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## DELIVER THE EXPERIENCE

*I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know no way of judging of the future but by the past.*

— British historian Edward Gibbon

Persuasion, sales, marketing, and influence all make overt and implied promises to the person being persuaded. Subliminal persuaders make the most imperceptible promises. But those subliminal promises create an expectation of something the audience believes will occur.

Your audience will also judge you by the experiences they've had in the past or the predominant experience that the industry has conditioned them to believe is correct. But, when you understand the influential power of experience, you'll understand how you can create the experience against which every other experience is judged. And that is one of the most profitable places

you can be. The reason this is so popular goes back to Gibbon's quote; your customers will always use the lamp of experience to judge the future. If you can give them the lamp that illuminates the future in your favor, you'll own them for life.

When a magician appears to drop a coin from one hand to another but palms it instead, the mind sees the coin as having fallen into the second hand. This is called sight retention and allows the expectant viewers to have a magical experience. When the mind follows the coin and the coin doesn't appear, the illusion is complete and the viewer experiences exactly what was expected.

In persuasion, the promises we make and the expectations that we set are the beliefs that those we persuade hope will occur. When they don't, magic doesn't happen. In fact, just the opposite happens, an unpleasant confrontation occurs that breaks the spell of persuasion and can doom the relationship.

Experience is the subtlest of persuaders; it is a tangible expectation that, when met, creates deep reinforcement of the influence strategies you've implemented so far.

Most persuasion training stops at compliance, which is a mistake. Compliance occurs when they agree to engage with you, but real compliance doesn't occur until after they complete the expected course of action and enjoy the expected experience.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

For persuasion to be most effective you have to set expectations early and often. Expectation is anticipation of an experience that is to occur in the future.

The more overt the expectation, the more specific the experience must be for congruence. The more general or subtle the expectation, the more room you have in creating an experience. It is imperative when you are developing your persuasion strategies that you compare the current experience your audience has to the expectation, and create an experience that matches or exceeds that expectation.

### **MASS EXPECTATIONS**

Consumers today have come to expect an experience that is part theater, part magic, and always exceptional. There are too many examples of great experiences that people can point to as the model they expect. Some of the experiences that people consider exceptional today happen at:

Disneyland  
The Cheesecake Factory  
Starbucks  
The W Hotel  
FAO Schwarz  
American Girl  
Hard Rock Café  
Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville (or concert)

With expectations of amazing experiences being set higher every day, it is imperative that you create an experience you can control and guarantee to exceed the expectations of your audience. If you don't, they'll revert to previous or imagined expectations of the experience.

## **FANTASY**

You need to understand that to deeply persuade through an experience, you are inviting someone into a fantasy world. That fantasy world is one in which he is the hero and is able to create whatever he wants.

Marjoe Gortner was the nation's youngest Pentecostal minister. He performed his first wedding ceremony when he was four years old. You might ask how a four-year-old would know how to marry someone, much less actually do it. Well, he had a lot of help from his mother, who taught him exactly how to act and what to do. She also asphyxiated him to help him remember his Scripture.

Marjoe had a number of personal revelations as he grew older. One was that he was no longer a believer and that he didn't want to keep manipulating people. He also had a revelation about the people. He discovered that for people who were not allowed to watch television, dance, or participate in most forms of entertainment, the tent meetings he performed in were their entertainment, and he was the entertainer. To that extent, he treated each sermon like a rock concert and emulated Mick Jagger. If you search for Marjoe on YouTube you'll find several examples of him preaching, and if you watch his movements, you'll see Mick Jagger.

Marjoe understood the fantasy that people were experiencing when he performed and he met them where they were. By speaking to people where they are, you can move them to where you want them to go, but you have to meet them where they are first.

When you set out to persuade the masses, you must understand their fantasy. Once you understand what the special experience they want to have is, you can easily create it. If they don't understand what their fantasy world looks like, they are even

more susceptible to persuasion at that point, because they will allow you to create the fantasy for them. If you get to create the fantasy, yours will always be the experience they compare to.

Televangelists understand this entry into fantasy better than most.

## **ENTERING THE FANTASY**

Influence occurs when you enter the fantasy and meet the expectations. When a person experiences their fantasy coming true, they are ecstatic. It is that feeling of ecstasy that remains when the experience ends, that drives them back, that causes them to tell their friends about it, to proselytize to their network, and to encourage them to experience what they did.

