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Is it Raining Outside?



By Shelle Rose Charvet, CSP

While 2009 has been a year that featured economic gloom, threats of political uncertainty, glimmers of recovery and dashing of hopes, our industry has been on the move. Last May, on the inspiration of Douglas Bolger and many others, the first meeting of the newly formed Business Events Industry Coalition of Canada (BEICC) took place. CAPS is proud to be a founding member.

This coalition of 19 associations represents most of our industry; from venues, to meeting planners, to speakers and suppliers to the industry. The purpose of the coalition is to ensure that tradeshowCanada is aware of the value of business events.

Business events are a powerful economic driver in our country. Conferences, tradeshow, congresses, conventions, incentive programs and meetings add \$71 billion to Canada's economy. This activity is equal to forestry, fishing and agriculture combined. Spin-off dollars generated by business events reach far into a myriad of industries – from travel and hospitality to financial institutions, healthcare and professional service firms. Our industry keeps people working – from unionized and non-unionized workers to part- and full-time employees – resulting in the equivalent of more than half-a-million full-year jobs.

CAPS is also proactively getting this message out. Not only is getting people together a benefit to our overall economy, when people get together they learn, grow and add value to their organizations. On September 30, CAPS sent out the following press release:

"The Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS) has identified investing in employee level training as critical to impacting overall business performance, productivity

levels and financial results."

"Our members are seeing more and more businesses fail because they do not have the right people with the right skills to adjust and respond to a changing economy," said Shari Bricks, CEO of CAPS.

With massive layoffs delivering cost savings in the short term, many companies will be facing a skills gap as they come out of the recession. CAPS encourages the more than 1.5 million small-to-medium sized businesses in Canada to change their outlook and view staff talent as an organizational strength instead of an expense.

"Despite the highest levels of unemployment Canada has seen in decades, we are still hearing employers say that it's a challenge to hire the right talent with the necessary skills," continued Bricks.

According to a 2008 survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, almost half of the business owners surveyed (46 per cent) indicate that skills shortages are to blame for hiring difficulties. This means talent creation through training is becoming a business necessity. Companies must invest in training to fill key positions and to survive.

Before the recession, SMEs reported spending an average of \$2,700 annually per employee on training. CAPS is challenging companies to take a proactive role in filling the skills gap by returning to these investment levels and creating their own talent.

Yes, it's raining outside, but together, as an industry, we can make sure Canada and Canadians are getting the most from our own grey matter. When we are meeting, sharing ideas, learning new skills and being inspired, we are making our organizations more competitive, more profitable and better places to work.

It is time that Canadian business leaders and politicians took a public stand to embrace learning as the key to breaking out of the recession.

Do you want your people to be informed, skilled and inspired? CAPS members and all the members of the Business Events Industry Coalition of Canada are making business profitable again.

Shelle Rose Charvet, CSP
2009 CAPS National President



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Halifax Centre Tentative

THE NOVA SCOTIA government, in partnership with the Halifax Regional Municipality, has announced that it has asked a developer to submit a detailed proposal by February for construction of a new convention centre in Halifax. The Rank Group's design and financing plan will be reviewed before final approval is given.

Bill Estabrooks, minister of transportation and infrastructure renewal, said the province is eager for a new, larger centre but is leaving the door open to reject any plan that obstructs the view from Citadel Hill. "We have off-ramps, as they say in the highway business," he said. "Very clearly, we're not interested in messing with the view planes."

Estabrooks said the project could also be terminated if it costs too much. However, he won't say how much the province is ready to spend. A new convention centre, slated for Argyle Street, is estimated to cost as much as \$300 million. The two levels of government signed an agreement in May to work together to get Nova Centre up by 2013.



IMAGE: MARLIES COHEN, PHOTOGRAPHER, WWW.MCUNIVERSE.COM

NCCC Signs First Clients

CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN on the Niagara Convention & Civic Centre (NCCC). This significant milestone also marked the signing of the NCCC's first official clients – the Canadian Tire Dealer's Association and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

"The groundbreaking means we are on schedule and on track for the opening of the NCCC," said Mayor Ted Salci. "The NCCC will become an important part of our city, giving a boost to our economy as tourists and Niagara Region residents alike will enjoy the facility. The centre represents an important piece of our city's infrastructure and will bring 75 full-time and 100 part-time jobs to our community," he added.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario have each committed up to \$35 million towards the Convention Centre. When completed, the NCCC will accommodate large conferences, conventions and events. The centre will include an 82,000-square-foot exhibition hall, a distinctive 17,000-square-foot ballroom, an intimate 1,000-seat theatre for live performances and more than 26,000-square feet of flexible meeting and breakout space. To date, the NCCC has more than 250 event dates on tentative hold representing a potential of 35,000 guestroom nights at local hotels.

The NCCC will open its doors in the spring of 2011.

Ryerson Gets MPI Training

MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL (MPI) has announced the addition of Toronto's Ryerson University as the newest location for an MPI Global Training Center. An integral part of MPI's Global Training, the centres deliver elevated content on a local level for meeting and business event professionals. Over the next two years, MPI anticipates partnering with at least 14 to 15 educational institutions worldwide.

"We are rapidly expanding our available locations for individuals in the meeting and business event industry to receive hands-on education at the local level," said Didier Scaillet, chief development officer for MPI. "Ryerson University brings over 50 years of hospitality and event management education experience to the table, meeting key selection criteria and making it a perfect fit as an MPI Global Training Center."

"Meetings and conventions are a vital component of a strong tourism industry," said David Whitaker, president and CEO of Tourism Toronto.

MPI partners with schools and organizations, such as the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, to provide training programs that will enhance meeting professionals' business skills at all levels.

Allstream Centre Embraces Past, Future

WHEN IT OPENED to the public in 1929, the Automotive Building was considered a modern marvel: 80 years later, restored, refurbished, rebuilt and renamed Allstream Centre, the building combines state-of-the-art technology and cutting-edge design with environmental responsibility and sustainability.

The exterior of the building has been restored to its 1929 glory with many art deco features in the interior. Restored in record time of 19 months, at a cost of \$46 million, the centre's pivotal location inside the Princes' Gates provides a magisterial entrance to Exhibition Place in Toronto.

The greenest and most energy-efficient conference facility in Canada, Allstream Centre's 160,000 square feet will serve as a flagship meeting and convention destination centre and as a go-to venue for galas and special events. Among the highlights are the largest ballroom in Toronto, in which 3,000 guests may be comfortably seated for breakfast, lunch or dinner and 20 second-floor meeting rooms accommodating between 50 and 750 delegates.

An underground walkway links the centre to underground parking and the Direct Energy Centre. The centre is wheelchair accessible.

