



# Gaining the Competitive Edge

**unique**  
**venues**  
you belong here.

Annual Marketing Conference - 2013

Dr. Mark Mulder



# [Unique Venues, Unique Insights]

From the field & marketing intelligence:

- 1) Competing
- 2) Uncovering Business Growth
- 3) Positioning Your Venue



## [Part 1]

# Competition

# [Your Competition]

Is this Familiar?

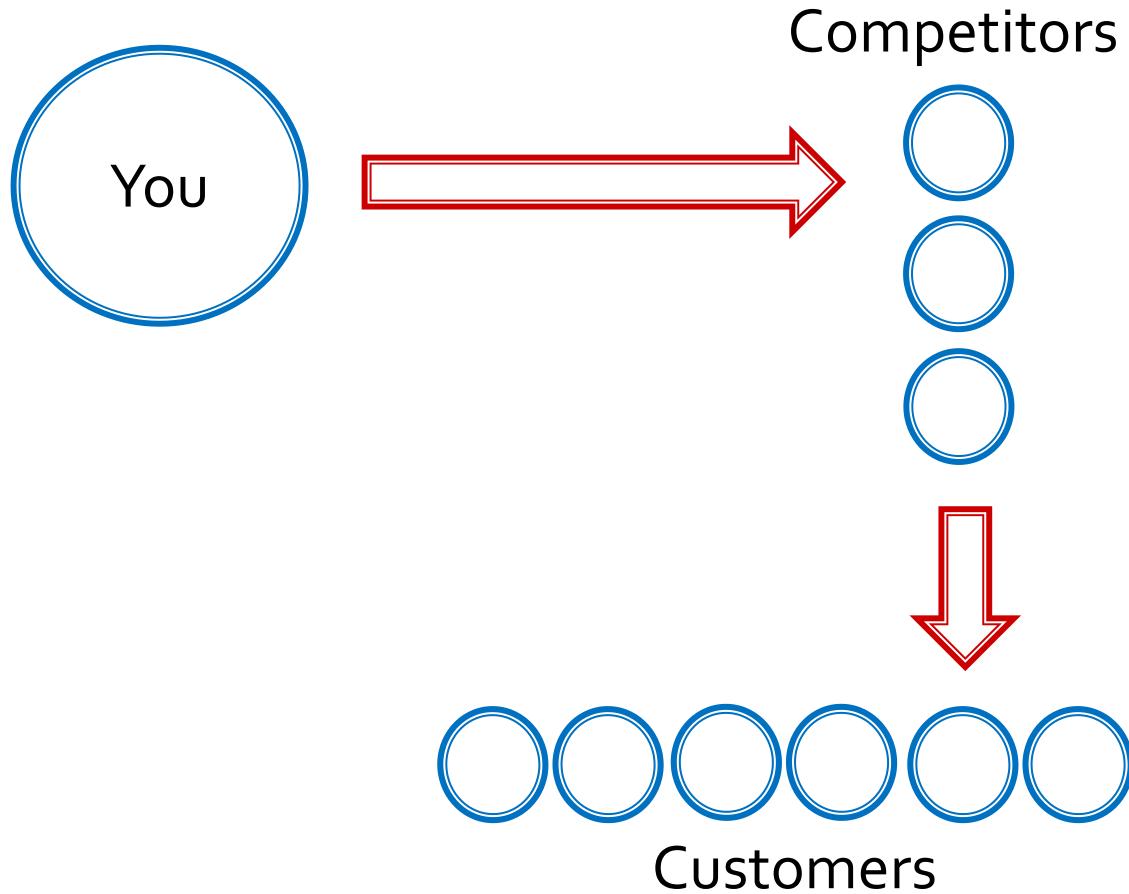
“We’d like to grow campus revenue...”

“We can compete with other providers to bring necessary resources to our operations.”

“Conferences and Auxiliaries are important revenue centers...”

# [Your Competition]

Typical Approach



# [Your Competition]

Consider...

Your main competition?

**Youself and the service you provide.**

Will it meet the needs of the customers you want to attract?

Is it consistent and memorable?

# [Your Competition]

Which is more important?



