



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

Topic: Make it Sensory

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

Spring sometimes takes awhile to arrive here in Chicago. But now in May, the season is in full bloom. Everyday and everywhere, we are greeted with the sense of spring -- birds singing, children biking outside, the scent of flowers (or spring rain) and multiple colors of green.

We have 5 senses to experience the world. We...

- See
- Hear
- Smell
- Feel
- Taste

Spring is a great time to fully experience each sense. But how can we incorporate more of our senses into meetings and events? This issue of T.I.M.E. walks you through the importance of a sensory environment and gives you tips to incorporate sight, sound, hearing and movement in your next meeting.

Sue

[Sue Tinnish](#)

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It Makes Sense

Taking advantage of all our senses makes good sense. Planning meetings and events which incorporate more than one sense will help the meeting be more innovative. A sensory experience makes sense in four ways:

1. Harness more ways to make your message meaningful and memorable
 2. Create an emotional connection
 3. Create a richer experience
 4. Reach more people by appealing to a broad array of learning styles
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How to Color My World

Color offers many benefits in meetings. Color can:

- **Create Interest**
Color has a psychological impact (emotions and mood) and a physiological impact (changes in your body). I always favor colored paper for handouts. The colored paper makes them more interesting and easier to locate. This is one small way that color can liven up a group of people and catch their attention.
- **Create Patterns**
When you look at a map, don't you always know that the land is green and the water is blue. Color can create quick understanding through patterns. Capture the same benefits in your meetings.
- **Create a Mood**
The emotion triggered by a color depends on nationality, past experiences, and sometimes personal preference. However, studies have shown that specific colors and combinations can psychologically affect the majority of people regardless of their culture or past.

Examples from the Real World:

Advertisers and consumer goods manufactures routinely use color psychology to manipulate consumer tastes. For example, detergent packaging tends to have pure white backgrounds or designs in bold primary colors to foster an image of cleanliness and strength.

Color is employed in therapeutic settings. At Aid for the Retarded, a shelter in Stamford, Connecticut, the walls are painted peach, blue and yellow to promote relaxation.

The topic of color will be explored more fully in my upcoming book, Meetings with Muscle.

I also recommend the following book to better understand the impact of different colors. Don't be put off by the design basis for this book; this is the best book I have read to understand the typical reactions to color, including cultural differences and how color affects people.

[Colors for Your Every Mood: Discover Your True Decorating Colors](#) by Leatrice Eiseman.

Shedding Light

Lighting has a huge impact on a meeting or event. You can create a welcoming environment with lighting. You can transform a room with lighting. Consider what lighting can do for your meeting:

- **Impact Attentiveness**

In the academic world, studies demonstrate a positive correlation between daylight and academic performance. Daylight gives off a continuous spectrum of all light wavelengths, including blue, red and green, appearing as a bright white. In contrast, fluorescent lamps give off a discontinuous spectrum - a flickering light, with spikes of color.

Lighting is measured by footcandles or fc's. We are accustomed to the light intensity available during the day (approximately 500 fc on a dreary day and up to 10,000 fc on a sunny day). This is compare this to the light intensity of artificial light (between 1 and 10 fc). Fatigue caused by too little light is generally experienced as tiredness rather than eye fatigue.

Fun Fact: Your eyes burn more calories in the average day than your legs do. Not too surprising when you consider their exhaustive daily cycle: shutting down when exposed to brightness and opening up in dim conditions, over and over again, a million times each day. Consider how the lighting will affect your meeting participant's and their level of alertness.

- **Support your Branding or Messaging**

Lighting helps set the stage for your message. Lighting can add drama, color, importance, and be visually pleasing. Gobos can project company logos. Special lighting can support your speakers, bring added recognition to your sponsors or otherwise differentiate elements of the meeting.