Here's how a televangelist enters the fantasy. He looks into the camera and speaks with emotional intensity and sincerity. "God is telling me that there is a little old woman out there watching right now who has twenty dollars hidden away in her cookie jar and He wants you to get that money and send it in to Jesus right now." Knowing his audience, he understands that there are dozens, if not hundreds, of "little old women" watching who feel that they are being spoken to directly and who send in their cash.

I don't want people to think I'm taking a stab at religion here; I'm not. And, televangelists are not the only ones who are exceptional at entering the fantasy and intensifying the experience. The purveyors of real estate courses, direct marketing courses, and other get-rich-quick programs on late night television do it equally well. The good-looking (or average-looking) guy is being interviewed by one or more beautiful women with large breasts and revealing clothes. He is being interviewed in

a tropical location or inside a beautiful home. He reveals how not long ago he was working long hours in a dead-end job and he saw an offer just like this one and he decided to try it out and his life was changed. Look around him, he lives a life of opulence and the beautiful women fawn over his wealth and prowess. The fantasy is complete. Buying the package will lead to wealth and wealth leads to gorgeous women who want to have sex with self-made men.

You had one of two fantasies when you bought this book. One was that there are secrets that “they” don’t want you to know about influence and marketing. But you want to know the secrets, because if you do, you’ll become even more effective at getting the things that you want. This, by the way, is true, and so is the fact that by necessity as you learn the skills, the fantasy changes. You may even become jaded by what become very obvious attempts to enter your reality and persuade you. The second fantasy is that you are hyperaware of the attempts of media and corporations to manipulate your experience, and that the best defense is knowledge. For you, this book is nearly sacred, because it reveals exactly how persuasion, influence, coercion, and manipulation occur. It is the shield you can wield to protect yourself and your loved ones from the perils of persuasion.

A lot of people (mostly other persuasion experts) were concerned that I’d be making a mistake by revealing the two fantasies that sell this book . . . but I have my own fantasy that involves understanding how intelligent you are and how you’ll use these techniques for the betterment of the world around us. In my fantasy, persuasion is used to solve some of the most important issues facing the world today and to make profits more easily and predictably.

A company that did a phenomenal job of entering my fantasy and creating an experience that I couldn't resist is an organization called [guideon.org](http://guideon.org). Guideon.org does two very important things. They provide mentorship and education for children of military members who lost their lives in the war in Iraq or Afghanistan. They provide the children and their surviving parents a camp where they can be together with other people like them, to learn new skills for coping and adjusting. They provide them with an experience of a lifetime to help to some degree counter the worst experience of a young life. The second thing they do is provide final wishes. They find out what the parent who was killed promised to do with their kids when they got back and they make those last wishes happen.

Just as effectively as the televangelist who reaches out to the "little old woman," they reached out to me, the "veteran who wants to make a difference for American children affected by the war." In my fantasy, I could imagine nothing more important than helping children learn how to appropriately navigate their grief and to get complete. So I immediately set to work. I introduced them to Russell Friedman of the Grief Recovery Institute ([grief.net](http://grief.net)) and co-author of *When Children Grieve*. The Grief Recovery Institute is the nation's foremost resource for grievors and those who work with them. I also started telling everyone I know about the amazing work that this organization is doing. And, I included it in my book, where tens of thousands of people will learn about them. Many of you will feel as compelled as I did to make a donation to help a grieving child.

And why was I so compelled? Because I could literally feel the pain of losing a parent. I lost my own mother when I was

young to a cult, and she died when I was still young. I completely experienced the pain they were trying to help heal, and as a result I was compelled. For me, that felt a lot like a lump in my throat that led me to make a donation. What does your experience feel like?

This idea of fantasy is so important that I want to leave you with one last example. My wife owns very successful wellness spas called Breathe Wellness Spas. When she created the spas, she was very clear about the fantasy that the people who would be coming had. They expected physical healing in the lap of luxury. They wanted to feel better physically and emotionally by coming to one place and spending money once. So the experience begins the moment they call. They are greeted warmly; time isn't an issue on the phone. When they arrive, they are offered small luxuries like chocolates, fruit, or wine. They are greeted by name. Everyone from the greeter to the therapist is focused on delivering the experience. They are treated with the utmost respect. They are surprised at every step of the way. They are given unexpected treatment that heightens the experience of extreme pampering and relaxation. They are offered the opportunity to talk or just sink into bliss. Therapists literally tell each client that they won't speak to them after the initial consultation unless the client chooses to speak; that they should focus on the depth of their relaxation. When their service is complete, they are given water or juice again . . . in fine crystal goblets or very high-end wine glasses. The result is that people find themselves in a sanctuary that they don't want to leave and that they want to get back to as soon as they can, preferably with friends. Their fantasy is that they want to escape, to be treated as royalty, to be relieved



