



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

Topic: That's Entertainment

Date: May 2003

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U. S. Library of Congress ISSN: 1539-1833

Welcome

In T.I.M.E. this month, with the help of Paul Mascioli, President of Mascioli Entertainment Corporation, I have written about Entertainment and Business Theater. Borrowing on theatrical ideas from B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore's book, [The Experience Economy](#), I offer some suggestions for new ways to enhance the experience of your meeting participants.

If all the world is a stage, you can make certain your meetings are center stage with this issue of Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events.

Sue

[Sue Tinnish](#)

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Insuring It's Entertainment

Written by Paul Mascioli, President, Mascioli Entertainment Corporation, 407.897.8824

We all know that entertainment can make or break an event. When the guests have experienced your event, hopefully they will remember all of the business aspects of their meetings, but will they also remember their time as being exhilarating and fun? If you've given them the right mix of entertainment, they certainly will.

Today's entertainment choices seem almost endless. Here are some points to consider when formulating your plans, and tips that will help you to complete them.

1. Give careful consideration to your source. Regardless of your requirements,

insist on dealing with an experienced agent or show producer who can go directly to entertainers or their management.

In some instances, an agent may even represent your desired talent in house; however, it is not necessarily desirable to deal with an agency touting a large, exclusive talent roster (the operative word being exclusive). Inevitably, it will try to plug its own talent into a slot, even though an attraction from another source may be far better suited to your event. No matter whom you choose, always be sure that you are dealing with an experienced, well connected individual who can assemble the right team to deliver your needs. Otherwise, you could easily end up dealing with multiple booking offices, which will dramatically increase your end cost and also complicates the process. Your booking agent must have the "right connections" so that your desired talent will take the call -- many will not take calls from unknown sources.

2. Make planning your entertainment an early priority in the overall scheme of things. Don't leave it as an after-thought because it's that special show that is going to create a lasting memory for your guests, keeping them reminiscing and coming back.
3. It is crucial that the a/v production for each show, event or meeting is absolutely "right on" for every given situation. Be sure to obtain all of your performers' requirements and coordinate them with your producer or a/v company well in advance of the event.
4. Your entertainment may have needs beyond a/v. A carefully structured contract is a must. Furthermore, when negotiating the contract price, be sure that you understand the ramifications of the contract rider. This can sometimes be as costly as the negotiated dollar amount of the contract and will include such items as transportation (flights and local ground), accommodations, catering and other miscellaneous hospitality needs (bottled water, etc.), dressing rooms specifications, backline (instruments and amplifiers, etc.), guests passes, taxes, work visas, video taping and audio recording restrictions and more.
5. Many parties and conventions are themed. Your talent producer should be able to offer you custom music, production numbers, scripts and décor suggestions that will compliment your theme, ensuring that it flows throughout your event, from the first guest's arrival until the last light is turned off.
6. Use Entertainment in innovative ways. Entertainment can add an element of drama, fun, humor and contribute to the overall environment. Here are some occasions for which you should consider entertainment:
 - o On arrival at the host city airport and hotel
 - o En route to the hotels and to all satellite events
 - o On arrival at satellite locations
 - o Event receptions
 - o Opening general sessions
 - o Session breaks
 - o Breakfasts, lunches and dinners
 - o The main event
 - o Speaker introductions
 - o Groundbreaking ceremonies

- o Sales awards
- o Trade show support
- o Traffic builders
- o Spouse programs
- o Open houses
- o Evening partying/dancing
- o Hospitality suites
- o Grand openings
- o Business theater Editorial note: More on this in the next section.

You might also want to consider having fun, motivational speakers for work sessions and interspersing awards presentations with entertainment.

Remember, how you fill all of your talent and production requirements and the energy and excitement created by your entertainment will be major contributors to the success or demise of your event. Good luck!

Paul Mascioli, President
Mascioli Entertainment Corporation
www.masciolientertainment.com

Thanks to Paul for providing us with his tips and uses for entertainment. Paul has been in the entertainment business since 1969 and is a three-time past president and Life Member of the Canadian Country Music Association. He is also an active member of Meeting Professionals International and the National Association of Catering Executives.

Contact him to take advantage of his expertise: by telephone at 407.897.8824, extension 104 or via email at paul@masciolientertainment.com. You can also click here [Paul Mascioli](#) or go to their website www.masciolientertainment.com.

[Mascioli Entertainment](#)

Business Theater

Business theater combines live talent with techniques from theater and media to inform and motivate your audience. Business theater incorporates performers, music, original lyrics, choreography, special staging, and effects to support your message. Information and messaging are interwoven to educate or reinforce issues you want to cover. The characters, situations and material are customized so the audience can connect, consciously or subconsciously. It allows audiences to actively participate by engaging their imaginations. Comedy is a typical element in business theater but above all, the experience the audience receives, is not only educational, but also entertaining.