- **Create a Mood**

Lighting can overwhelm people if it is too brilliant or intense. It can create a feeling of uneasiness if it is too dim. Proper lighting can set the mood and insure that the space is more functional. Lighting needs fall into three buckets: task, ambient and functional

Inadequate lighting can make people feeling grumpy, nervous, sleepy or miserable. An insurance company, Magna Carta, renovated their New York offices to improve the lighting and wound up improving people's moods.

In Las Vegas, people will gamble more under red lights than under blue.

You can effectively use lighting in your meetings:

- Determine the goal of the meeting: The type of lighting is dependent upon the purpose of the event.
- Survey the site considering the lighting needs for your speakers and your participants.
- Work with your vendor to maximize your budget with lighting.

Don't Miss A Beat

Music can enrich your meetings. Music offers these advantages:

- **Builds Memory**
As researches explore the neurobiology of music, they have found that it stimulates region of the brain responsible for memory, motor control timing and language. Think about the way music helps us retain messages -- think about the many music jingles you remember even though you never set out to "learn" the commercial message. Or consider how we learned our ABC's -- set to music. No matter how old you are, I bet you can still sing your ABC's.
- **Connects for Many People**
Music utilizes both sides of our brains; it allows us to connect multiple neural pathways on both the right and left side of the brain. This helps build more memory by strengthening synapses in all brain systems. And it also means whether you are a right-brain or left-brain person, music will activate your brain.
- **Affects the Mood**
Music can influence our heart rate (blood flow) and immune system (through stress levels). You can use music to create or set a mood. Music can trigger the neurotransmitter serotonin and the hormone epinephrine. Serotonin influences attention, learning and mood. Epinephrine is part of our "flight or fight" response.

Consider how music is used in two different public spaces. Elevators are small, crowded claustrophobic spaces. It is no coincidence that elevator music is perceived to be simple and unexciting. It would be inappropriate to get people excited in an elevator.

However, stores often switch between fast tempo music when they are busy and slow easygoing music when it is quiet. In the first case, they want you to make your purchases and leave. In the second instance, they want you to take your time and hopefully buy more.

- **Motivates**
Why do you think they have soldiers singing when they are marching or doing marathon runs? Music builds camaraderie and can be very motivational.

The secret to selecting music for your meetings is the Beats per Minute. See this

month's Freebies if you want to learn more.

Cover your Nose

It's easy to close your eyes and block out a sight. We can cover our ears and block out sound. But it's virtually impossible (unless you want to suffocate) to shut down your olfactory system.

Everything has a smell. How can we take advantage of the unavoidable existence of smells? How can we make smell work for us?

The olfactory system, which senses and processes odors, is one of the oldest and most vital parts of the brain. For most animals, it is the primary mode of communication.

In your brain, olfactory information travels not only to the limbic system, the brain structures that govern emotions, behavior, and memory storage, but also to the brain's cortex, where conscious thought occurs.

In addition to being tied to long term memory and our conscious thought, smell can influence:

- **Alertness**
The smell of lemon, jasmine or eucalyptus boosted productivity and helped to prevent drowsiness. When the smell of jasmine was diffused in a room, keyboard errors were reduced by almost 30%, and the smell of lemon reduced keyboard errors by almost 50%. A keypunching room study done in Japan by Shimizu showed similar results with the use of a lemon scent.
- **Stress**
Russian psychologists at the Russian Academy of Sciences found that saturating the air with smells of fruit and flowers can ease the load of computer operators, who spend long hours in front of displays each day. In a different study, Robert Baron, psychologist and chairman of the department of management at Rensselaer Polytechnic Clinic, found that scenting a room with spiced apple or "powder fresh" Glade markedly improved performance on a high- stress task.
- **Relaxation**
Studies have been done showing that certain smells can be helpful in enhancing relaxation. One of the most well-known studies was done at Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital, on patients undergoing magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), where the patient must lie motionless in a capsule while being scanned. When the vanilla-like aroma was introduced into the MRI tube, 63% of the patients showed reduced anxiety.