# Does Service Trump Facilities?

## We asked...

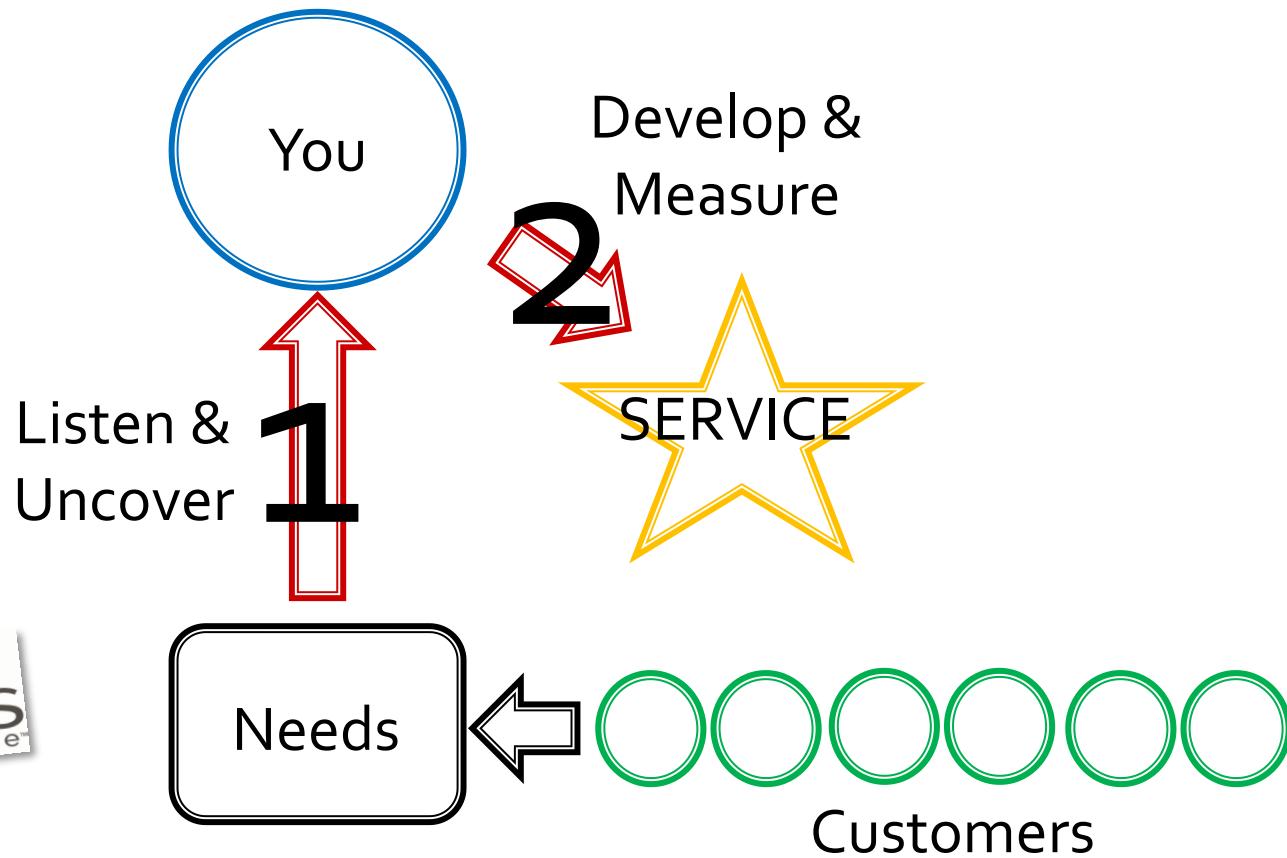
If a venue had moderate quality facilities but top notch service, would that be more important than top notch facilities but moderate service?

# They Said...



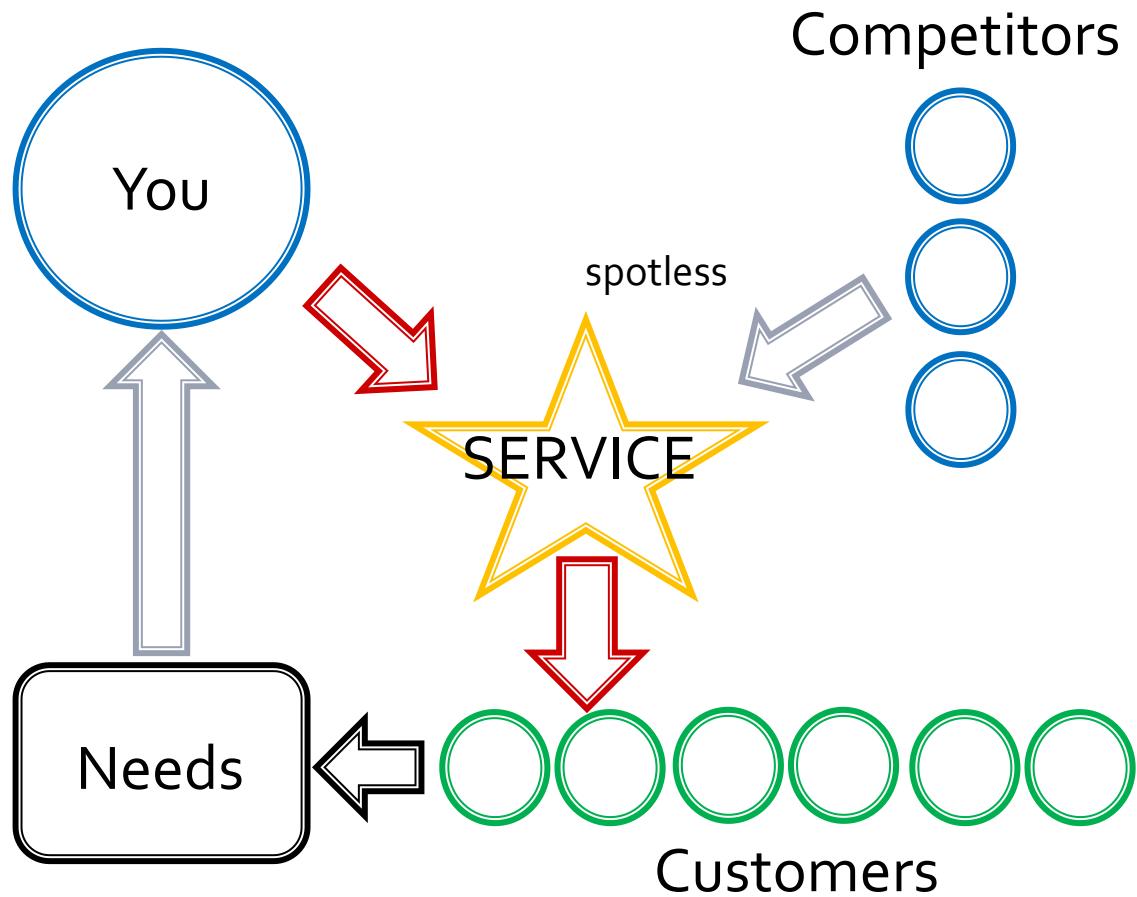
# [Your Competition]

