



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

Topic: New Year's Resolutions

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Written and Published by Sue Tinnish, 847.394.9857, stinnish@ameritech.net

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Welcome

It's 2006 – seems like only yesterday we were worried about Y2K! I had a great 2005 thanks to my family, friends, colleagues and great clients. I am excited about the prospect that a new year brings. In this issue I will share some of my optimism and excitement for 2006 – much of it embodied in new ideas, goals, and areas to stretch.

One of my great finds in 2005 (besides that new fun sweater) was a newsletter that I find clever, innovative, thought-provoking and insightful. I extrapolated many of their trends into the world of meetings and events. I encourage you to subscribe if you enjoy their opinionated view of the world at <http://www.trendwatching.com/newsletter/newsletter.html>

It's been a busy January -- I hope it's a trend for the entire year. (Although I do hope to be timelier in getting issues to you!) In the meantime, stretch with me into the new year.

Sue

[Sue Tinnish](#)

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Don't Chug into the New Year

Managers are not paid to make the inevitable happen... The job of managers, therefore, is to make the business do more than chug – to motive it forward in innovative, surprising ways.”

How can you do that? Last year I wrote about business resolutions that you could consider adopting for your business betterment. They included:

- Moving up the value chain – defining meeting outcomes in terms that were more valuable
- Building a reputation – how reputations are built and a list of ideas on what to build yours on
- Managing the people and the meeting – the most expensive (and valuable), element at a meeting is the people. By paying attention to the productivity of the meeting participants, you will be creating more effective meetings.
- Use information if you ask it of your attendees.
- Reinvent yourself – even successful organizations like Starbucks find reasons to reinvent themselves. Do the same to remain vital, viable and valuable.

In another spin on the start of the New Year, this issue of Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events, I will offer the personal advice that I will also be taking myself.

Trends to adopt and watch

1. Customer Made
2. Engagement
3. Stop and Think
4. Embrace New Technologies
5. Reedy to Know

Customer-made

Increasingly I am reading about versions of this trend which put the customers in the driving seat around their purchases. Trendwatching newsletters used a phrase in their (May), newsletter - customer-made. Others refer to customer-centric strategies.

About 5 years ago, Procter & Gamble launched its Connect + Develop program with the goal of having at least 50% of its new products derived from ideas generated by non-employee experts. Products such as Swiffer Wet Jet, Olay Daily Facials, Crest Whitestrips & Night Effects to Mr. Clean Autodry, Kandoo baby wipes and Lipfinity. (Source Tech Central Station, Industry Week.)

Jones Soda allows customers create 'custom soda labels' by submitting their own photos (their label gallery now contains an astounding 285,285 pictures); some of these are chosen as permanent, wide-distribution labels for Jones soda. In true

customer-made style, the Seattle based beverage company also actively asks for feedback on possible new flavors. (Source Springspotter Network, Charlene Rooke)

Paul Greenberg, in 1to1 Magazine (November/December), suggested that one looks at the game industry as a prototype for customer-made experiences. Talking with my nephews, Steven and Eric, over my holiday vacation gave me added awareness to this genre of personalized experiences. After purchasing the Doom game, people can download for free "mods" - modified programs - that changes the experience of the game. Amateur teams create mods for the love of the game. Greenberg notes that game engine for "Half Life" was used to create "Counterstrike". Counterstrike became so popular that the creator of Half Life bought the commercial rights to Counterstrike.

Consumers (especially the younger consumers), are into customer-made because they:

- Control exactly what they want and need at their own terms
- Receive personalized experiences
- Develop a more "human" relationship

In the meeting world where we refer to our attendees, conferees or (my preferred phraseology), participants, we can all benefit from the idea of our participants as customers. First, because it shifts the focus away from what "we" (whether that we is defined as management or the meeting executives), to the people in the seats. Secondly, trends in the consumer world impact the expectations our customers have during meetings.

Increasingly, in 2006 and beyond, our meeting participants will expect to collaborate about their meeting experiences.

How can we capitalize on this trend?

- Incorporate customer input into the meeting design process. When we tap into our customers, we also tap into their intellectual capital to enhance the meeting. We know more going into the meeting.
- Use meeting customers to act as ambassadors for the meeting and meeting content. When they have a role in co-creating the meeting, they don't need to be 'told' about the meeting or the content. They can help spread the word about the meeting – either functioning in a viral marketing role or supporting the message while sitting amongst the other customers.

New Slants

Every issue of Trendwatching stretches me in new directions. Two additional trends that have merit to consider include:

Meeting participants (the youth of today who will be the meeting participants of the future) who are Masters of Youniverse. These people maintain control of their private

and commercial lives. They're on an ongoing quest for the Best of the Best, the cheapest of the cheapest, the healthiest of the healthiest. In a word they want to make informed choices. And they will demand the same flexibility and information from meetings.