The Walt Disney World Magic House at Epcot Center in Florida has a room scented with the smell of fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies. The intention is to induce feelings of relaxation and comfort.

More Examples from the Real World:

In Las Vegas casinos, the amount of money gambled in a slot machine increases by

over 45% when the site is odorized with a pleasant aroma.

The "Nose Team" at Audi tracks down unwanted smells in cars. Audi recognizes that "Driving a car is a sensory experience. People spend so much time in cars that sensory perception becomes ever more important" says Heiko Lussmann-Geigger, a chemical engineer and head of the Audi odor team. (I drive a clean smelling Audi!)

In a consumer test of shampoos, a shampoo which participants ranked last on general performance an initial test, was ranking 1st in the second test after its fragrance had been altered. In the second test, participants said that the shampoos was easier to rinse out, foamed better and left the hair more glossy. Yet only the fragrance had changed.

What can you do differently? Annette Green, former president of the Fragrance Foundation, advises "Fragrance will be used as much for its behavioral effects as for adornment."

- Recognize that smells will exist whether you do anything or not
- Explore options with your venue to introduce positive smells
- Use nature as your inspiration. There are many reasons to love fresh flowers.

Get A Move on It

Physical movement is tied to learning. And not just for the kinesthetic learner. The front lobe of your brain is dominant in thinking and problem solving skills. This is the same area of the brain that also controls your motor skills -- your movement. Thinking and movement are related.

Carlo Pellegrini, a juggler, talks about how he teaches change management through juggling, "I approach change from a physical rather than a mental standpoint. When somebody does something physically, it changes the chemistry of the body. First the behavior changes, then the belief."

Movement is important because it also allows the body to re-charge itself. In meetings, people need to move around every 20 minutes. If you want to keep your participants engaged, strive to create opportunities for movement frequently.

Movement can be accomplished through:

- Stretch breaks
- Walking around the room to review visuals or materials
- Turn to the person next to you and...
- Forming groups
- Changing tables/seats and forming new groups
- Actual breaks

If you are interested in exploring more about the link between movement and learning, Carla Hannaford's *Smart Moves: Why Learning is Not all in Your Head* is the book for you. Here is a link to Amazon if you are interested in the book:



Sensory Environments

In the recent press, there have been two great examples of highly sensory environments. Learn from within the industry and learn from outside.

Example#1: The Summit Executive Centre, a meeting venue in Chicago, focuses on creating a sensory experience to ensure customers have a successful meeting experience.

The Summit was recently awarded the International Association of Conference Centers' first-ever Best of the Best award based upon its specific features designed to create a total and beneficial meeting experience. Some of the Summit's features include:

- Giving each guest Silly Putty to stimulate brain cells through touch
- Pumping music - usually Mozart - into meeting rooms before sessions to stimulate the auditory senses
- Visual stimulation through inspirational quotes on the meeting room walls
- Summit's meeting rooms are painted in cool, dark colors to help attendees focus on visual presentations and to foster informal discussions

(Reported in the May 11 issue of Meeting News. The link to the article is at the end of this section.)

Example #2: An elementary school to be built outside Dallas is full of bright ideas.

- Tall windows will allow direct sunlight into the building. Fresh air will be pumped in. Sunlight and fresh air are said to make children feel happier and more refreshed, thus promoting better learning.
- An arboretum behind the school will provide hands-on learning opportunities.
- Wide, open hallways that will allow direct access to work spaces. The hallways will include space for study "nooks," enabling students to work in small groups.

- Classrooms of varying sizes will allow teachers and students to work in different-size groups when necessary.

This meeting space for children offers a great lesson for us involved in creating meeting environments for adults. "We've created flexible spaces for different-size groups to move in and out," Dr. Waddell, School Superintendent, said. "The building isn't deciding how people work together, but it's facilitating what people need to do." Mark VanderVoort, vice president of education for HKS Inc., the architectural firm that designed the building, said the school is a departure from the typical suburban school. The design featuring flexible classrooms, relatively low room expense and easy-to-alter space will be assets. "Nowadays, the whole idea is not about a teacher standing up and lecturing to a class," he said. "It's more about teamwork, collaboration, project-based learning by doing, and students learning from each other."

