



## Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Emotionally Attached Meetings

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### Welcome

Like the question of whether a tree falling in the forest makes a sound if no one is around to hear it, what if nothing happens after a meeting...? Well-executed meetings should move people

- into believing
- into feeling
- into action

This issue of Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events addresses harnessing the power of emotion to create movement in meetings.

Sue

[Sue Tinnish](#)

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### Buy the Message

Meetings represent opportunities to:

- Give information
- Create ideas
- Decide on issues
- Delegate
- Share work
- Maintain relationships
- Celebrate

If the participants don't "buy" the message than what value has the meeting provided? Face to face events are great opportunities to persuade, involve or inspire.

Buying the message means that people remember, retain and learn. Learning is not reserved for training meetings. Consider this definition:

Learning - To come to be able and to realize

Learning is a change in the way people feel, think or behave. And learning has an emotional and rational component. The word "Emotion" means movement ["to move"]. Something moves us.

Innovative meetings should have a rational or informational component and should take advantage of the omni-present emotional component to help move people to think, feel or behave differently based upon the meeting objectives.

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### Advertisers Know

Advertisers know that persuading people to buy products relies on an emotional connection.

During the National Retail Federation's 94th Annual Convention and Expo, Dr. Clotilde Rapaille, psychologist, cultural anthropologist and marketing expert, stated that "Your customer's conception of your brand is formed from his first experience or "imprint" with your company, or more generally, with the products you sell."

Without emotion, he said, there is not enough neural transmission to garner a strong memory.

In the article, Live from NRF: Getting Emotional About Branding, appearing in the Chief Marketer, Rapaille cited the example of Folgers Coffee. Folgers takes advantage of the first impression consumers have with coffee to effectively market their product. The first impression is its scent. People smell the product when they are children, before they're old enough to drink coffee. The scent becomes linked in a person's mind with the emotional memory of coffee in his or her childhood kitchen. Rapaille found through the use of surveys that 97% of coffee drinkers love the smell of it, while only 43% drink it because they like the taste. Folgers used that knowledge to create an ad campaign centered on the smell rather than taste of its coffee. Folgers' commercials focus on the customer opening the package and savoring the scent, rather than on the actual experience of drinking it.

How can meetings create a similar emotional connection?

Original source:

[http://chiefmarketer.com/presence/promotion/nrf\\_emotional\\_branding\\_0118/](http://chiefmarketer.com/presence/promotion/nrf_emotional_branding_0118/)

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### Where Emotions Lie

There is a school of thought that believes that emotions occur before thought. I, in my own non-scientific opinion, believe that emotions surface much more quickly than

cognitive awareness. For example, a fear or anger responses can happen in milliseconds, long before we are aware of them. Our awareness takes time to catch up.

Yet in a matter of seconds, sensations, emotions and thoughts come together in the complex human brain. Our human brain encompasses three distinct brains: the reptilian brain, the neocortex, and the limbic brain.

The reptilian brain regulates heartbeat, digestion, and other basic life functions. The reptilian brain also manages our flight or fight instincts. But the reptilian brain supports neither emotion nor thinking.

The neocortex houses the most advanced skills like speaking, writing, planning, reasoning, and awareness.

Limbic brain is our emotional control center This brain controls the logic of our emotions. The limbic brain maintains balance in our bodies. The limbic brain regulates not only temperature but fluid levels (thirst), energy levels and intake (hunger), endocrine and hormone levels. The limbic system also regulates blood pressure, and blood sugar level. Certain structures of the limbic brain are involved in memory as well. Two large limbic system structures, the amygdala and hippocampus play important roles in memory.

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## An Emotional Build Up to a Better Meeting

What role do emotions play in an innovative meeting? Emotions:

### Trigger Decisions

Emotional memories that are stored in the limbic system help people make decisions. An emotional memory serves as a trigger to a situation automatically and quickly. Emotions influence people's attitude and their own current and next action. Emotions play an essential role in perception, learning and ultimately rational decision making.