H1N1 Adding to Canadian Economic Woes

THE SOCIAL IMPACT of the H1N1 virus, combined with the persistent sluggishness of the economy and a strong loonie, will hurt bottom lines across six industries in the year ahead, perhaps up to 20 per cent, reveals a study released by the Conference Board of Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Viral anxiety is keeping people from dining out – not only at fancy restaurants, but restaurants, period, and it is resulting in fewer people travelling around the country to the detriment of hoteliers, according to the Canadian Industrial Profile for Autumn 2009.

One of the obvious drop-offs will be international air travel to Canada, says Michael Burt, associate director of the organization's industrial trends group. "The numbers, obviously, were already very weak at the beginning of the year, as a result of the global recession," Burt said.

"But if you look at the numbers starting in May, we saw even more precipitous declines in the number of visitors coming to Canada, particularly from Asian countries," he added.

In the U.S., a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention pegged the country's annual GDP loss from flu season at 0.7 per cent, including the cost of time taken off work and medical expenses.

Burt said H1N1 would likely erode the GDP in Canada more than that, since even healthy, working-age adults can be knocked out of contributing to the economy. Already, people are thinking twice about shaking hands in business encounters. Canadians' social apprehensions could get even worse, he said. "It may not have reached a crisis point yet, in terms of people choosing not to meet in public or go to business meetings – but people are thinking about it."



CBT Injection for Kimberley

COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST (CBT) has provided \$300,000 to the City of Kimberley's conference centre project. "We are happy to announce our support for the construction of Kimberley's new conference facilities, as we believe the project will have a positive impact in the community and the region," said Neil Muth, CBT president and CEO.

The 12,000-square-foot convention centre, located at the base of Kimberley Alpine Resort will be the largest in the East Kootenay, providing sitting-room for up to 350 people and will be used as a year-round venue that will compliment the existing tourism market. The convention centre will contain several break-out rooms, office space and will be integrated with the City's Paralympic Training Centre. With the help of local contractors and businesses, it is anticipated that facility will be completed by September 2010.


IMAGE: GEORGIAN COLLEGE

Commitment Recognized



Scott Harradine (right) and Anne Kotlarchuk, a conference services manager at Guelph University

SCOTT HARRADINE, marketing and sales executive at Kempfenfelt Conference Centre, has received an award for excellence and leadership from the Canadian University and College Conference Organizers Association (CUCCOA). The award is presented to an individual who has demonstrated a high level of commitment and outstanding leadership in the field of conference service operations including mentoring of new members, providing list serve feedback, leading sessions for peers and overall contribution to the CUCCOA membership and growth of the organization.



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THE 80/20 RULE

By Sunjay Nath, MBA, BScE, CSP



Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto observed that 80 per cent of the land in Italy was owned by 20 per cent of the population. Upon further research, Pareto concluded that this trend was not an anomaly but, in fact, the norm in other countries. These observations were the basis for the *Pareto Principle* also known as the 80/20 Rule.

The illustrative potential of Pareto's principle

extends beyond understanding land ownership. Today, the concept is used to illustrate trends in everything from social to economic issues. You spend 80 per cent of your time with 20 per cent of your friends. Or, your business makes 80 per cent of your money from 20 per cent of your customers. These numbers have a strong intuitive appeal and we can easily relate to explanations and examples that use the 80/20 Rule.

I have a couple of issues that stem from two ways that the 80/20 Rule is often misinterpreted and misused. The first arises when the 80/20 Rule is used rigidly as 80 and 20. When quantifying human behaviours, it is often advantageous and necessary to involve degrees of flexibility and adapt the 80/20 Rule to the 90/10 Rule or the 73/27 Rule, depending on the circumstances and the groups involved.

UNTANGLING THE PARETO PRINCIPLE

FLEXIBILITY IN NUMBERS

There is definitely a smaller group of people who control a disproportionately larger amount of power, land, money, experience, sales and so on. We cannot define the two groups, however, with exact numbers that are always as clean as 80 and 20. The 80/20 Rule is a useful way to imagine distribution, not an exact science. If the numbers 80 and 20 are expected to be exact, Pareto's Principle becomes dangerous since it can produce oversights or under-preparation. Imagine only focusing on 20 per cent of your client base when, in reality, you ought to cater to 27 per cent of your client base? You would leave some good clients dissatisfied with your services and looking elsewhere. Remember that the two numbers are flexible.

Mathematically, if 20 per cent controls 80 per cent then, by extension, 80 per cent should control 20 per cent. My second issue with Pareto's Principle arises from this relationship. For some reason, people have a tendency to ignore the 80 per cent that controls the 20 per cent. Although this tunnel-vision perspective can be effective in some instances where prioritization of the 20 per cent is crucial, such a perspective can also lead to trouble. By slightly adjusting your approach and taking that 80 per cent into account, your work will yield better results in the long run. I will illustrate this argument using both a bathtub and a business.

You cannot fill a bathtub, using 100 per cent of the tub, without flooding the bathroom floor when you climb in. Realistically, water will likely only touch about 20 per cent of the surface area of the entire bathtub, give or take some percentage points, of course. Since approximately 80 per cent of your body is underwater as you bathe, you are getting 80 per cent of your use of the tub from that 20 per cent of the tub's surface area that holds the water. The horrible mistake someone might make is to assume that since the bather is only using 20 per cent of the tub, he or she should only clean and maintain 20 per cent of that tub. You see how this can be disastrous! A bather cannot choose to ignore that other 80 per cent of a bathtub when he or she cleans. Although he or she might get away with such an approach in the short term, eventually the dirt of the unclean 80 per cent will be over-

bearing and the clean 20 per cent will not make for a good bath. This interpretation of the 80/20 Rule is not sustainable.

Here is another way to think about it: if you are filling the tub, and choose to ignore the drain hole because it does not help you hold the water, you will require considerably more water, effort and energy to fill the tub – and, the lasting effects of filling the tub are considerably smaller. As soon as the tub is filled, the water level will start to quickly fall because of the open hole. In this case, the drain hole is considered part of the 80 per cent that controls the 20 per cent.

In business school, we are taught that 20 per cent of our clients produce 80 per cent of our sales. The mistake that some business people make is to spend all of their time with that 20 per cent and completely ignore the rest. As with the bathtub, ignoring that 80 per cent can become messy in the long run. If you ignore those 80 per cent, you will create squeaky wheels in your business's machinery. The 80 per cent will demand more time, complain a lot and become harder to please than otherwise. Ignoring your 80 per cent in favour of your business' 20 per cent does not make the 80 per cent go away. In fact, that approach has the opposite effect. Ignoring complaints causes the dissatisfied group to get more vocal, agitated and attracted to your competitors. The end result of ignoring the 80 per cent in favour of the 20 per cent is time wasted operating in a damage-control mode to oil those squeaky wheels that will slow down your enterprise and cost you money. As with the bathtub example, this tunnel-vision problem with the 80/20 Rule will affect you in the long run.

