



Moving from WOW to WHOA!!

Creating and managing the donor experience.

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“WHOA!!”

The word litters the landscape of popular jargon. Perhaps it began with Arthur Fonzarelli, otherwise known as the Fonz of *Happy Days* fame. Today it's best defined as an expression of sheer amazement, bordering on disbelief – as expressed by Keanu Reeves' expression of disbelief in the film *The Matrix*. We understand “whoa.” It communicates in a way few other expressions can to “pay attention...something's happening here!”

It used to be called “buzz” – that elusive “word of mouth” that creates interest in and demand for a product, service, or happening. Buzz is being replaced. Ten years ago Tom Peters introduced the concept of “Wow!” as “stepping out and standing out from the growing crowd of look-alikes.” He talked about individuals and organizations pursuing idea and strategies that would help them achieve “better than average” status. But in today's

environment being “better than average” isn’t enough. Customers and donors and even staff members – call them stakeholders – have been conditioned to higher expectations. “Satisfaction” is no longer a lofty goal. “Delight” is the new standard. McConkey/Johnston is now stressing the “relentless pursuit of donor delight” as the basis for what we call Donor Value Management®. We’re talking about moving from “Wow!” to “Whoa!!”

Movie and entertainment critics have mastered the art of hype, but hype without substance is hollow. Unsubstantiated hype has left people jaded and cynical. Their cynicism is difficult to overcome – precisely because of the tendency to hype EVERYTHING.

Many organizations have become adept at using hyperbole in an attempt to convince donors and prospects that their cause is more worthy than others. Using comparatives and superlatives in their marketing literature has become acceptable – if only because the competition for funding is so extreme that what used to be considered “Madison Avenue” techniques are now standard operating procedure. Is there a danger here? Consider that the nonprofit world has been rocked by two decades of scandal, mismanagement and violation of trust in both sacred and secular contexts. Overlay a hyper-competitive marketing environment in which style has often replaced substance and hype has replaced honesty. That’s why organizations today must be committed to delivering real value in relationships, in transactions and interactions with donors, clients, customers, campers, etc.

Creating VALUE for your donors has everything to do with their experience of being a donor to your organization. What does it look like? What does it feel like?

What sets it apart from other organizations?

Do they say “eeeew...” or “wow...” or “WHOA!!”

The Power of Partnership...

Who wants to be a donor? A contributor? A gift-er?

People choose to give to your organization for their reasons – not for yours. Treating people as if you’re in charge is a sure ticket to a short and meaningless involvement with them. The invitation to others to join you in helping others is far more powerful than asking people to contribute so you can do it. It’s an invitation to participation, to partnership, to working together to achieve a common objective.

The dictionary defines “partner” as a sharer, a partaker, an associate, or a companion. Many nonprofits relegate to donors a far less meaningful role – “supporter.” The common line of thought is “We do the work...you pay the bills.” Hardly an attractive role proposition!

Creating VALUE for your donors has everything to do with their experience of being a donor. What does it LOOK and FEEL like to be in partnership with your organization?

How do you create “partners” for your organization? Change the way you think about donors. Think of them as companions. Then treat them that way.

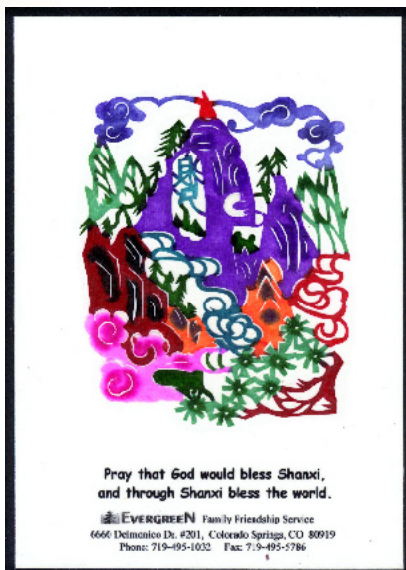
The Power of the Experience...

Experiential marketing reigns.

Marketing strategy designed to stimulate the senses is superior to marketing designed to stimulate the pocketbook, the mind or the heart alone. Learn from these examples...

1. Self-guided tours are now possible at Campus Crusade for Christ’s Headquarters in Orlando. Museum-quality displays, kiosks and interactive displays chronicle the history of Crusade’s mission to help “fulfill the Great Commission in this generation.” Add a refreshment café and a generous challenge to participate in a variety of the ministry’s outreaches and you have a wonderful front-end experience for the curious, as well as an affirming experience for existing partners.

2. “Welcome Aboard!” at Evergreen Family Friendship Service, with ministries in the Chinese interior includes more than the standard gift acknowledgment letter and receipt. New donors receive an intricately hand-cut, painted and mounted example of Chinese handcrafted “mini-art” with a message of gratitude for the donors’ new



partnership with Evergreen.

3. Fred Jordan Missions is one of the most visible and productive Skid Row missions near the garment district of downtown Los Angeles. Each Christmas FJM donors join with Mickey Mouse and Friends, courtesy of Disney, to provide a nourishing Christmas banquet, gifts of toys and clothing and seasonal entertainment for poor and needy residents at the FJM Christmas celebration on Skid Row. The celebration typically draws more than 12,000 (along with widespread media coverage).



What opportunities do you have to create stimulating (i.e. MEMORABLE, BUZZ-worthy) experiences for your stakeholders?

The Power of Style...

Style sells. Design is critical. But Substance satisfies.