### Filter Information

People rely on memories for filtering new information. The limbic system has an emotional filing system, indexing memories by their value for future experience. While the neocortex forgets facts and data, the limbic system does not. Information in meeting can call upon emotionally pleasant memories to cast a positive halo over new information. Just as Folgers Coffee takes advantage of early memories, meetings can also ride an emotional wave.

### Experience the Real and the Imagined

The amygdala in your limbic brain responds to both imaginary and real experiences. You can feel sadness about a past action, or fear a future possibility, even though these events are not really occurring. You will have an emotional response as if these imagined events were actually taking place in the external world. This capacity allows us to call upon a person's emotional experience to persuade, inspire or motivate.

### Human Touch

Our limbic system has a need for human contact. The impact of limbic connection is seen clearly in the elderly. When one member of an elderly loving couple dies, the other feels that part of them has died too. Face to face meetings feed the limbic system.

## Emotional Intelligence

Our limbic brain feeds our emotional intelligence. Our limbic systems serve as sensitive antennas to the emotions of other people. This ability to feel the feelings of others and to project our own is called limbic resonance. See our June 2001 on Emotional Intelligence. [Emotional Intelligence Back Issue](#)

## Calls to Action

The limbic brain appears to be the source of the feeling of conviction that can change an idea into a belief. Meetings should create a force that lives beyond the meeting itself.

## Emotions Influence Learning

Emotions and thoughts shape each other and cannot be separated. Emotions color meaning. Creating an emotional response is indispensable to retention of any messages contained in the meeting.

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## Emotionally Available

You can create emotionally available meetings in three ways. A meeting can be emotionally friendly by paying attention to:

- Environment - the overall feeling in the room
- Formats - the agenda and the way it is constructed
- Emotional state of participants - a person's physical and emotional well-being are closely linked to their ability to think and to learn effectively

## Emotionally Good Environments

A relaxed atmosphere that offers options for learning in individually satisfying ways is an emotionally satisfying environment. Gerald Edelman, chairman of the Department of Neurobiology at Scripps Research Institute and 1972 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Physiology, offers a vision of the brain as a jungle in which systems interact continuously in a chaotic fashion suggests that learners would thrive in an environment that provides many sensory, cultural, and problem layers.

Emotionally stressful environments are counterproductive to people's attempts to learn. Desired environments are safe, focused, stimulating and open. The limbic brain can sense whether an environment is hostile or friendly.

The use of humor can help diffuse and turnaround a bad environment. Introducing a sense of fun can increase the energy level and generally improve the "feeling" in the room.

Do your meetings operate in an environment where people feel free to ask questions, to offer a different idea, to be creative?

## Emotionally Charged Formats

Implementing some of the below approaches will appeal to the emotional side of people's brains. The audience will make better connections and "buy" the message more if the information is presented in an emotionally charged way. Some ideas

include:

- Stories
- Metaphors
- Themes
- Social Interaction
- Visual Imagery/Visualization
- Symbols
- Icons
- Drama
- Personalization

Successful creation of an emotional experience depends on using all of the senses and immersing the participants in a variety of complex and interactive experiences. Talking heads or subject matter experts should not be unilaterally excluded, but they should be part of a larger experience.

Pacing and creating a climax to the meeting also creates emotional connections. Moods and emotions can also be altered by music and color.

Do your meetings focus on facts and figures or do they provide an emotional hook that will lodge in your participants' limbic brains?

#### Emotional State of the Participants

How participants feel is very important to their ability to focus and learn. If they are enthusiastic, intrigued, receptive, and feel that the information is relevant and useful to them, then they will "buy" the message. You can appeal to the emotional state of your participants by doing the following:

- Tell them "What's In It for Me" - People want to feel respected and are seeking information in meetings that is relevant to them.
- Acknowledge their "state" - If people will not be easily persuaded, then acknowledge that challenge to the audience. If people had a horrendous travel experience getting to the meeting, acknowledge how they are feeling. Show respect for the participants' emotional state.
- Allow them to guide the program - Allow time for interaction, questions, reflection, or feedback.
- Pay attention to their physical needs - Breaks, food, temperature, lighting -- all the environmental conditions affect people's moods and emotions.