GIVING YOUR FULL 100 PER CENT

So what is the solution to these two problems? You want to spend *most* of your time with the theoretical 20 per cent who are yielding 80 per cent of your profits. But, you also need to spend some time with that 80 per cent group to make sure that they do not cause more serious issues over time and to ensure that they remain loyal and satisfied customers. All this needs to happen while you bear in mind that the figures 80 and 20 are only approximations.

You want to efficiently satisfy your 80 per cent so they no longer draw resources. Spend

the least amount of time, energy, attention and thought with your 80 per cent so they no longer pull you away from your focus: your 20 per cent. In other words, spend 80 per cent of your time with the 20 per cent responsible for 80 per cent of your revenue and 20 per cent of your time with the 80 per cent responsible for only 20 per cent of your revenue. In short, your objective is to spend most of your time catering to the preferred 20 per cent of your customers without overlooking the rest. Remember, you never know when one of your less-active customers might decide to increase their involvement with you. Satisfying that less profitable 80 per cent holds the potential to generate value in the long-term. A satisfied customer can always move from your 80 per cent group to your 20 per cent group. Unfortunately, the alternative is also a possibility.

MAINTAINING THE MASSES

There are several creative ways to manage your 80 per cent. One way to neutralize 80 per cent of your clientele is to pass them off to another service provider, or you might want to hire an assistant who can manage the 80 per cent, provide quality service and maintain the loyalty of that group. Also, you might create products or services focused specifically on the needs of your 20 per cent and then use those products as pre-packaged models that you can offer to your 80 per cent. You might also use products focused on your 20 per cent as templates to create less-specific products that can be quickly re-created for clients in your 80 per cent group. The point of these tactics is to keep your 80 per cent satisfied while using approximately 20 per cent of your resources. This frees up 80 per cent of your resources to dedicate to your cherished 20 per cent. While the examples provided here are general, they illustrate the potential for creativity when managing your clients with the 80/20 Rule.

Once you have managed your less-efficient client group, you want to spend the bulk of your time, energy, attention and thought maintaining the 20 per cent of your client base that is powering 80 per cent of your business's machinery. Essentially, this allows you to plug the tub drain so you can actually enjoy your bath.

Sol

SEE SUNJAY NATH'S FEATURE ON OUR INTERACTIVE BLOG AT WWW.SPEAKINGOFIMPACT.CA



REWRITING

THE RULES OF SELLING

Learn the insider secrets of Canada's fastest-growing companies

By Tom Stoyan, HoF

Let's face it, as a meeting planner your reputation is only as good as the last speaker you hired. You really can't afford a so-so client experience especially during these tough economic times. With fewer meetings, it's now more important than ever to "wow" them at each and every meeting/event. Your speaker selection is often the biggest factor in providing them that "wow" experience.

A Hyundai will get your client to their wedding but is that the experience they are looking for? That next meeting you're planning may be the equivalent of someone's corporate "wedding" day.

When the client presents you with a budget, ask them specifically what they want. Some clients are explicit and provide lots of detail. Others want you to look after everything. And then there are those who think you are a mind-reader and should know exactly what they want.

So what do you do? Use questions to identify their needs and their values.

I understand you like to be "in the moment" with your client. And so, on some days, you may ask better questions than on other days. The problem, of course, is that "the moment" sometimes doesn't show up. So, how do you ensure you ask the right questions?

ENGAGE THEM

Help your client make a better buying decision. That's your job, and you can do it by simply asking some tough questions. By doing so, you will exceed your client's expectations and, in turn, enhance your reputation. This will also keep their competition in the cold.

You also need to understand the reason why you're hired. People come to you because they're looking for a memorable experience. On some level, they know they

are not confident enough to do it themselves. Just as the dentist, the surgeon and the stylist knows things about their area of expertise that helps create the total customer experience – so do you.

Some of your clients may not recognize they don't have your experience, background and judgment to know what it takes to match their need with a professional speaker. This is especially true when talking about budget.

If matching their needs to the speaker's value meant only getting someone to fit the budget, your client might wonder if they could do it themselves the next time. You should want your client to only think of you when it comes time to plan for the next event. You want to be seen as the professional planner who invests the time to educate and speak to your client's real values.

So how does this show up in the real world? Your doctor, lawyer or dentist isn't concerned if you think the questions they ask are relevant or not. They know better. They know those questions will provide vital information to help with their decision-making process. Your clients expect the same from you.

The real professionals in our society have a checklist of questions they ask before they proceed. The pilot doesn't take off until the flight checklist is completed. The surgeon doesn't begin stitching up a patient until all the instruments are accounted for. What are you doing?

The following insider questions (customized for you) are used by the largest corporations in Canada in more than a dozen industries to help provide even more value by helping their clients with their decisions. I know because they have hired me to develop, train and coach their sales teams.

INSIDER QUESTIONS

The following questions will help you provide both a higher-level of service and a more meaningful experience to your next client.

- Why should they buy the speaker you selected?
- Why should they buy this speaker through you?
- Why should I buy this speaker now or in the near future?
- Why should I buy the speaker you selected at this price?

Write down as many reasons as you can think of for each question (aim for a minimum of five). As you know firsthand, people buy for their reasons and not ours.

Now, here's the key: turn each of your reasons into a question. These questions become the basis for more meaningful conversations with your clients.

People move the conversation to price because they don't know what else to talk about. Consider adding these to your discussions to help your clients with their buying decisions: depth of knowledge, years of experience, specific skill set(s), quality of research and customization.

There is a misconception that people will only pay the lowest price (and because of our experience with a few clients, we sometimes let our thinking get distorted). Do you live in the cheapest house, drive the cheapest car, buy the cheapest shoes, watch the cheapest TV? When we are presented with demonstrated, meaningful value, price becomes secondary. The same is true for the vast majority of your clients.

