

10 Rules to Create and Manage Experiential Brands

(from *Experiential Marketing*, by Bernd H. Schmitt, CEO)

1. Experiences don't just happen; they need to be planned. In that planning process, be creative; use surprise, intrigue and, at times, provocation. Shake things up.

2. Think about the customer experience first--and then about the functional features and benefits of your brand. (See my book *Experiential Marketing*, Chapter 1.)

3. Be obsessive about the details of the experience. Traditional satisfaction models are missing the sensory, gut-feel, brain blasting, all-body, all-feeling, all-mind "EJ" experience. (EJ=Exultate Jubilate.) Let the customer delight in exultant jubilation!

4. Find the "duck" for your brand. More than five years ago, I stayed for the first time in the Conrad Hotel in Hong Kong. In the bathroom on the rim of the bathtub they had placed a bright yellow rubber duck with a red mouth. I fell in love with the idea (and the duck) immediately. This little duck has become part of my life; I mention it in my speeches. They have really struck a chord with this little duck. It's the one thing that I always remember when I think about the hotel -- and it becomes the starting point of remembering the entire hotel experience. The lesson here? Every company needs to have a duck for its brand. That is, a little element that triggers, frames, summarizes, stylizes the experience.

5. Think consumption situation, not product. That is, "grooming in the bathroom," not "razor." "Casual meal," not "hot dog." "Travel," not "transportation." Move along the socio-cultural (For more on this, see my book *"Experiential Marketing,"* pp. 26-29)

6. Strive for "holistic experiences" that dazzle the senses, appeal to the heart, challenge the intellect, are relevant to people's lifestyles and provide relational, i.e., social identity appeal. (See *"Experiential Marketing,"* Chapter 9.)

7. Profile and track experiential impact with the Experiential Grid (see my book *"Experiential Marketing"* pp. 218-224). Profile different types of experiences (SENSE, FEEL, THINK, ACT, and RELATE) across experience providers (logos, ads, packaging, advertising, web sites etc.)

8. Use methodologies eclectically. Some methods may be quantitative (questionnaire analyses or logit); others qualitative (a day in the life of the customer). Some may be verbal (focus group); others visual (digital camera techniques). Some may be conducted in artificial lab settings; others in pubs or cafes. Anything goes! Be explorative and creative, and worry about reliability, validity and methodological sophistication later.

9. Consider how the experience changes when extending the brand--into new categories, onto the web, around the globe. Ask yourself how the brand be leveraged in a new category, in an electronic medium, in a different culture through experiential strategies.

10. Add dynamism and "Dionysianism" to your company and brand. Most organization and brand owners are too timid, too slow, and too bureaucratic. The term "Dionysian" is associated with the ecstatic, the passionate, the creative. Let this spirit breathe in your organization, and watch how things change. (See *"Experiential Marketing,"* Chapter 11.)