Where to Start?



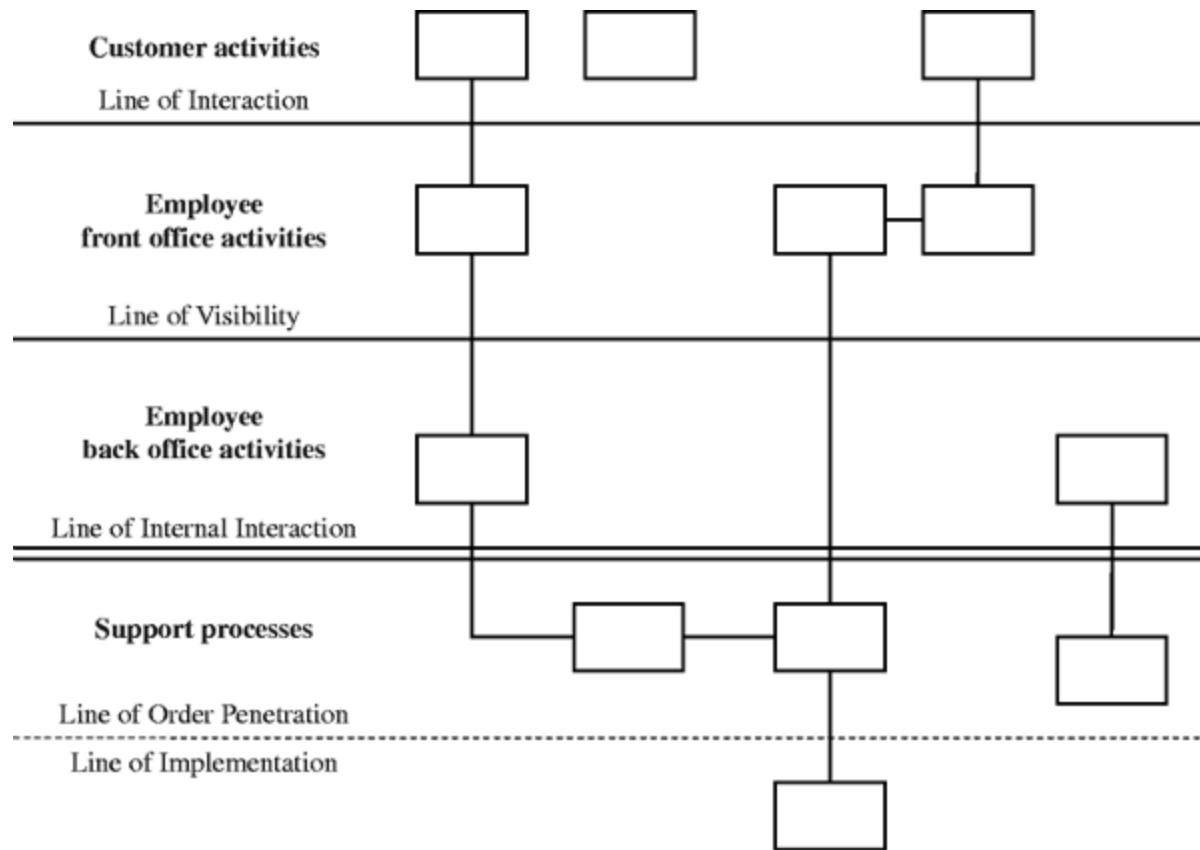
# [Growing Stronger Competition]

Great Path to Customers:



# [Competing via Service]

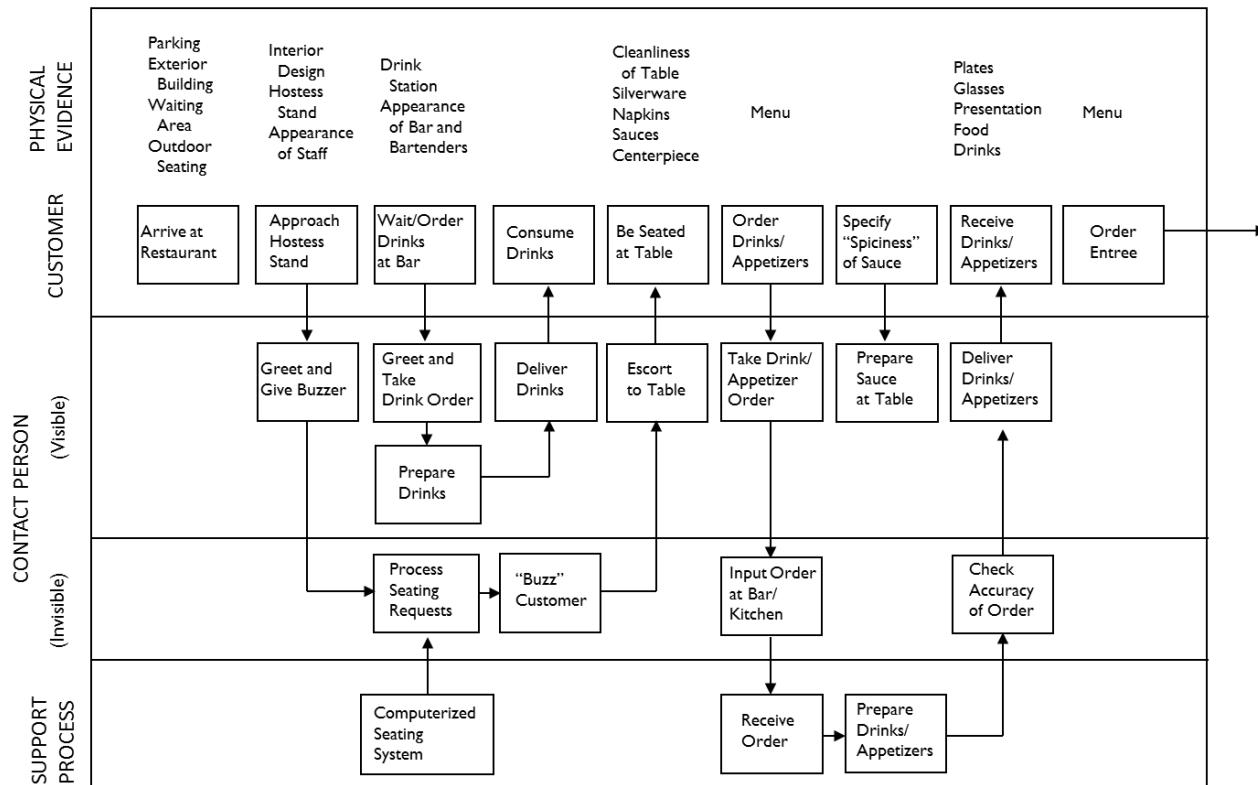
## A Tool for You: The Service Blueprint



Source: Adapted from Zeithaml and Bitner (1996)

# [Competing via Service]

## Service Blueprint



# [Competing via Service]

## Services → Satisfaction → Buzz

### On the Edge

Trends, friends, fashion and everything in between

By Kristi Gustafson | [E-mail](#) | [Twitter](#)

### Why I love Wegmans

March 23, 2009 at 11:03 am by [Kristi Gustafson](#)

I can not make a trip to Rochester without stopping [at Wegmans](#). It's funny that a grocery store can bring me so much joy. But Wegmans does (and has) so many features I wish we'd get [at Price Chopper](#) or Hannaford, such as:

Garbage cans throughout the store. Great produce. A full cookbook five times a year.

**Every staffer is friendly, helpful and polite.** It was 9:30 Saturday night and no one in the meat department. We found one kid (coat on, ready to leave) in the back, and asked if he knew if they carried cube steaks. He didn't sigh or roll his eyes or tell us his shift was over. Instead, he spent more than 5 minutes (a long time to look for a piece of meat) helping us locate the steaks.

**The store is clean.** In addition to the aforementioned dead coffee cups (or lack there of), the staff is regularly cleaning up the food court tables and the areas around where the food is served.

**Customer service is open till 10:30 at night, and they're helpful.** I was trying to reactivate my savings card (which hasn't been used since college). Not only did they try several methods to locate my card information but, after sending me away back to the register, the CS rep came up to make sure everything worked out and rang up correctly.

# [Service Growth]

How Could You Challenge Traditional Hotels...

Create a campus and/or event concierge?

Reframe student staff language?

Interns → ?

Phenomenal website with branded address and clear navigation

Move from 30 page guidebook & 20 page contract

# [Insights: Customer Needs]

We asked...

If there was one piece of advice you would give to those who operate unique venues about how to improve their attractiveness to you as a meeting planner, what would it be?

**They Said...**

“lock down spaces quickly...”

“be easier to find on the internet!”

“have students interested in managing events involved...”

# [Competition Wrap-up]

## What About YOUR Needs?

You are being asked to do more. To make more.