Don't cheat your clients. Don't let them focus on price. Instead, discover with them the total customer experience they are looking for and clarify the criteria they need to consider to enable you to provide a "wow" experience. **Sol**

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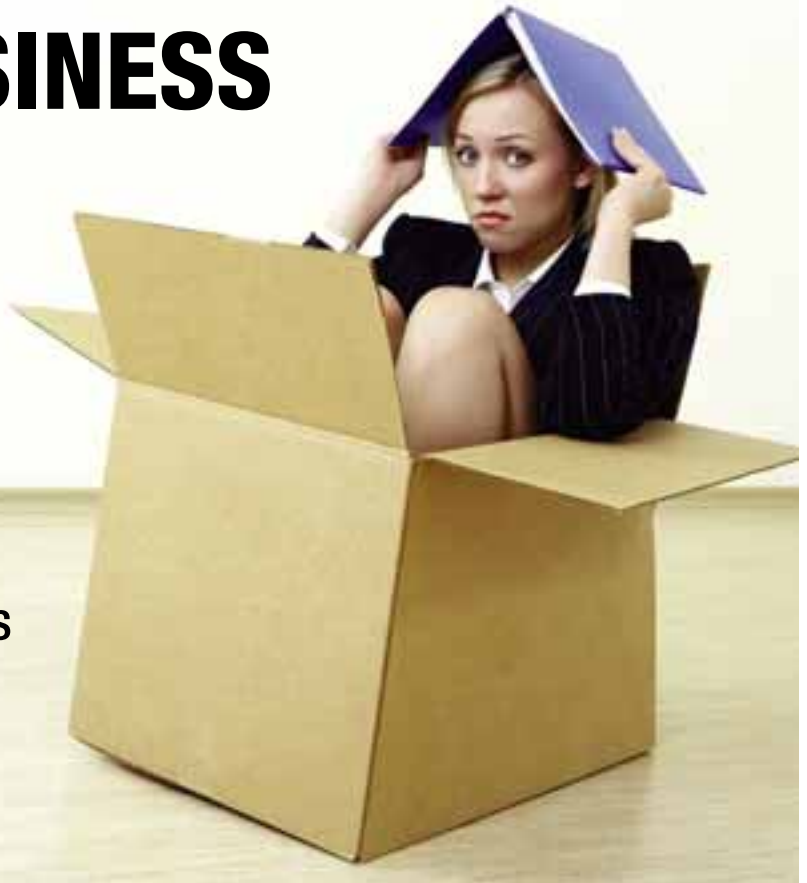
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WHY DO BUSINESS IN A BOX?



Challenging the boundaries for successful meetings

By Ed Bernacki

You've tried laser light shows and motivational speakers to engage people. You even thought of drummers, indoor fire-works and opera singing waiters to stir things up. And what is the result?

I have seen these gimmicks in different countries as a speaker on innovative thinking. What is clear is that too many events think that adding some sparkle to the same old format for meetings will improve results. It is time for more "outside the box" thinking to design our meetings. Yet, before we can think "outside the box," we need to see what the cur-

rent "inside the box" thinking is producing. Here are my observations:

We start planning many events without defining learning objectives for what it should achieve for participants.

With no overriding objectives, speakers are not challenged to create more original, unique and focused presentations.

We organize events to fill time slots. If we have a seven-hour day, we plan for six keynotes plus lunch with little thought going into new approaches. There is a shift to celebrity and motivational speakers who may

be inspiring but who offer little to the theme of the event.

If your research finds that people say, "Networking is the most valuable benefit of attending an event," you should be worried. Your event can be replaced with technology.

Some people are questioning how we create value when we bring people, speakers and ideas together in a conference. Yet, far too many events are planned with far too little strategic thinking. This must change if events are to remain effective and profitable in the long term.

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NOTICE HOW PARTICIPANTS PARTICIPATE

To start, focus on the “participants.” Explore how participants “participate” in your events. This may sound simplistic, yet I gauge the effectiveness of conference participants by asking: “Who attends meetings like this, takes notes and never looks at them again?” About 70 per cent of the people will raise their hand. If you doubt this, ask participants at your next event. We must define how we want participants to participate.

When I work with groups to prompt some “out of the box” thinking, I start by discussing two assumptions:

1. The true experts at your event are in the audience, not on stage. This conversation is about the expertise people will bring with them. This applies to association, staff and industry conferences. You should engage the expertise that walks into the meeting room as people want to share and learn.

2. Always use the brainpower of the audience to create something. The most successful strategy I know is to have participants collaborate to solve a problem or create personal ideas. It can be as simple as investing 20 minutes to collect ideas for this question: “What would make our company / association / industry more successful?” It can be as complex as this case study.

A CASE STUDY IN COLLABORATION

I assisted the Ireland National Federation of Voluntary Bodies design a meeting entitled “Innovation in Services & Supports for People with Intellectual Disability.” It was an annual meeting for 300 people. We used these assumptions to brainstorm ideas to engage participants. The federation wanted some keynote presentations and a way to discuss eight challenges that need solutions.

We concluded that half of the event would be traditional with keynote speakers. The other half would be collaboration workshops to achieve three objectives:

- prompt new thinking about each challenge,
- provide time for people to engage with each other and the issue,
- capture recommendations and conclusions for publication.

Each workshop would have about 75 people. Challenges were researched and developed into a one-page overview. Each would be led by a thought provocateur that would prompt and provoke participants to think in new ways. Here are the details of the three-hour sessions:

Thought provocateurs had 15 minutes to focus participants on the process, the challenge and to achieve a result in three hours.

Three expert speakers each added 20 minutes of new thinking.

Thought provocateurs led a 50-minute discussion to explore the issue based on several predetermined questions.

In the final 20 minutes, people were asked to define five specific recommendations (in groups or individually) to solve the challenge.

Each session had a “scribe” who captured ideas, conversations and solutions. The same process was repeated for all workshops. The scribes came back with pages of notes that led

the federation to publish a 68-page book, which was distributed to participants and the wider community.

This conference may have lacked the sizzle of a laser light show but it scored high for satisfaction and engagement. It was a good way to “think outside the box” by thinking about what happens inside the meeting rooms. Participants want to participate. Challenge them to create something useful and they will deliver. **Sol**

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All That Glitters...

Meetings that go beyond what's in the loot bag

By Kristin Arnold, MBA, CMC, CPF, CSP and Joseph Sherren, CSP, HoF

Victoria is in charge of planning meetings and is severely stressed. The company's annual conference theme is "Change – It'll Do You Good." She's lined up Sheryl Crow as the entertainment with two IMAG screens in the ballroom, created an eclectic menu that goes beyond "chicken and noodles" and the goodie bag has an amazing Solioä (a hybrid solar charger) that certainly should guarantee attendance.

But will it? Her company and its industry is changing – heck, we all know the entire planet is changing! Unfortunately, the structure and flow of this annual conference just feels like the ones we have been going to forever. And now, attendance is down, and she is under a tremendous amount of pressure to change the feel of the annual conference.

