



# People or Puppets



*Who pulls the strings? Do event guests  
Dance to our tunes and are we playing  
The music that will create social outcomes*

Peter Burley CPIT  
Presentation to Eventing the Future  
Conference Christchurch 2005



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# Who was a famous event manager?

- *Can you name one, probably not. If you would like to name drop, and this is a big name to drop, none other than the number one genius to have ever lived, Leonardo da Vinci. Renaissance artists were expected to also serve as chief party planner for their employer. Thus, da Vinci spent time designing and operating pageants, balls, costume parties, and other ephemera (short lived) events between his more lasting creations in arts, anatomy, botany, geology and physics. So there is good lineage in this profession and you are in good company as an 'event manager'.*
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# Montages of photographs from the night before



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# 6 Key Elements of Event Experience Creation

1. Interacting people (Target Market)
2. Physical setting
3. Objects (Leisure/ people or otherwise)
4. Rules (in the setting)
5. Relationships (between people)
6. Animation



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# Event Logistics is King

- We sometimes don't focus on the 'event experience' of the participants much at all, just a whole bunch of logistics.
  - The exercise we went through is not common usually the starting point is elsewhere in various aspects of the planning not to do with guests
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# A community fair:

- Organising venues/dates
- Signs and advertising
- Produce and volunteers
- Site plan and order of events
- Health and safety possibly traffic management

And on.....

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# A corporate function:

- Leveraging stake holders
  - Meeting sponsors needs
  - PR messages and VIP's
  - Logo's profile and virtual images
  - Room set up, high tech AV, banners
  - Sassy catchy media and entertainment
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Perhaps you can see where I might be leading with this. It seems that in some (not all occasions) we have subjugated the role of the event participant to one of a specific stakeholder that must be managed. We focus on the logistics and needs of many but not always on the experience design for the people who will have to go through the experience.

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**Logic and process become important, as do planning and the use of all the modern techniques such as:**

- mind mapping
  - the five why's
  - brainstorming
  - SWOT
  - market research
  - Project Management tools
  - Templates for everything
  - Integrated marketing
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We assume we know what our event guests want and we predict and manage their environment and we think the experience they are having is a good one. In truth our attention to the needs of our event guests can get negated or lost within the complex machinery of the event logistics, or sometimes we just don't care because the needs of other stakeholders are more important

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# Conference Example

- Some would say the conference formula with its focus on production line presentations and few chances for interaction except in the breaks does not consider attendees needs or how people would prefer to 'Experience' this learning.
  - The participant has been subjugated by other stakeholders and by the conference formula.
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# Buskers Festival



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## In summary

We need to watch out that our management of event guests has not become an abstract concept related to managing things around them with the use of complex event planning tools

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# A focus on Event Experience Design

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# Assumption 1.

People are essentially social beings - they want and need social interaction to give life (and in this case their event experience) meaning. They won't tell you this.... but it's true all the same.





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# Symbolic Interaction Theory

The interactionist (perspective) assumes that humans learn their basic symbols, their conception of self, and the definitions they attach to social(objects/occasions) through interactions with others (social and other objects). ...social objects are people

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Lee and Shafer 2002

individuals organize their behaviour in social occasions

The co mingling of persons and the temporary interaction enterprises that can arise there from.” And characterizes the co-mingling of individuals as a “shifting entity necessarily evanescent, created by arrivals and killed by departures.

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# Assumption 2.

There is evidence that event organizers in some cases have forgotten or in some cases never knew the importance of assumption 1.  
(importance of social interaction).



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# Assumption 3.

..the elements that contribute to superior experiences are knowable and reproducible, which make them designable....

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We know that individuals will experience events differently and interpretations can be subjective. What we need to perhaps do is ask the question:

**‘How can we do all this organizing but keep focus on the reality of peoples need to have meaningful event experiences?’**

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“from now on, leading edge companies – whether they sell to consumers or businesses – will find that the next competitive battleground lies in staging experiences”

Harvard Business Review

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## Drivers for Creation of Experiences

Ralph Kerle

- A story that encapsulates and describes the overall proposed commercial proposition
- A narrative outlining the sequence of creative moments for each business experience that will take place in our story
- The entertainment design – the characters that people our story
- The audience and cultural design we need to observe to engage them.
- The set
- The sound and music
- The light through which the audience sees the experience
- The visual component such as multi-media, graphic design, costuming and packaging that provide the overall look and style
- The staging – the direction of how and when the experience occurs

Robert Rossman and Barbara Elwood Schlatter

- The interacting people (event guests) participants (target market)
- The relational history of these guests to each other
- The physical, social and symbolic objects in the setting of the experience
- The physical setting itself
- The rules of the situation that govern behaviour in the setting
- The animation of the experience

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## Elements that contribute to superior events

\*Consider not just event design and logistics but experience design  
Experiences are as distinct from services as services are from Goods (Gilmour and Pine) Experience is not just the quality of the service you provide at your events.

\*Create experiences by seeking to make event guests participants and in some way allow them to interact with the event (even if it is only an opportunity to share meanings with other event participants).

\*Consider the event experience from the event guests viewpoint. Think in the mindset of the event guest.

- Give opportunity to people to co-mingle (Socialise) so meaning and experience of event participants can be shared and defined.
  - Think in terms of scripts, plays, stories and animation as much as you do in terms of production schedules, logistics sequencing and run sheets.
  - Look for ways to add meaning to the ‘experiencing’ of this event
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## Summary

- So lets have a continuation of all that focus on the detail, the systems and management processes, synergies and realizing the various stakeholder benefits and leveraging.... can't forget that!... and logistics and a focus on quality and evaluation **but** somewhere in here lets see if the people who attend the “experience” that you create FOR THEM (and that they will judge you on) is worth all the hard work you just did.
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