Are you given what you need?

## Getting Buy-In... Some Ideas:

1. Change the terms... revenue centers are worthy of investments, cost centers are associated with cuts.
2. Share best practices... show your administration the ROI of the investment of peer institutions.
3. Change the messenger, get an assessment.

[Part 2]

# Uncovering Business Growth

# [Co-opetition]

## Co-opetition:

Working collaboratively to generate customers, then dividing the pie

The stronger the Unique Venue market is (as a whole), the more people will be attracted to it...

# [Challenging the Competition]

## Co-opetition:

What if we shook the hotel industry?

What if UV's offered service levels that left hotel venues drooling?

# [Challenging the Competition]

**Ease**  
of doing business

Contracting...  
from the field

# [Challenging the Competition]

## Question:

Are you an O.S.S.?

If not, what is holding  
your campus back?

# [Challenging the Competition]

## We asked...

Some venues have multiple offices that meeting planners must meet with, and in some cases, contract with (i.e., facilities, housing, catering, etc.). In other cases, venues have a one-stop-shop approach (i.e., one contract, one point of contact which handles multiple services such as catering, accommodations, audio/video/media, parking, etc.). If facilities were similar between two venues, but one had a one-stop-shop and the other had the multiple offices/multiple contract approach, which venue would you prefer?

## They Said...



80%

Prefer to Strongly Prefer  
One-Stop-Shop

93%

Somewhat to Strongly  
Prefer O.S.S.

# [Challenging the Competition]

We asked...

Regarding the previous question with the one-stop-shop, how likely are you to focus your venue search on unique venues which offer a one-stop-shop approach to event coordination?

They Said...

67%

Likely to Very Likely

# [Challenging the Competition]

## We asked...

Imagine you were planning a one day seminar, and needed a facility, sound system, lunch, am and pm break package, and video projector. Some venues have gone to a package price, whereby the most common items are put into a per person rate (e.g., \$60 flat fee per person for the room, catering, audio/video, service, etc.). How important is having a package price to you when selecting a venue?

## They Said...

**34%**

Somewhat to Very Important

# [Insights: Customer Needs]

We asked...

Compared to commercial hotel properties and meeting venues, what is it that unique venues most often struggle with?

They Said...

“lots of add-ons...”

“comparable pricing...”

“too pricey...”

# [Insights: Customer Needs]

We asked...

Compared to commercial hotel properties and meeting venues, what is it that unique venues most often struggle with?

They Said...

“very slow response...”

“no response...”



My experience...

# [Uncovering Business Growth]

## RFP:

Slow as molasses.

To many meeting planners, their experience with an RFP has them puzzled. Echo? Echo?  
(RFP = CCL?)

Not responding to RFP = malpractice

Suggestions:

Develop a Rapid Response program

Flip the RFP (today or next year)

# [Uncovering Business Growth]

We asked...

Imagine you sent out an RFP via the Unique Venues website. What would be an impressive amount of time by which a venue would reply to an RFP (realistically)?

They Said...

66%

Within 4 hours

80%

Within 6 hours

# [Uncovering Business Growth]

We asked...

In general, if a venue doesn't respond to an RFP by \_\_\_\_\_ day(s), at what point would you likely not do business with the venue?

They Said...

47%

Within 2 days

80%

Within 4 days



# [Marketing Intelligence]

We can look to **competitors** for intelligence.

We can also look objectively at **our own operations**.

A competitor analysis offers a view of both.  
Observational and experiential research techniques.

Where are we strong?

What should we watch out for?

How should we respond?

# [Important Question]

**Are we competitive?**



Why would people want to spend their time and money with us?

**How is our service?** Are customers/guests satisfied?  
Will they return or burn us on social media?

Goal: Can we convert more sales?

# [Going Undercover]

Marketing intelligence may use **unknown associates** to look at competitors and internal operations.

The main goal is to **assess operations**. Are websites easy to navigate? Are staff helpful? Are things confusing?

By **spotting opportunities for improvement** before they become negative experiences, service is improved. Also, employees can be recognized for top notch service.

# [Uncovering Business Growth]

## Competitor Analysis... Now What?

Truly a great tool to scan your competitors for ideas for positioning your services and facilities.

But, how do you best position? What are the foundations of branding your venue?

## [Part 3]

# Positioning Your Venue

# [Branding]

## Scope of Branding – Steps to Brand Equity

How to “brand” a product... in 4 steps

1) Identify **key differences** between your brand and other brands. Branding is really all about creating differences between products.

What are some key differences with your venues/services?

# [Branding]

## Scope of Branding – Steps to Brand Equity

How to “brand” a product... in 4 steps

2) Teach consumers about the brand and its positioning.  
Marketers need to teach consumers “**who**” the product is,  
“**what**” the product does, and “**why**” consumers should  
care.

For your venues and services, which will likely be most difficult?

Facilities & Services vs. Solutions?