Organizations use business theater for:

- General sessions
- Live interactive training
- Product promotions
- Client events

- Employee recognition or celebration
- Trade shows
- Special events/Public relations

Business Theater in Action

The essence of business theater is to use theatrical tools to create an immersive experience for participants; something that engages rather than allowing participants to be passive. It seems quite inadequate to write about business theater in action, but these quick examples offer a glimpse into its power and richness. For a multi-dimensional perspective, see the contact information following the examples.

General Keynote Session

The president of a company utilized business theater in his keynote address on leadership. To drive home his points about the need for discipline and creativity, the president interacted with live character actors portraying George Patton, Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein on stage. Additionally, photos and video clips of the real life leaders were interspersed in his speech. Instead of viewing a dry presentation with endless PowerPoint slides, the meeting participants' attention was captivated and directed on multiple levels.

Trade Show

A manufacturing company employed business theater during a trade show to reinforce the theme and build traffic. A male a cappella rock group sang an original song with lyrics. The group engaged and interacted with people who stopped to listen. The song reinforced the print materials (banners and brochures) and people were found singing the catchy tune throughout the show.

Training

A high-tech company found itself in the uncomfortable position of needing sexual harassment training. A custom skit mirrored the company culture for participants. After the skit was complete, the actors functioned as facilitators in small groups to lead the group through a series of questions. Later, the play was "re-played" and the small groups had the opportunity to call "CUT" and stop the action and re-write the skit so that the harassing behavior was eliminated.

Sales Meeting

An actor playing off the then-popular MC Hammer helped unify and create structure to a sales meeting. The actor sang specially created songs to break up the sales presentations and energize the group. His presence also provided continuity between presentations.

Mike Hamilton contributed these examples of business theater. For more details, feel free to contact Mike at mike@synchronicity.com. Click here [Mike Hamilton](#) or telephone him at 815-464-1252.

I encourage other readers to contribute ideas, examples or themes for future issues of Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events. Thanks Mike!

The Theatrical Experience

Whether you are using Business Theater or not, concepts from the theatrical world can enhance your next meeting or event. Pine and Gilmore, authors of the [The Experience Economy](#), talk about 4 forms of theater:

1. Improv
2. Platform Theater
3. Matching Theater
4. Street Theater

Improv Theater means improvising a new way of finding value: creating, inventing or "winging it".

The second type of theater is the one that is most familiar to people: Platform Theater. Platform Theater flows in sequence and there is little variation from the planned script. In a business setting, the "script" is a drafted speech.

Even though most meetings operate from a basis of Platform Theater, there is a difference between reciting lines and bringing the message to life.

Matching Theater is akin to a film or television program. The easiest way to understand Matching Theater is that the end product results from combing pieces of work, performed at different times and often in different places into a unified whole.

Street Theater is the domain of jugglers, magicians and mimes, who must draw people into their performance, amaze the audience with their abilities and then ask them for money.

The business example of Street Theater cited in the book is a sales person making a call. Just as street performers must overcome traffic noise, hecklers or bad weather to give a profitable performance, salespeople often have no control over the environment in which they perform. They have to turn the prospect's office, factory or site into a stage on which to create their selling performance.

When interrupted, they must turn the remark into an opportunity to launch another part of the act. They have to read the audience and decide "on the fly" what parts of the rehearsed performance to drop and which to include. The end result is an unique performance that creates value by re-using something that has worked in past.

Street Theater is different from improv because rather than improvising, street performances mass customize their performance.

The Experience Economy is an excellent read for understanding how to create "experiences" but also to delve deeper into the idea of a meeting as staging an event. An abbreviated article is also available from Amazon as a PDF download. [Welcome to](#)

[the Experience Economy](#) or click here for the book [The Experience Economy](#).

Theatrical Meetings

How do these different forms of theater fit into meetings?

Improv Theater

The concept of Improv Theater may be incorporated into meetings -- for example:

- Panel Discussions
- Open Space Technology Meetings (see also my back issue on this topic) where the audience sets the agenda
- Banter between speakers or between the audience and the speaker is Improv Theater.

Platform Theater

Most meeting elements fall into Platform Theater. Rehearsal is an important precursor to a successful performance. Mechanical reading does not equate to a star performance. The May issue of Presentation Magazine talks about the difference between practicing and rehearsing to perform.

Involve as much sensory support for your meeting to create a standing ovation for your Platform Theater.

Matching Theater

- A great example of Matching Theater is the meeting recap where music, pictures, and images of the meeting are combined together at the end to produce a motivating closing to a meeting.
- Webcasts have elements of Matching Theater too.

Street Theater

- Senior management become street performers when they mingle with meeting participants.
- Question and Answer sessions are a form of Street Theater.

The Transformational Economy

Pine and Gilmore write that "Once the Experience Economy has run its course, the Transformation Economy will emerge."