Style AND Substance must be considered, not only in designing products, programs and marketing approaches, but also in designing lobbies, signage, receipt forms, envelopes and every bit of material your stakeholder sees. It matters in designing your organization.

Design is... (in the words of Tom Peters, quoted in *The Pursuit of Wow!*, pp 120-127)

1. *The garnish that makes a plate of meat and potatoes an elegant dish.*
 2. *An easy to use Fedex airbill.*
 3. *An understanding that all the senses were created equal.*
 4. *Discernible in a flash.*
 5. *Not expensive.*
 6. *The essential personality of a product or service or company.*
 7. *Consistency (looks familiar – and good)*
 8. *Inconsistency (startles – and breaks with the past)*
 9. *Why I fall in love with things.*
 10. *Why I stay in love with things.*
- ... and 132 other observations and ideas.

Don't think that style – i.e. design – doesn't matter to your donors.

The Power of Service...

The world is discovering customer service – sort of. There's good and there's bad. Walk into a store and the saleslady calls you by name. Check into a hotel and the chain already understands that you prefer an upper floor room along with a feather pillow. Receive a notice from your car dealership that it's time for your 50,000-mile service check-up – free of charge.

On the other hand, your new subscription to a magazine takes eight weeks to begin. Your call to the exterminator brings a reply that they can't help you until next month. Or your request to be removed from that ministry's mailing list is, apparently, ignored – for six months.

Why does service matter? Does it truly make a difference? It does – but only if it's beyond “normal.” In this day and age service

must approach SUPERIOR-CLASS to get people's attention – and their loyalty.

What are the arenas in which “customer/partner service” contributes to relationships with your stakeholders? If you looked at your organization from THEIR perspective would you be proud of what you see?

Finding Ways to Deliver “WHOA!!” – Managing the Donor Experience

Remember the word... WHOA!! – It means surprise, delight, WAY BEYOND expectations.

How committed are you to creating The Delighted Partner? What does she feel about your work? Why is she Delighted? How and why does she stay that way? What happens when she's not Delighted any more?

Can you answer these questions for donors/partners at all levels within your organization? Here's a clue:

Much has to do with service delivery to those your organization “serves.” (Wouldn't it be nice if your leaders had the orientation

“Customer service” only makes a difference if it's beyond “normal.” Your service must approach SUPERIOR-CLASS to get people's attention - and their loyalty.

that you also serve those who are your “partners” in serving others?) High IMPACT (successful results, increasing numbers, ROI, etc.) produces increasing degrees of satisfaction. High BENEFITS (tangible and intangible) yield additional levels of satisfaction. Stellar service delivery to DONORS rounds out the picture for them.

Whoever said “don’t sweat the small stuff” was wrong. Details matter. Systems matter. Voices on the telephone matter. Printed communications matter. Saying “thank you” matters big-time. Saying it again and again...and again matters. Real live signatures matter. Sharing ideas, asking opinions and inviting input matters.

Bottom line, your willingness to spend time – and money – on relationships matters.

A tip from Tom Peters – Create a “SURPRISE Factory” for donors...

Everyone in your organization should be charged with the task of dreaming up ways to surprise the daylights out of those who support your work. Create a forum where people can share – and be rewarded for – ideas that would really create “WHOA!!”

Better than limiting your attention to your staff, get wildly bold and ask your partners what would really turn their crank. Most would be delighted to tell you (subtle hint intended).

The Partner Interface... An Idea Starter

You are responsible for designing the

“experience” of being a partner with your organization. In much the same way that a designer helps engineers determine what the driver’s experience will be in the new model Cadillac SUV, you must create a sense of what being a donor/partner “feels” like. What are the tools you have to work with? What are the “interfaces” between partner and organization? Consider these few ideas to get you started:

1. Marketing Materials
2. Facilities
3. Communications Calendar / Media
4. Computer Systems / Database
5. Phone Systems / Operator / Receptionist
6. Receipting Process
7. Ministry / Service Programs / Products / Services
8. “Donor Relations” Functions
9. Donor Development Programs / Strategies
10. Volunteer Involvements / Program

How can you raise the bar – and confound your competitors – by creating a unique EXPERIENCE for your organization's supporting partners in the above situations?

How can you bring compelling, sizzling STYLE into play in these components of the Partner Interface?

What must be done to radically transform the level of SERVICE experienced by your Partners at every stage of their relationship with your organization?

When you begin to answer these questions – and implement those answers – you will begin to notice your donor continuity rates reflecting dramatic improvement.

In Conclusion..

There are two choices available to you in the battle to create and keep the right kind of donors for your organization. You can continue to minimize your investment in “donor relations” for the sake of maximizing “ministry income.” Or you can come to the realization that growing “ministry income” is only possible by maximizing your investment in meaningful, delight-producing “donor relations” efforts. If you consider the relational (and financial) implications of the following progression you can reach no other conclusion:

UNSATISFIED ->
 INDIFFERENT ->
 SATISFIED ->
 VERY SATISFIED ->
DELIGHTED

Delighted friends, partners, companions,

are LASTING friends, partners and companions. When they say “WHOA!” as a result of their experience and interactions with your organization, you will succeed – beyond anyone’s expectations. So your task is as follows...

Create a strategy for the “Relentless Pursuit of Donor Delight” that answers the following questions:

1. What is the cost of donor defections to your organization?
2. How much will you invest in creating a sense of WHOA!! for your donors?
3. How can you train your organization to focus on Partner “Delight?”
4. What criteria will you use to measure “Delight?”
5. How will your progress be measured?
6. When will your progress against objectives be measured?
7. When will you begin?

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