# [Branding]

## Scope of Branding – Steps to Brand Equity

How to “brand” a product... in 4 steps

3) Consider, create and communicate **mental structures** to help consumers organize their knowledge about your venue in a way that clarifies their decision-making.

What could a mental structure be about your venue? Start with things likely important to your target...



# [Branding]

## Scope of Branding – Steps to Brand Equity

How to “brand” a product... in 4 steps

4) Convince consumers the **differences are meaningful** versus your competitors in the product or service category.

For branding strategies to be successful and brand value to be created, this is critical.

*You have differences, but how do you make them meaningful?*

Hint: It's not about you, it's about the customer and what they value. This is why research for insights into your customers *and your competitors* is critical.

# [Branding]

## Positioning the Brand – Competitive Frame of Reference

POP's and POD's are key to identify

### POP is Point-of-Parity

POP's are attributes or benefits associations that are not necessarily unique to the brand buy may in fact be shared with other brands.

What are some POP's between your property and your competitors (kind of a quick benchmark)?

# [Branding]

## Positioning the Brand

POP's and POD's are key to identify

### POD is Point-of-Difference

Attributes or benefits consumers strongly associate with a brand, positively evaluate, and believe that they could not find the same extent with a competitive brand.



# [Branding]

## Brand Mantras: Internal Branding → External

*A brand mantra is an articulation of the heart and soul of the brand and is the way firms would like consumers to think about the brand.*

**Purpose:** ensure that all **employees** within the organization and all **external marketing partners** understand what the brand is most fundamentally to represent with consumers.

# [Branding]

## Brand Mantras – Compare



Internally, Nike marketers adopted the three-word brand mantra, “**authentic athletic performance**,” to guide their marketing efforts. Thus, in Nike’s eyes, its entire marketing program—its products and how they are sold—must reflect those key brand values.



Disney’s brand mantra is “**fun family entertainment**.”



The brand mantra for Betty Crocker is “**Homemade Made Easy**.”

The brand mantra for the employees to LIVE within your venue/services: “?”

# [Value]

**Value Formula:**

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Benefits}}{\text{Cost}}$$

**General Drive**

← maximize

← minimize

# [Value]

Some examples:

Value Formula:

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Benefits}}{\text{Cost}}$$



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# [Experiences]

## How Can You Stage Them?

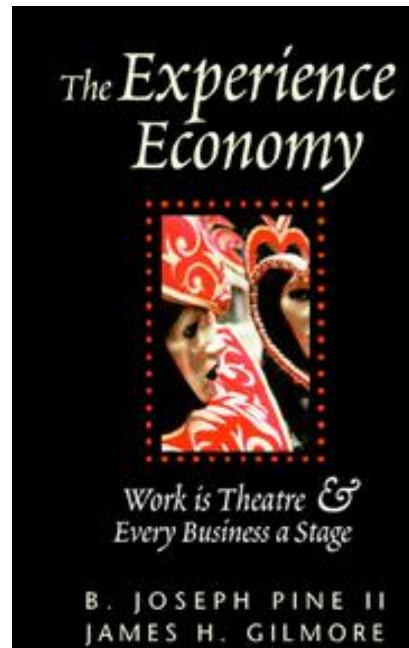
Welcome to the Experience Economy

by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore



 Harvard Business Review

Reprint 98407



# [Experiences]

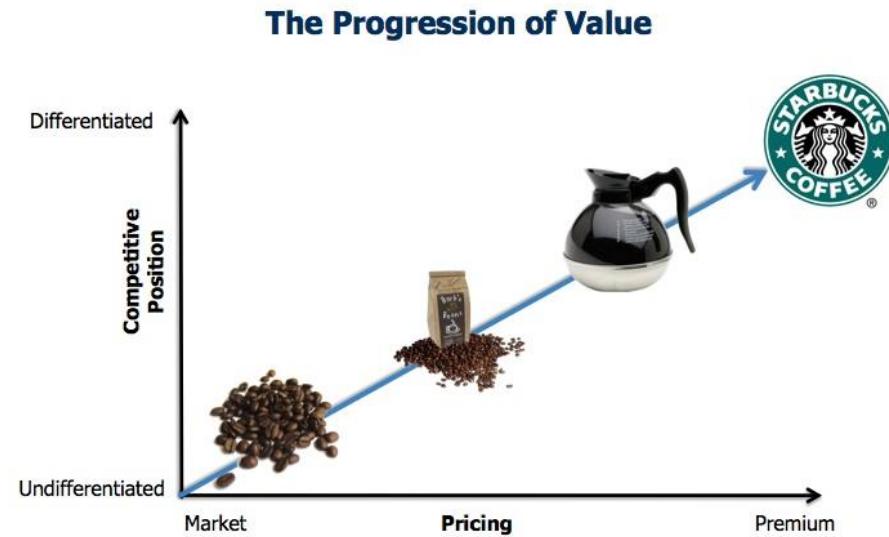
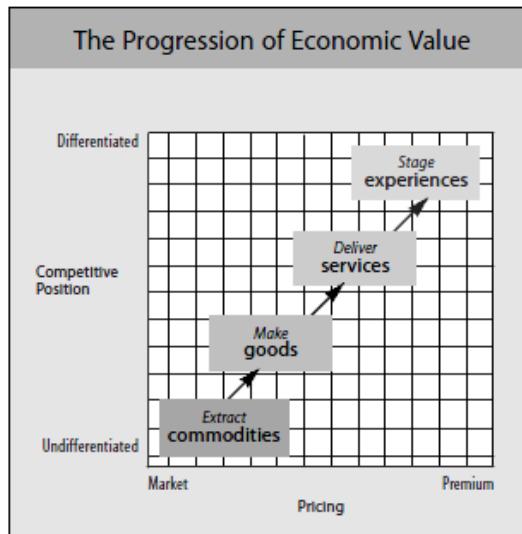
## How Can You Stage Them?