The new generation is accustomed to publishing, printing and creating. The use of digital cameras, sophisticated phones and the internet allow people to post almost anything in the public domain. Trendwatching calls it GRAVANITY where graffiti meets vanity.

When M&Ms introduced customized candy a few years ago, enabling consumers, businesses, universities and any organization crazy about its personal corporate colors to mix and match M&Ms colors to form the perfect gift, promotional material or office-treat, Trendwatching.com thought it was an excellent example of mass customization (another trend). Now M&Ms also allows consumers to personalize the actual texts on the chocolate candies, with two lines of up to 8 characters each.

Ever one benefits - consumers and companies because they can have their own personal, branded sweets; M&Ms because it can charge a premium for its candy. Lesson to be learned? M&Ms can change a commodity into a special customized product with a splash of Gravanity.

Troika, a London-based collective of artists and designers, have created the SMS Guerilla Projector. The device delivers instant Gravanity by letting individuals and companies project SMS messages on anything with a smooth surface, from buildings to signs. Thanks to the global ubiquity of texting, seeing one's name or brand up in lights has never been easier.

How will future meeting participants expect to express their gravanity?

Engagement

In the article *The Five Keys to Branding Success in 2006* By Dr. Robert Passikoff, he goes on to discuss a new measure in marketing.

He writes that one of five key trends that will determine the difference between success and failure for brands and marketers for 2006 is an emphasis on "engagement." Inserting itself between traditional marketing activities and an increasing demand for return on investment assessments, engagement will become the Holy Grail for marketers and advertisers. Defined as the outcome of ad and marketing activities that substantively increases a brand's strength in the eyes of the consumers (and actually predicts sales and profitability), engagement will be used more and more to allocate marketing budgets. Watch for joint task forces from the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF), the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA), and the American Marketing Association (AMA), to provide some degree of engagement meaning and metrics.

Whether you are measuring engagement or not, use this concept to do the following:

- Focus on engaging your participants for a higher degree of success.
- Use the concept to follow the trail of the meeting's impact. If the outcome of an

ad through engagement is sales and profitability, then use the same idea to track your business impact. When meeting planners are engaged, what will it lead to?

- It's clear to me that all areas of what we called the soft sciences in school (marketing, social sciences) are moving increasingly toward measurement and accountability.

How will you get to engagement in 2006?

Stop and Think

A little silence could go a long way toward making a meeting more productive.

Adam Hanft is a nationally-known authority on consumer marketing, business strategy and social trends. (Hanft writes a monthly column for Inc. magazine titled "Grist.") Face2Face meeting blog picked up one of his comments: "We're deep in a high-chatter, instant response, fill-the-frequency verbal flood. Meetings are a series of backed up, stacked up mini-speeches. Of course, the more we talk the less we think. We're so afraid that someone will get ahead of us that there's barely a nano-second of silence. We're afraid of it. We're amped up and silence is a symbol of indecision or lack of clarity or a lack of forward motion. We're dangerously ponderless. Imagine, if you will, a business meeting as a Pinter play. Those sometimes ominous silences would snap a few key points into resolute focus, the way white space around a wall brings meaning and attention to a painting. Meetings could benefit from a little silence allowing everyone to take a few minutes to reflect on what they just heard, or jot down three ways they'll use what they heard. The idea of allowing for reflection actually enhances learning—and allows meeting customers to put the ideas they have just hear into practice."

In addition to traditional PowerPoint handouts, I like to create Reflection Journals or pages for people to review and note their comments about a specific presentation. Questions that can be included in a reflection journal include:

- What was the most important (significant, crucial), thing you learned in today's presentation?
- What question(s) do you have about the information covered?
- List the key concepts
- What examples resonated for you?
- What is the main application for you of the material we discussed today?
- What did you learn today that you will use or apply after this meeting?

For two additional examples of Action Planning tools that promote reflection, email me. Also, if you are intrigued by this topic, send for the back issue on Slack (December 2001)

Embrace New Technologies

Jeff De Cagna contributes to *Convene*. In the April 2005 issue he talked about his efforts at blogging, audio logging and podcasting. (I wrote about blogs in detail in April 2003, *Pre and Post Marketing*).

Embracing new technology is especially important because of what Trendwatching calls Generation C. The C captures the avalanche of consumer generated content building upon people's inherent creativity.

The new technology allows everyone to be creative capitalizing on the hardware, the software, the skills, global audience and new distribution channels. The technology starts with:

- iMovies or other self-produced videos
- Digital photography
- Blogs - Microsoft's MSN Spaces attracted more than 1.5 million during the first six weeks. MSN Spaces offers basic blog for online publishing, photo sharing, all kinds of access levels for one's space, postings, automatic updates to registered visitors when one's space has been updated, and so on. In South Korea, more than 10 million South Korean citizens (25% of the entire population) use Cyworld. Cy world provides people with personalized cyber-outlet, where self made poems, stories, songs, photos, videos and what have you can be shown off to other people, producers, agents, talent scouts and employers alike.
- Podcasting – audio programs delivered via the Internet where people can listen to them at their leisure.

