

Jerry Yoshitomi, Meaning Matters

Introduction

Jerry Yoshitomi is an independent cultural facilitator and Chief Knowledge Officer of MeaningMatters LLC which is engaged by foundations, public arts agencies and organisations to research and provoke innovative new practices that change the landscape of arts practice. He is also the moderator for a collaborative of Performing Arts Presenters at U.S. major research universities and has facilitated strategic visioning and planning processes for several of them. He served as facilitator for the START Initiative of the Wallace Foundation and participated in teams for a Cultural Master Plan for the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department and a Regional Learning Framework to increase arts participation for the Washington State Arts Commission. He serves as Lead Consultant for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts' participation in the Community Leadership Project, serving low-income and diverse communities.

His foremost work in international cultural exchange was as Executive Director of Los Angeles' Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. During his tenure, the JACCC presented more performances and exhibitions by Japanese artists than any other theatre/gallery outside of Japan.

In this presentation Jerry used his insights in audience behaviour to show how visitor expectations are changing, becoming more demanding with the consequence being that we need to change our strategies accordingly.

How the public is changing

Diane Ragsdale's thoughts about the influence of the economy are a good precursor to our discussions this morning.

There is much to be optimistic about. Groups all over the world are making great strides and marketing is a key part of their advances. It's also worth observing that there are many human things that have not changed and will not change.

Russell Willis Taylor [who spoke at the conference in the final session] was co-chair of the Salzburg Global Summit recently, which stated:

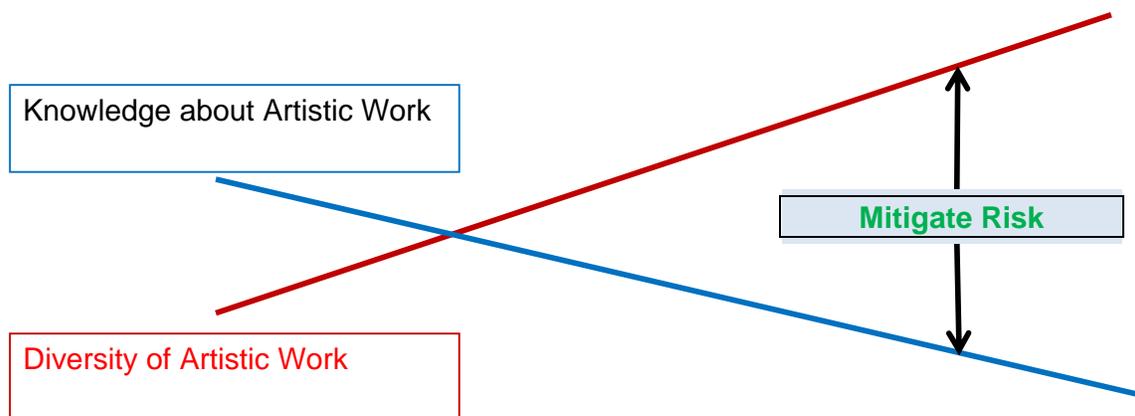
*"To engage with audiences, we must now not just do things **for** people, but instead do things **with** people. Not that we must cede power to the public, **that power is already ceded.**"*

We do not have the power. The public has the power, but we need to help them on their journey.

Alan Brown (www.wolfbrown.com) speaks of the 'confluence of many forces', referring to the changing patterns of demand in which people want shorter, more intense experiences, partly as a result of being time starved and having shorter attention spans. Linked to this, they have lower levels of context and knowledge and therefore need more interpretive assistance, they require their leisure experiences to be customised and seek active forms of participation.

On the other hand, they still want authenticity and intimacy. It is a challenge in a huge hall like this (Glasgow Royal Concert Hall) then to give audiences the sort of intimacy they want.

The diversity of artistic work has changed. New work is being created and a wider range of cultures is being incorporated. This is happening alongside a declining knowledge about artistic work which is leading to a 'contextualisation gap'. People don't know if they want to spend time on something they don't really know about and there is a certain amount of risk for them. It is our challenge to work within this gap to mitigate risk.



Mitigating risk

So, how do we do this?

The Oregon Humanities Council Lecture Series was seen as a rather dry and moribund event with a declining audience so they decided to move this from an auditorium into a pub for a 'Think and Drink' session in which people were encouraged to relax and interact with the speakers giving it new life.

Kicking Horse Culture provides a money back guarantee promising: *Buy a ticket to any of our LIVE KICKS shows & if you do not like it & want to leave at intermission - we'll refund your ticket money.* In three years, no-one has asked for a refund.

