

## bring experiential back!!

As marketing advisor to the Mary MacKillop Foundation in this special year of Canonisation, I was also honoured to be the Master of Ceremony at their recent Fundraising Gala Dinners in Sydney and Melbourne (of which our events division, Ant Events, was the organiser).

Last Friday night at the Sydney event, The Foundation had all sides of the political landscape present. Her Excellency, Governor of NSW Marie Bashir, NSW Premier Kristina Keneally, NSW Opposition leader Barry O'Farrell and Malcolm Turnbull all sat at the dignitaries table to celebrate a fantastic night of fundraising. Incidentally, they all had their time at the lectern as well!!

So apart from the fact that it was Mary MacKillop's third miracle to have all sides of the political game at the same table, the event allowed all 260 guests at The Hilton, Sydney, to understand, appreciate and be educated on the works of the Mary MacKillop Foundation.

With various videos, dancing performances and a canvas that sat centre stage for guests to sign and send well wishes to the Foundation, people were engaged with the works and meaning of the Foundation and the end outcomes of their fundraising efforts. Not only were people reminded why they paid \$200 for their ticket, but we also created an opportunity for them to be more informed. This is experiential marketing. People experienced something from the Mary MacKillop Foundation brand.

In my times in London in 04 and 05, experiential marketing was the marketing 'buzz word'. Every second marketing agency was re-branding from their 'events' division to their 'experiential marketing' division.

Since then, of course, experiential marketing still exists, but the buzz and meaning of it has somewhat changed. Experiencing a brand goes well beyond 'events'.

For small business, it can be one of the most inexpensive angles to be utilised. Within the retail environment - in store, music playing, physical interaction with customers... all experiential. Social media - updates on your day, updates on your services, your business... more experiential. Your website - resources, blogs, competitions... some more. Events - roadshows, parties, seminars, workshops lunches and fundraisers. The list really is neverending for small business.

It's critical to make your brand an experience for people, make it memorable. Yes, it's about you and your brand, but people associate your brand with the experience they have had. By engaging customers and encouraging participation, they are making use of some of their senses with your brand.

The guy that asks you for your name at your favourite coffee shop before writing your name on your take-away cup... experiential marketing. The happy meal toy in your child's meal... experiential marketing. The Christmas party that you get invited to... experiential marketing. This newsletter... experiential. When people go to support their team... experiential marketing for the team in question. Why do you think some sports have such a poor crowd... because the experience is poor. It becomes a double-edged sword for poor performing sporting teams and sports for that matter.

Don't forget that people relate the experience to your brand. People

want to have a memorable and positive experience with you and your brand. A personal attachment is created. It creates another touch point for new and current clientele.

Your brand is you, your staff, your product or service and your value add... any touch point that interacts with your customer. When we visit a restaurant or frequent a bar that we like... it's all about the experience that we have encountered.

Organised, attention to detail, people experiencing something, that's what I've learnt in my experience of experiential marketing over the years. The avenues are endless for people to experience your small business brand.

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### a quick one on... experiential marketing

- People want to have a memorable experience with you and your brand that they can talk about.
- Try to utilise as many of the 5 senses as possible through your experiential marketing.
- The experience doesn't necessarily have to lead to an immediate sale...it can be a pure brand building exercise.
- People remember a boring, unorganised, frustrating experience for all the wrong reasons.
- Utilise your website to engage people through items such as customer resources and blogs.
- Promotions are often a great way to engage people, your clientele get something tangible out of it.

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