“An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that *creates a memorable event.*”

Pine & Gilmore

# [Experiences]

## Can They Add Value?



# [Experiences]

## Dimensions of Experiences:

### 1<sup>st</sup> Dimension: **Customer Participation**

Passive (observers): symphony

Active (participants): sporting event (create noise during play, part of your experience and those watching as well)

passive ← → active

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Dimension: **Connection**

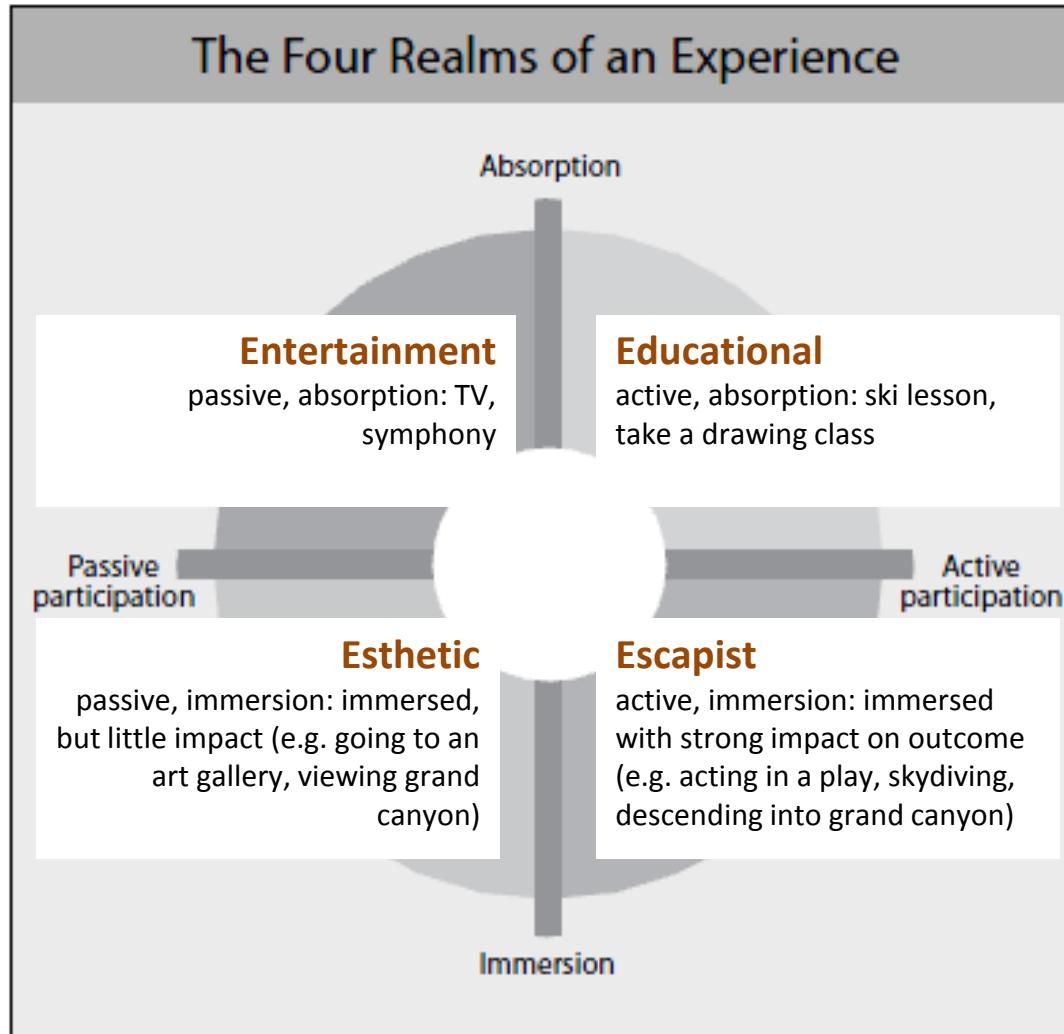
(environmental relationship)

Absorption: watch video at home on an old 19" TV

Immersion: watch movie at theatre (audience, sound, popcorn, candy)