In New Zealand, research found that 56% of people attributed 'less time/other commitments' as their main reason why they were going along to events less often. Only 16% said it was due to money. Therefore some organisations are selling their first and second halves separately. Jazz clubs do it. Composers originally didn't write them this way – to be performed together in a whole evening. In Tokyo some orchestras are doing a one hour performance at 5 and 9 so they are reaching twice as many people, rehearsing less and making more money.

Think & Drink

Think & Drink is a happy-hour series that sparks provocative conversations about big ideas. The series, which invites the public to think and talk together, reflects Oregon Humanities' emphasis on infusing important public conversations with critical thinking and fresh ideas. All Think & Drink events are free and open to the public.

March 03, 2011

Listen to the WikiLeaks Think & Drink



Mostly Mozart in San Diego were holding performances at 8pm which lasted two and a half hours with an interval. They've changed this to have a 6.30pm wine and beer reception, a 7.30pm concert which lasts about 70 minutes and then there is a short talk-back afterwards and everyone can go home not long after 9. Young people like the relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity to go out for dinner afterwards. Older people, *like Jerry Yoshitomi*, can get to bed by 10.

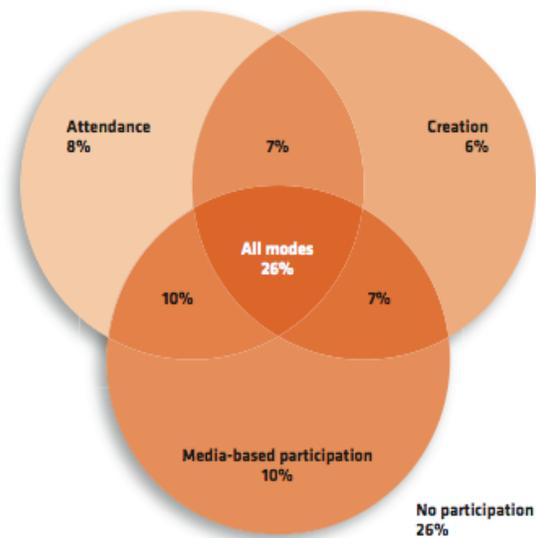
At the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the *Bay Area Now* visual arts programme has an opening night party not an opening night reception. Instead of these receptions being open from 6-9pm they are now open till 11 and at around 9.30pm the younger people are coming in starting their evenings there and then going clubbing for the rest of the night.

How many of us are accommodating people according to their time rather than our time?

People are inherently creative. They want to share information with us. They want platforms for co-creation. Just as this conference has a blog and spaces of communication, what are you doing to enable communication of your audiences between each other?

Some of my clients have recommended that instead of using name tags that they use the names of peoples' favourite composers. Or they arrange for places in the lobby where people can meet other people with the same interests and talk about Mahler for example. It's a way of breaking down the big experience and having a much more intimate experience.

A multi-modal distribution of U.S. adults' arts participation rates: 2008



In Percentages of U.S. Adults

The other thing that's happening is that peoples' participation in the arts is changing. This diagram is from the work of Alan Brown (WolfBrown) (*Beyond Attendance: A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation*, by Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown). It shows the different ways in which people are participating in the arts.

The great news here is that 74% of the American population participates in the arts, one third participate in the arts via both attendance and personal arts creation and a quarter reported arts participation through means exclusive of attendance.

The difficulty for many of the people in this room is how do you get the people on the right and bottom to move over to the left?

For example, in the USA there is the idea of '*piano pot lucks*'. People will rehearse a piece of music, the host will get their piano tuned, you bring along your sheet music, side dish and a bottle of wine, mixing the social and artistic sides. How could we encourage these people to attend our events?

We're also involved in a major study of jazz in the states (www.jazzartsgroup.org/jai/). Two key things have been discovered:

- There is a preference for more informal and intimate venues
- Taste is socially transmitted. The most likely way that taste is transmitted is by to person so our recommendations to jazz promoters have been that they ensure there is at least one show in the season which has free tickets for them to bring along friends

Another way to look at it as part of the 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore); if you think of the evolution of cakes and birthdays, originally people made cakes from raw ingredients, then after the Second World War, ready made cake mixes meant you just needed to add an egg. Then bakers made cakes with decorations. Now you can have a whole birthday experience in which someone takes over the organisation of the whole event for you.