of their stress and be heard if they so choose, or to be one with themselves. It is also a very natural extension of the experience to take home products that allow them to try to recreate that sanctuary at home. They'll never ultimately be as successful on their own, so they'll always return. Delivering this kind of experience was so powerful, that when my wife and I moved to Virginia, her core clients were so unhappy with the alternative experiences, that they literally got together and got her to come back to Boise regularly to massage them. They were willing to pay a great deal more to have the experience that fulfilled the fantasy.

Fantasy is where people live and experience the reality that they want. Carefully evaluate your customer's fantasy and see where you can enter it. Once you understand the fantasy, you can intensify the experience. And when you intensify the experience, persuasion happens.

## ATMOSPHERICS

In 1973, marketing professor Phillip Kotler introduced the world to the science of atmospherics in the *Journal of Retailing*. According to Kotler, *atmospherics* is "The conscious planning of atmospheres to contribute to the buyer's purchasing propensity."

You've likely heard me say that businesses have a persona. Atmospherics are the persona of your business. Creating a business persona is consciously creating an atmosphere that increases the buyer's purchasing propensity. Every bit of the experience is orchestrated from the way your web site looks, to the way your building looks, to the way your staff looks and is trained to engage the buyer to the way your product is

designed or your service is delivered. The extent to which you can deliver an emotionally charged experience that fits the fantasy the buyer expects, will determine how profitable you'll ultimately be and the long-term effectiveness of your persuasion strategies.

I want you to ask yourself the following questions to determine what the atmosphere (and experience) is that you are delivering.

- What is the fantasy that my client has, and how do I acknowledge and reinforce it from the first point of contact?
- What is the experience people have when they call me?
- What is the experience that people have when they get to my web site?
- What are the implicit and explicit promises that I'm making to my audience?
- What can I do to intensify the fantasy and increase the experience?
- Am I setting criteria for the experience where one doesn't exist so that I can control the experience in the future?
- Do my building, my furnishings, or my staff create an emotionally compelling experience for people who come to my office or store?
- What are the three most important things I could do or change to intensify the emotional experience of the people who engage me?
- What is one thing that I can do that leaves an indelible experience in the buyer who engages me so that I own a dominant position of influence in his mind in the future?

**Subliminal Selling Secret**

Sometimes, when working to create an experience, people get stuck because they can't seem to figure out what people really want from the experience. One of the best ways to find out is to ask . . . but in a very specific way.

I like to ask people about the “good old days,” so I'll ask them to recount their first experience in the category. Their first experience may have been amazing or it may have been bad. Either way, it gives you a basis for determining where they are now.

Once they explain their first experience, I start asking them feeling questions, questions like, “How did you feel about \_\_\_\_?” Or, “When you think about \_\_\_\_, how does that make you feel?” Another great question is, “What will it be like when you find the perfect solution?” Or, “If you could wave a magic wand and create the perfect buying experience around this, what would that be like?”

By simply asking these kinds of questions, you can gather a great deal of emotional information that you can leverage in building your experience. Listen closely as people relate their experiences. They'll give you reams of emotional content that you can feed back to them as measured by the experience they will have with you.

In a coming chapter, I discuss how to create a cult of customers. A lot of people banter that word around as if they know what it means. Most don't and most cults of customers arise organically. But the most profitable ones are carefully cultivated. Cults form around experiences, as you'll discover.

## MAKE THE BUYER THE HERO

No matter whether your intention is to persuade the masses or the individual, you have to remember that you are really only persuading one person at a time. The conversation you have, or the experience you create, has to feel like it is unique to the person experiencing it. She needs to feel that it is directed at her personally because she must feel like she is in control of her decision for persuasion to occur. All persuasion is self-persuasion from the perspective of the individual who is complying with your efforts to get her to take a particular course of action.