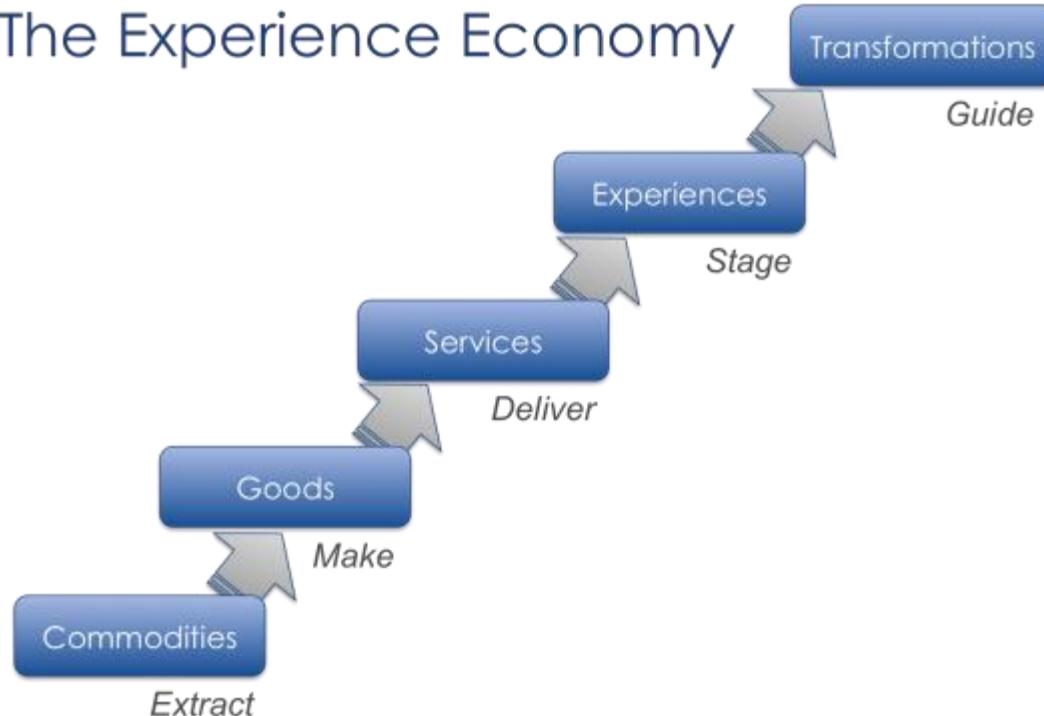
# [Experiences]



# [Experiences]

Can They Add Value?

## The Experience Economy



Source: B. Joseph Pine II & James Gilmore  
"The Experience Economy" (1997, 2011)

# [Experiences]

## How Can You Stage Them?

If you were going to stage experiences that you could monetize, how might you do it?

What would you turn to in order to make something memorable while also making you money?

Would people care? Why?

# [Unique Venues, Unique Insights]

## We asked...

Imagine a facility put together a really nice package of event ideas which were unique and celebrated the culture in which the unique venue was located. For example, imagine a university campus in Washington State (located near the Puget Sound) put together a unique water tour which included a short talk with a campus biologist about the amazing Orca Whales; or offered a progressive dinner option featuring 3 of the top restaurants in the Pacific Northwest; or offered a special "taste of the Northwest" dinner complete with cooking classes that featured a local chef to showcase special menu items or wine tasting featuring local organic wines. Imagine these were unique and custom created by the unique venue, were a very reasonable price, had top quality reviews and generally could not be replicated with other tour providers.

# [Unique Venues, Unique Insights]

We asked...

How likely would this unique venue  
attract your attention?

They Said...

66%

Somewhat to Very Likely

# [Unique Venues, Unique Insights]

## We asked...

Regarding the above question about unique events for your participants, consider events that offered creative, participatory and experiential learning that celebrated the attractions of the geographic area. How likely could it be that creative and unique events such as these might help you attract more participants to your event?

## They Said...

**60%**

Likely to Very Likely

**80%**

Somewhat to Very Likely

# [Wrap-Up]

## Typical...

We tend to consider marketing as outreach.

Don't confuse marketing with the **Selling Concept**:

In the selling concept, our pitch tends to be product **attribute based**.

We tend to focus on ourselves and our facilities to bring in customers.

Most door-to-door sales pitches are great examples of the selling concept.

# [Wrap-up]

**Focus Your Efforts Here...**

## **Marketing Concept:**

Goal is not to find the right customers for your product, but to find the right product for your customers.

Your customers = research based, specific segment.

Focus: understand customer **needs** first, THEN work to satisfy those needs.

# [Unique Venues, Unique Insights]

From the field & marketing intelligence:

## 1) Competing

Yourself (service, GAP)

Other venues (how to grow/compete)

## 2) Uncovering Business Growth

Co-opetition & RFP

## 3) Positioning Your Venue

Foundations of branding (mantra/POP/POD)

Value & experiences

# [Gaining the Competitive Edge]

**COMMENTS?**

**QUESTIONS?**

**IDEAS?**

## Gaining the Competitive Edge

Dr. Mark Mulder   Marketing Professor

[muldermr@plu.edu](mailto:muldermr@plu.edu)