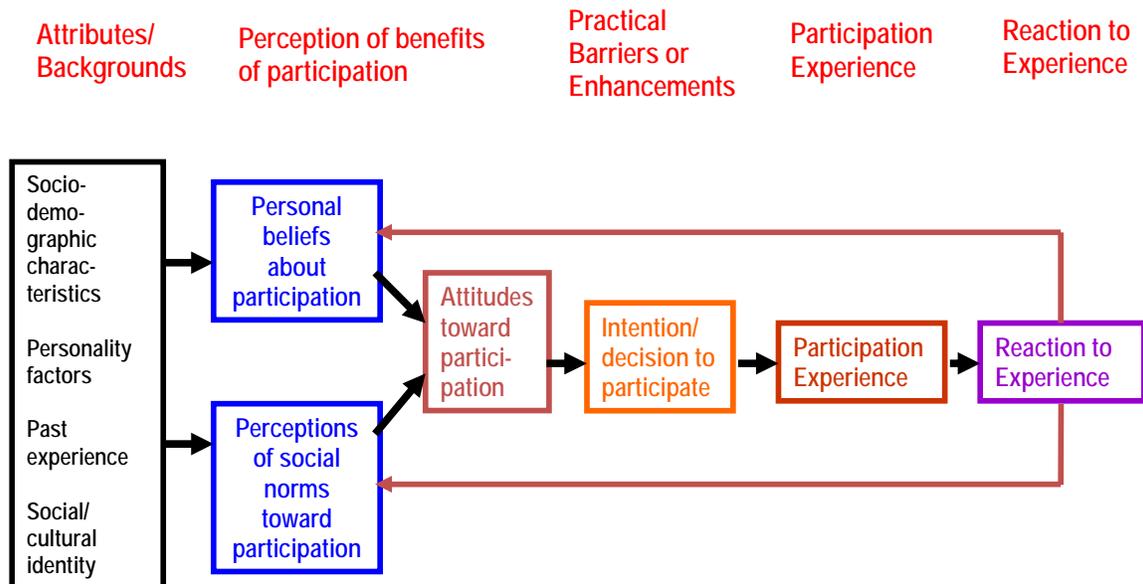
What are we doing to provide people with memorable experiences? Pine and Gilmore ask, how we could be so good that audiences would want to come back even when there's no music.

Whose job is it to communicate the brand promise? *Answer: marketing*

Whose job is it to deliver the brand promise to encourage repeat attenders? *Answer: everyone.*

So, take this message back to your bosses.

This is the Rand model of participation (by McCarthy & Jinnett -RAND). The primary reason why people attend or participate in the arts is the perception of benefits to them. What's going to happen to me? That's the brand promise.



The experience has to be rich and the reaction is important. They therefore need 'memory elicitation devices' so that they can remember how fabulous it was to visit your event or museum.

Readiness to receive

So you are engaging audiences not just at the concert but before, during and after ... and in fact it's all year round.

In Australia, at the sequel to the Phantom of the Opera they prepare people with emails beforehand to help people to get ready for the performance. Baker Richards and Wolf Brown in their study of Liverpool talk about the '*readiness to receive*' – helping people to get ready for the event.

At Circa Theatre in New Zealand, they provide a card and pencil on every seat and ask the audience '*what would you say to a person who has not yet purchased a ticket?*' The results are then put up in the lobby, on the website etc.

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra put out a call for amateurs – 'rusty musicians' – who were invited to come along and play parts in the piece they were doing. 400 pdfs of the sheet music were downloaded. It was self-certified that they could play the piece, but they had to pay to take part and they then also sold tickets to family and friends; 100 members at a time were joined by 25 members of the BSO, rehearsing with them and then playing to a sold-out concert.

The South East Michigan Flute Association invited 100 flute players to join James Galway on stage in a 'mass flute choir finale'. At the Museum of Modern Art visitors were encouraged to fill in cards saying 'I went to Moma and ...'.



The Long Tail

http://longtail.typepad.com/the_long_tail/

The Long Tail is now a well-known concept; Ulysses published 100 years ago had huge impact when it was published with this diminishing over time but with a book like Ulysses the long tail is significant. Chris Anderson argues that the yellow tail actually has spikes, with significant events such as anniversaries and revivals having an influence. So in fact the yellow tail is a bigger area than the red tail. Those of you with long histories could use this idea.

The Scottsboro Boys on Broadway asked attendees to pledge to buy a ticket on line for a future performance. The Chicago Opera Theatre asked supporters to vote for one of three obscure Verdi operas, with the winning choice being performed. The people who voted for that opera were more likely to attend.

To end with, this Churn Study Factor analysis of the American League of Orchestras by Oliver Wyman found that the 16 factors most likely to influence customer behaviours were as follows:

Core Product:

- Repertoire
- Hall
- Contemporary Music
- Enriching Experience
- Orchestra Prestige/Quality

Music Enhancement

- Music Information
- Live Commentary
- Special Effects

Access

- Access
- Parking
- Ability to Attend

Social Experience

- Social Outing
- Bar
- "The Orchestra Club"

Transactional

- Planning & Purchasing
- Ticket Exchanges