants to spend more their energy on learning and networking at your meetings and conferences.

Most of our contributors mentioned travel planning and scheduling apps (Guidepal, Time Tables, World Travel Guide, Flight Tracker, FlightStats, SeatGuru, Airport Maps, eSkyGuide), as well as guides and reviews for restaurants, hotels and attractions (OpenTable, Urbanspoon, TripAdvisor, Locly). For reducing stress, two of our respondents admitted blasting away at green barnyard creatures with an app called Angry Birds.

## SUSAN

Susan Sweeney, CA, CSP, HoF, spent last September in Europe with just her iPad and found the following apps particularly useful.

**Skype** gave her the opportunity to keep up with home and business every day from a hill-side balcony in Santorini.

Sandy Leppan is a freelance editor with 12 years' experience editing professional speakers' books, one-sheets, articles and websites.

• leppan@rogers.com



**Dragon Dictation** allowed her to speak into her iPad, which would then translate it to text to send via email, Facebook or Twitter.

**Read It Later** downloaded Web pages so that she could read them when she had time.

**Kindle** and **iBooks** meant no luggage weight and a huge assortment of reading.

## LINDA

We received several recommendations from Linda Tarrant, CSP, HoF, who travels the world for business and pleasure, and Adrienne Steele, the executive assistant who makes most of Linda's travel arrangements.

**Kayak** is a free travel search engine aggregator to locate the best deals from across airlines and travel sites on flights, hotels, car rentals, cruises and more. Load agendas, track flights, and double-check airport information. Meeting a colleague or client? Turn on the beacon to give them your location so it's a "can't miss" connection, even in a busy airport or convention centre.

**TED** is a top level listing of what's current; send inspiring talks and ideas to friends and colleagues.

**iFitness** or **Workout Trainer** are your personal fitness trainers that guide you through audio workouts (weightlifting, cardio or yoga) with step-by-step exercises, instructional photos and videos.

## CHERYL

Cheryl Cran, CSP, has a Mac Book Pro, an iPad and an iPhone and considers a number of apps to be most useful.

**USA Today AutoPilot** is your all-in-one travel companion that has current status of flights and weather conditions in departure and destination locations, and stores information about your hotel and rental car reservations.

**Travel + Leisure's Packing Checklist** ensures that you'll never forget to pack an important item again: create a customized checklist based on the type of trip, and read articles and blogs from Travel + Leisure

**Weatherbug** provides up-to-the-minute weather information from more than 8,000 weather stations in Canada and the U.S. so you can view hourly or seven-day forecasts to find out if it's raining in Halifax or snowing in Denver.

Cheryl's favourite is **Angry Birds** which she plays while waiting at airports.

## HUGH

Hugh Culver, MBA, CSP, the author of *Give Me a Break: The Art of Making Time Work for You*, uses his iPhone daily to look smart.

**IPassword** is the most essential tool on his iPhone and MAC; load it with SINs, passport numbers, addresses, rental car details, and all log-in information (For MAC or RoboForm for PC).

**Evernote** is indispensable for collecting random thoughts, articles, quotations or pictures then finding them again.

**Gmail** lets Hugh copy important documents into Google Docs for safekeeping and sharing; sync my calendar and contacts, and know that whatever breaks on the road has been backed up and is accessible from the hotel lobby

A **notepad** and a **pen** – revolutionary! These devices work unplugged and are rugged for tough travel conditions. Proven in the darkest Congo and on the streets of America. Available everywhere.

There are a wide variety of apps and many more being developed and added all of the time. As a meeting planner, adding links to these in your promotional materials or in your tweets can help your participants make their travel arrangements, find new and interesting places to explore, follow up on speaker content and even work their stress out by shooting a few birds while waiting in those never-ending line-ups. Invite participants to share their favourite apps and learn from other participants even before the conference begins. Happy Apping!

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## Think Outside the Meeting

**If you're going to joke about taking off your pants, why not just do it?**

By Michael Kerr, CSP, HoF

It's time to start thinking outside the meeting. Even if you are having your meeting outside, I would encourage you to think even more outside than outside. In fact, I'd encourage you to think outside the outside in your next outside meeting to really get outside the meeting that's being held outside.

Does this make sense?

Let me explain why.

Meetings have become so yesterday. (Not just because I was at a meeting yesterday, although, frankly, that could be it.)

Let's face it, meetings have been going downhill ever since Adam met Eve (and we all know how that went). At the very least, meetings have become mundane. Like Elton John or Stephen Harper, too many meetings have gone mainstream. Too many meetings have lost their edge, their flair, their "je ne sais meeting."

Think about it. When was the last time you were at a meeting that made you want to leap up onto the nearest table, pound your fists like Tarzan and scream out, "I LOVE this meeting and I love you, my fellow meeting goers, more than I love life itself!?" If you were being honest right now, you'd probably admit it's been a while.

Or, when was the last time you Tweeted that you were excited about going to a meeting? (Okay, bad example. If you Tweeted anything then chances are you were darned excited about experiencing actual human contact in any form.)

Michael Kerr is a keynote speaker, trainer, and author of the book *Who Invited Table 37?*

• [www.mikekerr.com](http://www.mikekerr.com)



But you get my point. Like a post-fourth season episode of *Two and a Half Men*, meetings have become too predictable: everyone lines up like cattle (albeit, well-dressed cattle) to get their nametags; there's an opening ceremony involving flags, anthems and a couple of dueling monkeys on unicycles; Chuck, the well-natured, microphone-challenged emcee stands behind the lectern and jokes about not wearing any pants; the opening keynote speaker brings everyone to tears only to bring everyone to uproarious laughter only to bring everyone to the back of the room to flog their many books, DVDs and personalized cheese graters.

The other reason to think outside the meeting is that demographics are rapidly changing in a dramatically rapid way that can only be described as dramatic. So dramatically that some speakers can't switch their topics to speaking about the generation gaps fast enough to keep up!

I mean we've got the zoomers backing into the boomers who are crushing the gen-exers who are squeezing out the nexters who are having to adapt to the sandwich generation who is in danger of being overtaken by the vegans who aren't sure what the flounders are doing and no one knows who those guys are

sitting at table 37. I mean, seriously, who let them in?

We also need to contend with the increase in visible minorities, invisible minorities, minorities that used to be invisible but now seem really obvious, minorities that have overtaken the majority hence making the whole minority label rather obsolete, minorities within the minority segments, the minority of the majority of minorities... plus those guys at table 37. (Like, really, who do they work for? Are they HR?)

Superimposed on all this change is the technological change which is changing things so rapidly, that soon technology will make even technology obsolete.

So what can we, in the meeting business, do?

Sure, we could hide behind our name tags or move to table 37, but really, what would that accomplish?

Clearly we need a meeting revolution. We need to break not only the ice at meetings, but the mould in which the ice was created. We need to boldly go where meetings have never gone before.

That's right. I'm talking nametags that glow in the dark. I'm talking dueling monkeys that also juggle. I'm talking about emcees who don't just joke about taking their pants off – they actually do it! I'm talking about keynote speakers who engage all audience members not only through their witty, multi-demographic banter but with their amazing technology that makes everyone forget about the speaker's message because by the time the speaker says it, it's already outdated anyway (so let's not kid ourselves).

I'm also talking about challenging our basic assumptions about meetings. Do we really need to feed people? Who says we have to have washrooms readily available? In fact, do we even need attendees to make a meeting successful? I mean, come on, aren't the meeting attendees the ones most likely to complain about your meetings in the first place?

To recap: I'm simply talking about thinking outside your meeting.

Which, if you're in a boring meeting right now, there's a good chance you are doing it anyway.

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