How could she make this one different? One idea might be to jump on the bandwagon of the new techno-flash trend. Instead of bringing people together at great cost, the conference could be transformed into a web-based feed where all the presentations could be downloaded from the company's intranet website. There would be full-featured videos of the presenters, including animated PowerPoint slides with voice-overs and active links to additional references and resources. Employees would receive all the content they would have experienced at the conference, and more, because they wouldn't have to choose between concurrent sessions.

Kristin Arnold is a high-stakes meeting facilitator, trainer and keynote speaker, who has worked with thousands of senior executives, project managers and team leaders, challenging their traditional notions about teamwork. She presents concrete, practical concepts, tools and techniques that her clients can immediately apply and realize substantive results.



• www.extraordinaryteam.com

Joe Sherren is a speaker, trainer, executive coach and best-selling author, who has been motivating and building skills with leaders and managers for more than 25 years. Joe works with leading organizations from around the world to maximize performance in leadership, customer loyalty, team development, communication skills, ethics and strategic planning.



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MANY MEETING PLANNERS ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO MEASURE THE MEETING'S RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) WHERE OUTCOMES OF AN EVENT MUST TRANSLATE DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR INTO COMPANY REVENUE OR A REDUCTION OF COSTS IN A SPECIFIC TIME PERIOD. THIS IS NOT A WORTHWHILE EXERCISE

GETTING TO THE MEAT OF THE MEETING

On the surface, this type of meeting seems more efficient and less costly but will it bring added value and achieve all the objectives? Conferences are more than a vehicle to deliver information. Just as important as the data and material are the opportunities for collaborative learning, for sharing, networking and building relationships. People need to feel connected and want to be able to build on opportunities that emerge from those personal interactions.

But, this does not have to be an either/or proposition. Some people may just want the facts, so they will download pertinent sections of the meeting. Most want to move beyond the information, get into application, learn from each other and create synergistic solutions.

People attend conferences for the conversations among participants. Just look out into the hallway where people are intent on discussions which stimulate thinking and create a sense of hope and optimism. Through conversation, they create a common ground to explore the issues and problems of their professions and practice, as well as develop implementable solutions.

Conversation is the driver for work, community, decision-making and for collaboration. It is the connection with other people, as well as great programming that will create conference value – not what is on the menu or the give-away that will probably end up in the hotel garbage.

So how do you create the environment that will not only provide great conversation, but

will also develop truly worthwhile, downloadable presentations? By putting the focus of the event on people who can actually make a significant difference to the outcome – the participants and the presenters.

Since most meetings are getting smaller and more intimate, invite a diverse mix of people who share a common goal or threat and will appreciate an opportunity to be inspired, learn from others and be able to share in a meaningful way.

In this digital age, it becomes even more important to pick your presenters carefully as their presentation lives on the web long after the event. The presenters should be professional speakers, trainers and facilitators who have the ability to stimulate thinking, educate and direct the conversations. They will tangibly increase the value of the event by harnessing the collective potential of the attendees toward the meeting objectives.

THE TRUE MEASURE OF THE MEETING

Many meeting planners are still struggling to measure the meeting's Return on Investment (ROI) where outcomes of an event must translate dollar-for-dollar into company revenue or a reduction of costs in a specific time period. This is not a worthwhile exercise. A more appropriate measure would be ROO (Return on Objectives). Meeting planners must go beyond the logistics of the event and get clarity on what the meeting needs to achieve. Then they must engage the true professionals who can best ensure those objectives are met.

We can see that in the near future many big-budget conferences will perhaps be replaced by smaller gatherings of like-minded people where the allocation of costs for production, menus or trinkets will be greatly reduced. What will happen is that the bigger investment will be in the hiring of professional speakers who will provide hope, confidence and inspire people to reach higher. We need engaging certified trainers who will impart knowledge and teach useable skills. We need professional facilitators who will be present at each breakout session to ensure agendas stay on track, objectives are met and provide post-conference follow-up.

A properly and professionally facilitated conference will be much more meaningful and memorable than whatever was found in the trinket bag or on the menu. It surprises us that some corporate meeting planners are still willing to spend more of the conference budget on those items than they are on the resource that will ensure success – the professionals who deliver lasting value. We are finding that cor-

porations are more willing now to sponsor education sessions attached to association conferences. For example, instead of sponsoring a hospitality suite, they may opt to provide a workshop, perhaps unrelated to the theme of the conference, but one which is focused on "personal growth" such as work-life balance or "dressing to influence."

Victoria can see the future and she knows that she has to change and adapt her meeting to meet the needs of the attendees, as well as

the other individuals who will be "participating" via downloads after the conference is over. She will now focus less energy and money on the trinkets, the entertainment, and on making the right food selections and ensure that she has the right presenters who are sequenced properly throughout the conference. She now recognizes that it is more about getting the right speaker to deliver the right message and provide the right tools to this audience. Are you ready to change, too? **Sol**

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When in Doubt, Break a Few Rules

Why do so many people think of rules as commandments?

By Larry Winget

I hate rules. I have been breaking the rules, going against the grain, living on the edge, pushing the envelope, stepping outside the box, doing it my way, and every other stupid cliché you've ever heard of, for many years.

I have been doing things the so-called masters of the speaking business told me I couldn't do, saying things I have been told I couldn't say, selling things I was told I couldn't sell, dressing the way I was told I couldn't dress and I have had a full calendar because of it. Yes, because of it, not in spite of it. I've worked for nearly 400 of the Fortune 500, standing on stages in front of some of the stuffiest, corporate types around and broken most all of the rules while doing it. So, I am very much in favour of breaking the rules.

Larry Winget is a television personality, *New York Times* / *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author of four books and is known as The Pitbull of Personal Development®.



• www.larrywinget.com

The following rules used to be golden and still are to many speakers and meeting planners.

I THE SPONSOR OR THE COMPANY PRESIDENT OR SOME OTHER BIGWIG SHALL INTRODUCE THE SPEAKER

Why? In fact, why even have an introduction? It's printed right there in the program and besides, the audience is going to find out pretty quickly who the speaker is. I went for years without any introduction. None at all. "Here's Larry Winget." That's it. Introductions only tell the audience how good you used to be, not how good you are about to be.

II BOOKS ARE THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE PRODUCT THAT ADD CREDIBILITY

A few of the big-time speakers told me 20 years ago that "product" meant books and tapes and that I was demeaning the industry by selling T-shirts. A few hundred thousand T-shirts later, it hasn't felt all that demeaning to me! Plus, my audiences seem to think they have been served well by being able to buy a shirt, coffee mug, bobblehead or shot glass

with my picture or one of my sayings on it. Product enhances the message of the speech and speaker regardless of the medium. Remember, there are KISS caskets!