Customizing an experience turns it into a transformation. In a transformation, the

customer is the product. The authors offer this example: a person signing up for a Health Club membership. The person didn't really buy the membership, nor did they buy the experience -- sweating, grunting and working out -- what they ideally want is a new shape, a better heart or new strength.

How can a large meeting be Mass Customized? Since the communication is not one-on-one, there are some inherent challenges in mass customizing meetings.

Here are four things that we already do that offer us a new context to think of their value -- the value of mass customization:

1. Programming tracks, levels or options in your meetings.

A common practice in the association world is to allow participants to pick and choose their sessions. How can we structure agendas to meet the differing needs of participants?

I am planning a MPI Leadership Meeting for our Chapter and we are offering an optional session for returning Committee Leaders. By structuring our agenda so that people can opt out of sessions were they already possess the knowledge and expertise, we are mass customizing the meeting. In addition, I am planning time for "Synergy Circles" where Committee Leaders can choose to interact with other Committees to exchange ideas and plan joint activities together. Each Committee will have the opportunity to mix with 3 other Committees (each group will meet for 20 minutes). During the hour designated for Synergy Circles, Chapter Leaders can dialog with people whom they need to coordinate, collaborate or otherwise work together. (The event is scheduled for the end of June/early July. Email me if you want to find out how the agenda works out by clicking here [Leadership Day Outcome](#) or write to stinnish@ameritech.net)

2. Pre-event surveys.

I am a huge proponent of internet surveys and they can be designed to allow you to poll the audience to find out what is most relevant and important to them.

3. Post-event debriefs.

Post-cons should focus on logistics and improving processes. In addition, they should focus on what can be done to improve the content of the meeting. Use focus groups, evaluations, man-on-the-street interviews, and other methods to find out what worked for attendees and what didn't. Then program the changes in for next year.

Remember data can be your best friend in initiating change. Use evaluation results to help you "introduce" change to your meeting agenda. Percentages, statistics, numbers can help you sell change! You are not put in the position of being the "bad guy" and moreover, you are mass customizing to your attendees needs.

4. Put the onus on your participants.

It is unrealistic to expect the planners and organizers of meetings to do all the

work to meet the needs of a diverse audience. Tell the participants that it is up to them to be open and receptive to new information and to benefit from the meeting. Pose questions to them before the meeting that directs their thinking toward personal applications aligned with the objectives of the meeting.

Freebies:

FREEBIE:

You can also use the arts to help you improve the performance of your teams at the office. Theater, music and storytelling has a place in the office -- not just on stage.

Here's a great resource to help you (whether you have an artistic bone in your body or not) to create better functioning teams. [Orchestrating Collaboration at Work: Using Music, Improv, Storytelling and Other Arts to Improve Teamwork](#),

More FREEBIES: Storytelling is an ancient art. And storytelling is one of the simplest theatrical elements you can add to enhance a meeting -- whether it is a sales call meeting, a general session keynote, or a small meeting. For insight on adding storytelling to your repertoire, email me (please include your fax number so I can also send you a great article) to Stinnish@ameritech.net or click here [Storytelling](#).

Future T.I.M.E.

I will be speaking at the following events:

Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress : August 2- 5
[Can't We All Get Along: Increasing Program Value with Effective Supplier Teams](#) on **Tuesday, August 5, 8:00 - 9:30 am**

[The Measurement Exchange: Real World Answers to your Questions](#) on **Tuesday, August 5 10:00 - 11:30 am**

Southeastern Florida MPI Educational Conference, MPI -SEC August 21-23, 2003
[180 Ways to Transform Your Meeting](#). I am presenting on **August 21**.

I TME Motivation Show: in Chicago from **September 16 - 18**

I love to see familiar faces in the audience. Please come and see me!

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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
April 2002: [Outdoor Learning](#) and (Freebie) Justification Checklist
May 2002: [Budgets, ROI, ROO, and ROK](#) and (Freebie) Budgeting Beyond Excel
June 2002: [Creativity](#) and (Freebie) Building the Case for Creativity
July 2002: [High Touch Technology](#) and (Freebie) Personal Technology Tools
August 2002: [Economic and Business Cycles](#) and (Freebie) Investment Strategies for meetings
September 2002: [Successful Environmental Factors/Conference Centers](#) and (Freebie) Learning Environments
October 2002: [Return on Investment](#) and (Freebie) Balanced Scorecard
November 2002: [Incentive Meetings](#) and (Freebie) Forum Synopsis
December 2002: [Resource Recap](#) and (Freebie) Resource Lists

January 2003: [Everyday Meetings](#) and (Freebie) Meeting Quiz
February 2003: [Diversity](#) and (Freebie) Survey Results
March 2003: [Problem Solving](#) and (Freebie) Techniques Illustrated
April 2003: [Marketing: Pre- and Post- Event](#) and (Freebie) Blogs

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