(From The Dallas Morning News, Monday, May 10, 2004)

[Read More about the Summit in Meeting News](#)

Freebies: Future Sensations

FREEBIES:

Consider these future sensations and how they might affect meetings:

The Emotion Sensitive Environment is about creating a comfortable personal space. Currently, we control our comfort by turning lights on and off at the flick of a switch, controlling temperature and even humidity through a thermostat control, or even changing the atmosphere through candles or music. The next step is the Emotionally Sensitive Environment where our homes will automatically detect what changes we need and create an atmosphere perfect for our mood.

Using a skin test (Galvanic Skin Response) to determine our stress level, a program will select the optimal color of the room to create the most comfortable scene. This color change will happen with a color wheel behind a light. This is the Smart House concept on Steroids!

Or consider this innovation:

British Internet provider, Telewest Broadband, is testing a system to let people to send aromatic e-mails over the internet. It has developed a kind of hi-tech air freshener that plugs into a PC and sprays a smell linked to the message. Telewest say it could be used by supermarkets to tempt people with the smell of fresh bread or by holiday companies seeking to stir up images of sun-kissed beaches.

"This could bring an extra whiff of realism to the internet," said Chad Raube, Director of Internet Services at Telewest Broadband. "We are always looking at ways to enhance the broadband internet experience of the future and this time we are sure consumers will come up smelling of roses."

More Freebies. If you are interested in learning how to select music for the correct physiological and psychological effect on your meeting participants, email Sue at stinnish@ameritech.net or click here [Sue Tinnish](#)

Future T.I.M.E.

I will be speaking at the following conferences:

National Business Travel Association, Orlando, Florida, Wednesday, August 4

For **Independent Meeting Planners**, I will be the speaker during a Brown Bag TeleWorkshop (audio conference) Thursday, November 11, 2004 offered by The Harris Group. Registration will open up in August. You can view more details on the website under the topic "Calendar" at <http://www.groupharris.com> or click here [The Harris Group](#). The topic is "Adding Muscle to Your Business – Stretching the Meeting and Your Value" and will be based upon a chapter in my book "Meetings with Muscle". Participants will receive a copy of the book as part of the audio seminar.

South Florida Chapter of Meeting Professionals International, February 22, 2005

Meetings with Muscle is taking shape. This book will focus on increasing the productivity of meetings through better communication strategies. Meetings with Muscle will suggest ideas, strategies, and tips for improving the very core of the meeting -- the content. If you have any contributions or are willing to preview parts of the book, I would love to include you on the team! Please email me and offer your suggestions.

T.I.M.E. Gone By

I received a warm welcome at **MPI-Pittsburgh University** last month. Thank you to the Chapter for their warm hospitality. I also enjoyed being a panelist on Rick Weaver's panel on Trends in the Industry.

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, June, June, 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
May 2003: [Entertainment](#) and (Freebie) Storytelling
June 2003: [Balance in Meetings and child caret](#) with (Freebie) Child Care at Meetings Tips
July 2003: [Mobile Events](#) with (Freebie) Sponsorship
August 2003: [Last Minute Ideas](#) with (Freebie) Audience Participation
September 2003: [Training Meetings](#) with (Freebie) Kirkpatrick Challenge
October 2003: [Unique Venues](#) with (Freebie) Experiential Checklist
November 2003: [Data, Information and Number Crunching](#) with (Freebie) European Privacy
December 2003: [Deja View](#)

January 2004: [Branding](#) with (Freebie) Identity vs. Brand
February 2004: [Audio Visuals](#) with (Freebie) Speaker Guidelines
March 2004: [Networking](#) with (Freebie) Networking Ideas
April 2004: [Strategic Budgeting](#) with (Freebie) Budgeting Ideas

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