How can you create a more welcoming experience throughout your meetings that puts people in the mood?

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Freebies: [New Business Model](#)

Freebies: [Sense & Respond](#)

Here's a new way to think about marketing that could have some interesting implications for the meeting industry.

The article, "Sense and Respond—the Next Generation Business Model" appeared in the May 2005 issue of Stanford Business School's Knowledgebase Newsletter. Written by Seungjin Whang, a professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business, he notes that we are moving toward sensing and individually responding to consumers in the marketing world. Instead of broadcasting uniform messages to a wide audience in an indiscriminate fashion, Sense and Respond (S&R) attempts to pinpoint the right individual with the right message or product or service.

Imagine walking into a store and having a flat plasma screen greet you with the customized message, "Welcome back to our store. How did your last purchase of \_\_\_\_\_ work out for you? Come in and see our new collection."

In this retail example, Sense and Respond could, if properly implemented, reduce various costs such as excess inventory, poor customer service, low response rates to ad campaigns and running out of stock.

Sense and Respond advances the business model used by Dell Computers (build a computer to your specifications) that embraces the concept of mass customization.

Upon reading this, I stopped to ponder the future. I definitely don't have any answers, but I do have questions that can cause us all to think more innovatively about meetings.

- How can we sense how our participants are reacting to our meetings - mid-meeting - and respond?
- How can we utilize past behavior and responses to influence future behavior?
- In the association world, how can we track preferences and past attendance to guide our participants to register for future conferences or sessions?
- What are the privacy implications?
- How can we track people's preferences to deliver them information that appeals to their needs and emotions?

**More Freebies:** I have read some outstanding books on the brain and learning - non-scientific with applications for meetings. If you are interested in my resource list, email me and I will send you a Brainy Resource List. [Brain Books](#)

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Future T.I.M.E.

I will speaking at [Affordable Meetings](#) - on September 7 from 1:45 - 3:00 in Washington DC. Come see me if you will be at that show.

Finally, my subscriber base only grows through word of mouth of my subscribers. I

would really appreciate it if you would forward T.I.M.E. onto your colleagues, associates, and clients. Just press the forward button at the end of the newsletter.

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### T.I.M.E. Gone By

If you are interested in past issues, please e-mail us with the month and topic and we will send you a copy of that newsletter. Here's what is included in past issues [Back Issue Request](#):

May 2000: [Teambuilding](#) and (Freebie) New York Times Reprint On Teambuilding

June 2000: [Green Meetings](#) and (Freebie) Resource List Of Exercises

July 2000: [Values](#) and (Freebie) Meeting Analysis

August 2000: [Minimum/Minimal Meetings](#) and (Freebie) Web Winners

October 2000: [Evaluations](#) and (Freebie) Sample Evaluation Questions

November 2000: [Politics](#)

December 2000: [Toys](#) and (Freebie) Brainstorming Ideas

January 2001: [Sales, Award Presentations](#) and (Freebie) Sales Tips

February 2001: [Change](#) and Communicating Change and (Freebie) Change Bombs

March 2001: [Open Space Technology](#)

April 2001: [Adult Learning Styles](#) and (Freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire

May 2001: [Trade Shows](#) and (Freebie) Trade Show Timeline

June 2001: [Emotional Intelligence](#) and (Freebie) EI Quiz

July 2001: [Presentation Tips](#) and (Freebie) Speaker Introductions

August 2001: [Ice Breakers](#) and (Freebie) Resource List

September 2001: [Facilitation](#) and (Freebie) Problem Personalities In A Meeting

October 2001: [Humor](#) and (Freebie) The Benefits Of Laughter

November 2001: [Customer Care](#) and (Freebie) Complaints

December 2001: [Slack](#) and (Freebie) Quiet Time

January 2002: [Teambuilding Options](#) and (Freebie)

February 2002: [Promotional Products](#) and (Freebie) Case Study

March 2002: [Multicultural Communication](#) and (Freebie) Multicultural Meeting Tips

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