III MEETING PLANNERS: THOU SHALT NOT SELL PRODUCT FROM THE PLATFORM

IV SPEAKERS: THE ONLY WAY TO SELL PRODUCT IS FROM THE PLATFORM

Both of these rules are pretty stupid. Meeting planners and audiences alike hate it when speakers abuse this rule, but speakers seem to believe it is necessary to do commercials from the stage in order to sell their stuff. Why? If you are good, the audience will buy. Why not just try being really good? It's that simple. I never mention product from the stage and sell about as much as anyone in the business. Not to have product at the event cheats the audience of the lasting effects of the meeting.

V SPEAKERS SHALL WEAR BUSINESS ATTIRE OR BUSINESS CASUAL

My business attire is an embroidered cowboy shirt, cowboy boots, blue jeans, sunglasses, earrings, bracelets to my elbow and a ring on nearly every finger. That's what I wear on television and on my book covers and how people know me. It is expected of me. If I wore a suit or slacks and a golf shirt, no one in the audience would recognize me, and my message would be compromised because it would be

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IF YOU KNOW THE RULES THAT CAN'T BE BROKEN, THEN THOSE OTHER "RULES" WEREN'T RULES AT ALL, THEY WERE MERELY "THAT'S THE WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT"



inauthentic and contradictory to my brand. I have had meeting planners actually ask me to take my earrings out before I went on stage. My reply: "I'm a grown man and you aren't my mama – the earrings stay."

Since this is a short article, I don't have room to cover everything passed off as rules of how to run a successful meeting, but most of them can easily be broken. I see very successful people who regularly break the rules in this business. I watched my buddy Joe Calloway leave the stage and leave the building before his speech was even over. Figure that one out! It was amazing! I've seen meeting planners

break rules about seating, lighting, timing, food and more, and it worked great. In fact, breaking the rules almost always works great, if...

It works great if you always remember which rules can't be broken. If you know the rules that can't be broken, then those other "rules" weren't rules at all, they were merely "that's the way we've always done it." So let me deal with the rules that can't be broken:

Be amazing. If you are good at what you do, you can get by with a lot. If you are the best at what you do, you can get by with damn near anything. I admit that I get by with a lot, and I

have spent 20 years making sure I deliver the goods every time.

Don't be boring. You can't get past this one. If the audience is bored, you fail. You fail as a meeting planner and in my case as a speaker. Every audience member is thinking, "Do *anything* but bore me." In fact, putting on a boring meeting or giving a boring speech is the most unforgivable of all sins.

Past those two, I'm stumped to think of anything else that could be considered as rules. If you think of any, break them – you'll be glad you did!

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Simon Fraser University / Burnaby

Meeting Venue Decision? It's Academic

By Judy Owen

A great atmosphere can often set the tone for a successful event. If that event is a meeting or conference to exchange ideas and expand knowledge, there's no better setting than a Canadian university or college.

Awarded a grade of "A+" by many within the Canadian meetings industry, universities and colleges offer state-of-the-art facilities, spacious surrounding and all-around ideal settings inherent with a locale well versed in hosting large groups of people on a daily basis. Classrooms, labs, theatres with the latest technology – campuses provide all the tools needed to stage a meeting or conference for any size of group.

Then there's the bonuses that schools offer: accommodations that fit every budget, unique and historical settings, convenient locations and amenities that suit varied interests.

"I've found that the trend I'm seeing is that my clients are looking for unique venues," says Rose Timmerman-Gitzi, founder of

Ottawa-based RTG Special Events.

"Your traditional meeting space would be in a hotel. They're now looking to find places that are unique and sort of out of the ordinary, and colleges and universities definitely fit that mould."

The Canadian University and College Conference Organizers Association represents more than 75 colleges and universities from coast to coast. The majority of the schools only host meetings and conferences from May through August and many have event planners on staff.

Timmerman-Gitzi, president of the Canadian Society of Professional Event Planners, has booked events across the country at universities such as Simon Fraser in B.C. and Ottawa and Carleton in Ontario.

"The environment, especially if you're doing a learning type of workshop, gives more of a classroom feel," she says.

"Your focus is going to be quite instinctively, 'Oh, I'm here to learn. I'm here to pick up

some nuggets from this education session or from this training session or from this symposium or speaker.'

"So it does lend itself to creating an environment and a mindset of the delegates that they're in an education type of environment, and the expectation is they're learning."

INTUITION FOR AN IDEAL VENUE

Cost is also a factor in holding a meeting at a college or university. Usually, accommodations range from dormitories to hotel and/or apartment suites. "Our business has only grown since the economic downturn," says Erin Walton, supervisor of conference and event services for Edmonton's Grant MacEwan University.

Many of those new clients are provincial and federal government groups.

"It seems to be a group of people who have been encouraged to find more economical meeting venues," Walton says. Timmerman-Gitzi says she has seen the same thing.

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“There’s a big push in Ottawa toward budget and perception,” she says, adding that’s led to more government-related groups seeking cost-efficient venues such as universities and colleges.

Many schools also offer flexibility to bring in outside suppliers for catering, audiovisual and lighting needs, Timmerman-Gitzi adds.

Grant MacEwan is open year-round for meetings and conferences, although it’s the summer when accommodations expand up to 892 beds. Rates start around \$87 per night for a queen suite up to \$187 for a four-bedroom, two-bath suite with a kitchen.

“The MacEwan residence becomes the second largest hotel in the city of Edmonton during the summer months,” Walton says. “Our rates can often be more competitive than hotels and conference centres because we aren’t paying the mortgage here. We are just trying to fill the gaps left behind by the educational programs, so we don’t have any onus on us to meet quotas or pay (maintenance) bills. Our rates are definitely lower because of that.”

Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., is also open year-round for conferences and meetings at its mountain-top setting. Accommodations increase to 1,000 guests during the summer and costs range from \$42 for a dorm room to \$175 for a townhouse unit.

The campus features the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the Burnaby Mountain conservation area with its rose gardens and hiking and walking trails.

Dalhousie University in Halifax opens its residence rooms to conference delegates during the summer at \$44 nightly for a single room to \$68 for a twin room. The University of Ottawa has two-bedroom suites starting \$95 per night for double occupancy to a single dorm room for \$45.

The University of British Columbia offers about 3,600 rooms from May through August, ranging from hostel rooms to hotel and apartment suites. “(Variety of cost) is a major attraction to a lot of groups, particularly groups that have very diverse delegate pro-



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McMaster University



Georgian College

files,” says Teresa Rempel, UBC’s director, sales and marketing, conferences and accommodation.

Between 100 to 140 meetings and conferences are held each year at UBC. Approximately 70 per cent of the meetings are for academic-related groups, but sports teams, youth groups and religious organizations also come to the school 20 minutes from downtown Vancouver, she says.