Once you understand the fantasy that your audience has, and you know what experience you must deliver, you have to decide how to make the individual the hero. Everyone you persuade is looking for the emotional contentment that feeling like a hero brings. They want to feel like they did something good and powerful for themselves, their family, their company, or the world around them. They want to not only be recognized, but they must recognize that they are truly heroic for what they've done.

Heroics sounds very strong, but we need to put it in context. We are not talking about walking into a burning building or charging a machine gun emplacement.

*Heroics* in the eyes of the person being persuaded is simply the emotional contentment that comes from making a considered decision that feels right. You help people feel heroic when you help them experience an enhancement in the quality of their life in some way. The more they feel unique, or better, on the inside, or smarter than those around them, the more heroic their decision feels.

Many people confuse heroics with being gutsy, and that is a part of the hero fantasy that you can leverage. When

you get people to take public actions first, you talk about their intelligence, their courage, and their willingness to do something that others have difficulty doing. They find clarity in what others perceive as confusion, and they take action. For most people, that feels very heroic. In what ways can you engage people in experiencing those things with you?

Something I do in many of the talks I do where I sell something from the stage is to get people to come to the front in the very beginning of the talk and give me their money or credit card. When they do and nothing happens, they don't lose their money, and they aren't tricked into anything. There is actually a lesson there. They feel very good about having the courage to get up to the front of the room and participate. They begin having an experience.

**Subliminal Selling Secret**

When you create a hero, someone who has gone first, taken an action that is perceived to be dangerous or uncertain, you expose them to the world. Heroes feel most like heroes when they are exposed as such. People who feel like they've taken heroic action are also much more likely to become evangelists for your product, because telling their story of success makes them feel heroic all over again. One of the core desires that drive persuasion is the desire of people to feel special.

I want you to start thinking of persuasion as theater and those that you'll persuade as an audience. Once you begin to realize that everything you are doing is related to creating a memorable experience, your business will change. Your position as a persuader will change.

When you think of your job not as a persuader but as an actor, you begin to think differently about delivering an experience. Now, please understand I'm not giving you license to lie or engage your customers in fiction. I'm giving you license to carefully orchestrate and deliver a magical experience that can't be forgotten or easily replaced by a competitor.

Your office is your stage. The furnishings are your staging, the décor the scenery. They must be carefully placed and designed to create the atmosphere that the audience expects so they can engage themselves in your story. Your employees are your players. Each of them must be carefully choreographed to play his part. They must emotionally engage with the buyer to move the scene forward to conclusion. When everything is in place and everyone plays his part to perfection, the audience is moved, and compelled. They experience the magic they always knew existed.

You never forget your first kiss, your first love, your first pure adrenaline-filled adventure . . . and you never forget the first time a person or a company delivered an experience that was unbelievable. Everything that comes after is a comparison that mostly doesn't live up to the first experience.

**Implementation Is Everything**

*Money Follows Action*

Before you read the next chapter, take the following actions:

- Question at least three of your best clients or customers about their experience with you. Find out if there is something you could add that would make their experience

exceptional. Write down the emotional components of their discussion and evaluate the experience against those emotions. See if you need to do more and where you can enter their fantasy most effectively.

- Visit at least two or three experience-oriented or themed businesses and take notes about how they create the specific experience. Look at their décor, their attitude, and their employees. Notice how they create the theater and how it relates to the experience you expect and the experience you have. Notice how it feels when you are treated in a well-choreographed way. See where the choreography leads you as measured by opportunities to buy.
- Visit [guideon.org](http://guideon.org) and experience how an organization that is making a difference at an individual level creates an experience for you. If you like what they are doing, give them a donation. You'll be a part of something much bigger than any of us and you'll make an unbelievable difference for some very special kids. And, if you love what they are doing, send a note to a few of your friends and influence them to do the same.

## ESSENTIAL FURTHER STUDY

### Books

*The Experience Economy*—B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore (Harvard Business School Press, 1999)

*Coercion*—Douglas Rushkoff (Riverhead Books, 2000)

*Why People Buy Things They Don't Need*—Pamela Danziger (Dearborn, 2003)

### **Movies**

Search YouTube for Marjoe Gortner and visit [subliminalpersuasionbook.com](http://subliminalpersuasionbook.com) for some unexpected resources.

### **Television**

Choose at least two televangelists and two infomercials to watch to see how they deliver on the fantasy. I suggest that one televangelist you watch be Joel Osteen, and pick at least one real estate investment infomercial.