Impacts on meetings

- Personal showrooms where people can show off their talents
- Un-authorized or authorized blogs that comment on a meeting or conference
- Creation of post-meeting communities through blogs
- Teambuilding based upon digital audio or visual images
- Redefining the poster meeting
- New ways to enhance visual presentations
- Just in time delivery of images – both still and video

De Cagna concludes his *Convene* article by saying, "You have a great opportunity to be at the forefront of this emerging technology. Why not launch a blog or help get your attendees excited about your upcoming annual meeting? How about creating a podcast that discusses the meeting's most interesting sessions and events, and perhaps includes interviews with confirmed speakers or even attendees?"

Ready to Know

The Internet has created the ability to have access to immense amounts of information. From instant price comparison and extensive product information, to independent

reviews, opinions and recommendations, the Internet makes you a Master of Information. People crave relevant information on everything and anything. Wireless connectivity means information should be available 'on the go'.

TRENDWATCHING.COM has dubbed this phenomenon Ready-To-Know. Demanding consumers are in a constant 'Ready To Go, Ready-To-Know' state of mind, expecting any information deemed relevant to be available instantly, on their own terms.

The newsletter had countless examples. Here is one that caught my attention: READY-TO-KNOW and real estate: Yet another cool 'text-and-know' service, this one from the world of real estate Dutch www.SMSeenHuis.nl ("text a house"), works with real estate agents to enrich 'for sale' or 'for rent' signs with a unique text code, allowing passers-by interested in a certain property to text, instantly receive and store detailed information on their cell phone. Details include asking price, address, number of rooms, square footage, seller, etc.

Where can Ready To Know information come from during meetings:

- Think (longer term) RFID tags
- New ways to download specialized information for conference customers.
- Conference updates

Want to read more about this trend? Go to: www.trendwatching.com/trends/READY-TO-KNOW.htm

Freebies: Trends

Freebies

Can you tell I am groovin' on the insight from Trendwatching. They also note a another trend in Branded Brands. (Similar to my prediction of more branding in foods in last month's DeJa View issue.) This trend is embodies when hoteliers partner with other brands providing best-of-the-best experiences and product placements. Consider the examples they provide:

- Holiday Inn and Nickelodeon are about to open their first Nickelodeon Family Suites. Any child's dream (and some parents' ultimate nightmare ;-), this all singing, all dancing family hotel will combine Holiday Inn's hospitality expertise with Nickelodeon's competence in entertainment.
- Bulgari and Ritz-Carlton are branding hotels with new offerings in Milan and Bali.

More Freebies: Like these trends? Email me and I will send you more of my interpretations of trends on meetings. [Sue Tinnish](mailto:Sue.Tinnish)

Future T.I.M.E.

I have several speaking engagements lined up. Come and see me! I will be at Affordable Meetings in June.

I will be part of Executive Meeting Center's (EMC) MEET education sessions in 4 locations this year. Atlanta in May. Other details forthcoming.

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.

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](#):

2000

Teambuilding (May), Green Meetings (June), Values (July), Minimum/Minimal Meetings (August), Evaluations (October), Politics (November), and Toys (December)

2001

Sales, Award Presentations (January), Change and Communicating Change (February), Open Space Technology (March), Adult Learning Styles (April), Trade Shows (May), Emotional Intelligence (June), Presentation Tips (July), Ice Breakers (August), Facilitation (September), Humor (October), Customer Care (November) Slack (December)

2002

Teambuilding Options (January), Promotional Products (February), Multicultural Communication (March), Outdoor Learning (April), Budgets, (June), (June), and ROK (May), Creativity (June), High Touch Technology (July), Economic and Business Cycles (August), Successful Environmental Factors/Conference Centers (September), Return on Investment (October), Incentive Meetings (November), Resource Recap (December)

2003

Everyday Meetings (January), Diversity (February), Problem Solving (March), Marketing Pre- and Post- Event (April), Entertainment (May), Balance in Meetings and child caret (June), Mobile Events (July), Last Minute Ideas (August), Training Meetings (September), Unique Venues (October), Data, Information and Number Crunching Privacy (November), Deja View (December)

2004

Branding (January), Audio Visuals (February), Networking (March), Strategic Budgeting (April), Sensory Meetings (May), Board Meetings (June), Leadership (July), Barrier-free Meetings (August), Time Management & Meetings (September), The Travel Experience

& Stress (October), Voting Techniques (November), Deja View II (December)

2005

New Year's Resolutions (January), Brainy Side of Food and Beverage (February), Sarbanes-Oxley and Meetings (March), Visual Aids (April), Experiential Teambuilding (May), Emotional Meetings (June), Press Conferences (July), Green Meetings (August), International Meetings (September), Value of Entertainment (October), Copyright Laws (November), Deja View III (December)

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