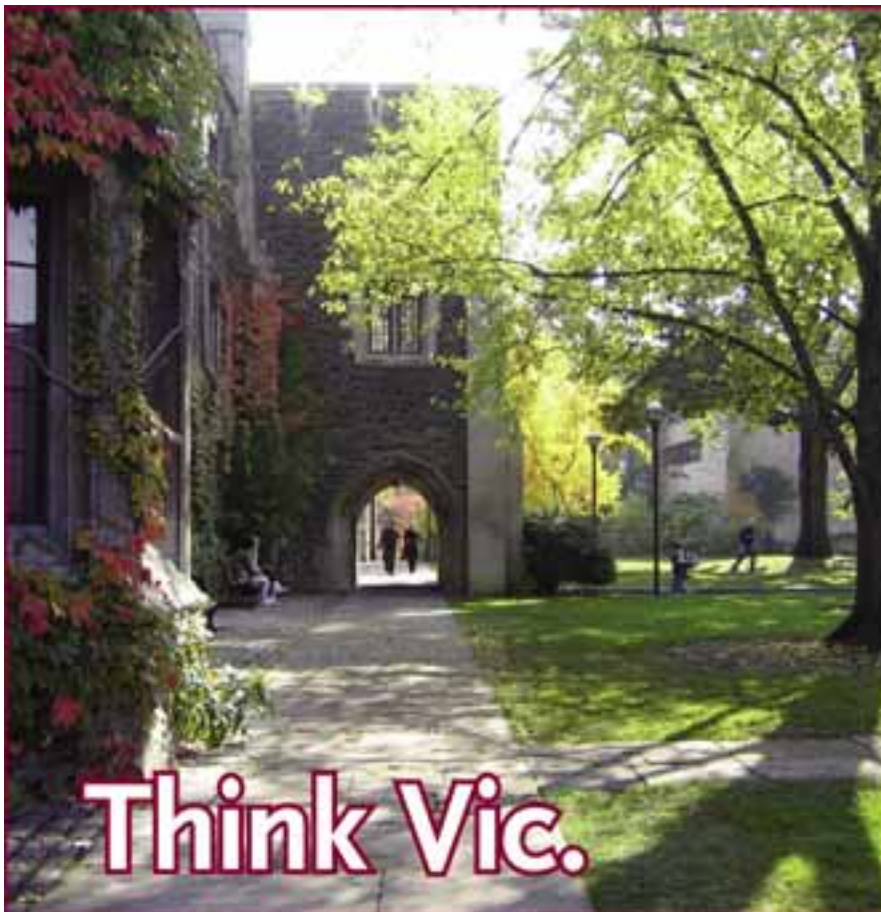
“The revenue goes back to housing, which supports the students’ rents. It reduces their

rent, and also helps with other maintenance projects,” Rempel says.

Next summer, UBC is the setting for two large conferences, each with more than 1,000 delegates attending the International Conference on Vacuum Ultraviolet and X-ray Physics and the International Nuclear Physics Conference. The school has more than 85,000 square feet of meeting space and approximately 200 meeting rooms and special venues, including a 1,200-seat, state-of-the-art performing arts theatre.

When delegates and/or their families want to relax, the campus is like a small city and includes the newly renovated Museum of Anthropology with its collection of totem poles, spectacular botanical gardens and even an organic farm that supplies vegetables for campus restaurants. Salmon barbecues for up to 1,500 delegates have been held outdoors at the museum.

“Often times delegates talk about (the barbecue) even after they go home,” Rempel says of the unique service.



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The UBC Life Sciences Centre is the largest building on campus at 52,165 square feet. It's been awarded the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED ©) gold certification by the United States Green Building Council for its innovative sustainability features.

Grant MacEwan University is also making a name for itself in environmentally conscious services. Two of its buildings were constructed to achieve LEED certification, which is still pending. "It's a huge attraction, especially because we're downtown," Walton says. "There is definitely a trend toward downtown corporate clients trying to be more corporately responsible, so they tend to want things like that."

The school has hosted meetings for a number of environmental-related clients, including the Canadian Environmental Network

and Canada Green Building Council. "People who are mandated to use green buildings," Walton says. "There's not many choices in Edmonton."

The conference department is a self-sustaining unit of the school, with revenue going to salaries, supplies and rent it pays the university. "We kind of think of ourselves as ambassadors. That's our value," Walton says. "We bring corporations on to campus who might be donors, sponsors, alumni, potential students, parents of potential students. We're the only group on campus dealing with the external public, so we generate a lot of good public relations."

Most clients come from Alberta, but in the summer it hosts events for companies with head offices across Canada. Group accommodations are only offered May through August.

Like many schools, MacEwan has profes-

sional event planners on site. One growing service it offers is online registration, which it also contracts out. "No one wants to register through fax or phone," Walton says, adding the school gets a volume rate through its online service provider, so it's cost-effective.

"It's almost like a sub-business. We're thinking of hiring a full-time person to do that because it's taking off."

University or college settings also provide a glimpse into a city's culture and identity. "Queen's University (in Kingston) is very historical and there are some meeting spaces in Ottawa U that are fairly unique, such as Tabaret Hall," Timmerman-Gitzi says. "If you're in a university or college, there's an opportunity when you're doing breaks to step outside, especially in the summer months, and just sort of get a feel for the city itself."

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- University of Regina – Canadian University Music Society
- University of Calgary – North American Conference on Spirituality and Social Work
- Ryerson University – Oxfam Canada Conference
- Concordia University – Canadian Political Science Association
- UBC – International Nuclear Physics Conference
- Bishop's University – Watchtower conference
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- University of Manitoba – Canadian Conference on Computational Geometry

Judy Owen is a professional freelance writer. She has written for many national trade and association magazines and newspapers.

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Re-exposing the audience to the message increases meeting ROI

By Dave Paradi

Research cited in John Medina's book *Brain Rules* suggests that we retain and use ideas better if we are re-exposed to the information after the initial time we hear or see it. This gives meeting planners an opportunity to increase the ROI of a meeting by planning for re-exposure to the meeting content. If the attendees act on the information they hear to improve their results, the meeting is considered more successful. Meeting planners can improve the probability of attendee action by planning how they will re-expose attendees to

Dave Paradi helps presenters communicate more effectively by using persuasive PowerPoint visuals. His newsletter, videos and much more are available on his website.

• www.ThinkOutsideTheSlide.com



the valuable content provided by the speakers at the meeting.

Traditionally we think of this re-exposure as happening after the meeting, but today's technology gives us the opportunity to use the idea of re-exposure before the meeting as well. If the attendees hear information from the speakers in advance of the meeting, the actual presentations will be a form of re-exposure. Then, after the meeting, further re-exposure reinforces what has been experienced and gives strategies for action.

The typical meeting attendee returns to their office eager to implement what they learned, but then reality hits them. Their e-mail inbox is overflowing, there are meetings to attend (to catch up on what was missed) and four colleagues are waiting at their office door to get assistance with urgent crises that came up while they were away. The great plans for implementation get put off for another day –

and that day never comes. By planning re-exposure, meeting planners can catch attendees at a time when they have caught up from being away and are willing to be re-inspired to implement what they heard.

Whether it is before or after the meeting, here are ways to partner with the speakers at your meeting to offer attendees re-exposure opportunities that will increase their ROI.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS

Many speakers offer e-mail newsletters that reinforce their message and add new ideas in their area of expertise. During conferences, meeting planners usually give speakers permission to offer their newsletter to those attendees who give them a business card or pre-printed form supplied by the speaker. Why not take this one step further and make these valuable newsletters available to all attendees via links on the meeting website? Set up a page where each speaker can list a two-sentence description of what the attendee will get from the newsletter and a direct link to sign up on the speaker's website. Attendees self-select to receive information that they feel will help them act on the ideas from the meeting. If the attendee signs up before the meeting, they will have some exposure to the ideas before the speakers get up on stage.



CONTENT-FOCUSED FOLLOW-UPS

One of the changes I made this year is to offer attendees at my workshops a follow-up program that includes more than my newsletter. When a workshop attendee signs up for my newsletter, I send an e-mail shortly after the session that reminds them of the ways they can quickly implement the ideas they heard. Then, about 30 days later, I send another e-mail that offers more encouragement to use the ideas and links to more resources that will help with implementation. Meeting planners can use this idea by asking their speakers to supply two follow-up messages that can be sent to all attendees. These messages should go out seven days and again at 30 days after the end of the meeting. They should re-cap the key actionable ideas the speaker shared and give advice on what steps to take first. The attendees can also see links for more information on the speaker's website.

VIDEO MESSAGES

Speakers are adding content-rich videos to sharing sites such as *YouTube* or uploading presentations to sites such as *SlideShare*. Meeting planners can take advantage of this content to reinforce the messages shared at the meeting. Ask speakers to identify what video content will best introduce the audience to the message they will be sharing. Before the meeting, supply links to these videos so that audiences can be prepared to learn from the experts who will be speaking. After the meeting, ask the speakers to

suggest what video content would be best to reinforce the discussions that took place during their session. Share those links with the attendees as a way to re-expose them to the actionable ideas that they learned. You might even want to suggest that speakers record a specific follow-up video for the group based on the feedback and discussions that took place. This

makes the message even more tailored to the meeting attendees.

Consider these ideas as a way to improve the ROI of your next meeting through planned re-exposure to the meeting content. Leverage what speakers already create to provide this benefit at little or no cost to the organization or association for which you are working. **Sol**

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Dale's Winter Survival Guide

There is no use fighting it; winter is coming

By Dale Irvin, CSP, CPAE

It happens every year about this time and doesn't seem to be getting any better no matter how much we hear about global warming. There is no way around winter other than picking up and moving to some place like Florida for a few months, but since this issue's cover story is all about the 80/20 Rule, I won't talk about moving to Florida – although you do have to be either 80 or 20 to live there.

Instead, I want to share a few ideas that will warm you up and make a 20 degree winter day seem like 80. Note: These temperatures are quoted in Fahrenheit for two reasons. 1) I live in Chicago and that's what we use. 2) If converted to Celsius, the 80/20 rule would be the 26.666°/-6.666° rule.

Winter can be cold, dreary, slushy and it gets dark at three o'clock in the afternoon. But, that's only if you go outside. My first recommendation for surviving winter is to stay inside. During rough winters in Chicago, I have been known to stay inside my house for months at a time due primarily to the fact that I had no work and I live near a beer store that delivers.

For most people, this is an impractical suggestion because they have to go out to school or work, but we are not like most people. We are speakers! If you don't have a speaking gig, stay home. If your office isn't in your home, move it there. A speaker's office is just a phone number and a website, so there's not that much to move. Light a fire in the fireplace...light a fire in a REAL fireplace. Some-



Author of *Laughter Doesn't Hurt*, Dale is a professional summarizer who provides hilarious recaps and updates of meetings, conventions and other events as they happen.



• www.daleirvin.com

times people take me literally, so I want to point out that one should never, ever, *ever* put a candle inside of a cardboard fireplace because he thought it would be romantic. Only real fireplaces attached to real chimneys should ever be used to light fires.

Once you have the fire lit, celebrate the moment with a glass of wine. Now, invest your off time wisely by using your hours in front of the fireplace to mentally work on different projects and come up with new ideas. It's what the Zen people call "being in the zone," but I just call it "wine."

You will be amazed at how many creative and useful ideas you can come up with when you are snowbound and drinking in front of a comfy fire. Here are some of my observations from my diary last winter when I spent many days doing just that.

I'm low on firewood. What else can I burn? IDEA! Instead of shredding my documents, I can use them as alternative fuel.

If only I had a blanket that had sleeves in it. Oh look, there's one on TV now. I just thought of it and it appeared. I must have some kind of power.

It's 2 p.m. and getting dark. Do people with solar-powered cars have to be home by now?

IDEA #2 – If you absolutely have to go outdoors in the winter, make sure you are properly attired. The worst thing about winter is the cold. Admit it, three feet of snow would seem like fun if it was 70 degrees outside (21.111°C).

Dress for Success is out the door in the winter. It is more like Dress for Distress. You have to be prepared for the worst in case you run into an unexpected glacier that keeps you from getting home. Unfortunately, you can only wear so many clothes until you become immobile and look like the Michelin Tire man. That's where my idea comes in.

When I go out in the cold weather, I wear a coat, hat, gloves and a scarf. In addition to this, I put a warm slice of ham into my shoes. I heat the ham in a microwave, careful not to make it too hot, and slip it into my shoes as a warm, meaty inner sole. It provides cushion and warmth, not to mention a very pleasant "bacon-y" aroma.

FINAL IDEA – This is going to come as a shocker hearing it from a guy like me, but the best way to survive winter is to add more laughs to your life. The more you laugh, the more you jiggle, and the more you jiggle, the more heat you generate, so laugh more and heat up. I will even help you out. Visit my website, www.daleirvin.com and sign up for the Friday Funnies. Each week, I will send you a recap of the week's news from a different point of view. It's funny. It will keep you warm and, best of all, it's free!

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