

**Feature Focus:**  
*Playing at work*

Anyone who has been involved in an XPotential workshop will probably remember that we provide participants with toys. You may also remember a brief explanation about how playing helps us to access the creative parts of our brain. In this article we look a little deeper and consider how to expand the benefits of play beyond occasional workshops.

"Play is our brain's favourite way of learning", according to author Diane Ackerman; the process of playing can help us to be adaptive and solve problems. Play also arouses curiosity, leading to discovery and creativity. Fundamentally, play is "fun"; it brings joy. This is particularly beneficial amongst teams; 90% of Gen Y-ers (i.e. the generation younger than "baby boomers") say they desire co-workers who make the workplace fun. Sharing laughter, joy and fun with others promotes bonding and helps to build a sense of community. Compassion and trust are both by-products of regular play, and this is reflected in the fact that playing cooperatively is preferred 3 times more than competitively. To play this way, a good choice of team mates can be influential. One survey by Hodge-Cronin & Associates found that 98% of CEOs prefer job candidates to have a sense of humour, with 84% believing that people with a sense of humour do a better job.

"The more a job inherently resembles a game – with variety, appropriate and flexible challenges, clear goals and immediate feedback – the more enjoyable it will be regardless of the worker's level" – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Psychology Professor at Claremont Graduate University. In some ways, work already resembles a game; with levels (job title) and scores (review / salary), but to reap the benefits of game-play, small things like stop-watch timing / racing to finish against colleagues or challenges such as including

or avoiding a certain word in a presentation, can enhance interest in tasks that can otherwise seem unappealing. Gaming like this can energize a work force. In the show "Kitchen Nightmares," chef Gordon Ramsey devised a restaurant bingo game for waiters, with the winner being the first person to get their tables to order every single item on the menu.

Bringing fun and play to the workplace helps to combat what Beverly Beuermann-King (Education and Development Consultant for the Canadian Mental Health Association) calls "Terminal Seriousness", which can hamper communication, problem solving and team work. The antidote is taking some "playtime" to relieve stress and boost productivity and creativity – toys can help with this by encouraging laughter, endorphins release, improved circulation and relief of tension. As the Zen saying goes:

"The bow that is always kept taut will break".

**Consumer Connections:**  
*Willingness to pay: What we can learn from the wedding industry*

When determining the pricing element of the marketing mix, one crucial factor to take into account is the consumer's willingness to pay. When it comes to willingness to spend money, there is one purchase that is given a disproportionate share of bank balance; weddings. Through considering the factors that contribute to this effect, we can determine how brands in other industries might use attributes of their own products and positioning to appeal to consumers in the way that wedding purchases do.

Perceived worth and importance of a wedding is clearly a key factor. Being (one hopes) a once-in-a-lifetime purchase, we can assume that the wedding "consumer" has spent a long time wanting, planning and thinking about the "product", creating the sort of desire that makes price seem less important than finally having the product in your hands in the same way as, for example an iPad launch.

Being "once-in-a-lifetime", wedding purchasing is  
*(continued on next page...)*





### Consumer Connections cont.:

unlike most other types of spending in that consumers (in general) have little previous buying experience to draw from, and are under time constraints plus the emotional pressure to satisfy expectations of friends and family. Fear of regret also plays a role; "perfect" is the most frequently used word in wedding related advertising, implying that without a certain product, your wedding would be "not perfect", making the purchase seem a more worthwhile way to spend money than on alternatives.



Determining the value of "the perfect" wedding also poses a challenge as consumers tend not to break it down into tangible value indicators, but see it as putting a price on a couple's love. Price decisions become less rational and compensatory and spending soars. Willingness to Pay studies have shown that people will pay significantly more for products (e.g. candles and thank you cards) described as for wedding use vs. for any occasion, even though the judged quality of the products is the same.

The debate around why weddings are seen as so important gets more philosophical; it is the one day completely centred around you (first to be served dinner, first to dance...), if this one chance to be the star does not impress, then our deepest fear of being un-important / not mattering will be affirmed. The big spend is about proving that we do matter, we are worthy – and this is a deep-seated motivation that has the potential to be translated across industries.

### Trend Spotting:

#### *Adverts from the archives*

Many of the brands we buy today have been around for a significant amount of time, through different eras and stages of each of our lives. Some focus their marketing on modern needs and lifestyle (e.g. how often do Sainsbury's talk about their 140 year heritage?), but recently there has been a trend towards "nostalgia marketing", with the revival of old campaigns such as the Tetley Tea Folk, and Galaxy's "Why have cotton when you can have silk?". Are these revival campaigns relevant today? Or is this just lazy creative?

As it turns out, many products and campaigns are so well-liked by consumers that they will take the time to petition for their return. In a similar way to how fan pressure on facebook persuaded Cadbury's to bring back the Wispa bar, Tetley Tea received a reported 10,000 public requests to bring back the Tea Folk, who were put to rest 9 years ago from Tetley's advertising.

Most arguments for turning to nostalgia for marketing revolve around the recession. It could be argued that it is less risky to return to spending on a proven marketing campaign than to try to invent something new, although this almost assumes no change in the market (competitors, shoppers...). The use of nostalgia is also seen to bring comfort and reassurance to consumers in economically uncertain times, where the past may seem more appealing than



the future. Part of this feeling of reassurance and certainty comes from the neuroscientific benefits of long-running campaigns; it takes a long time to create mental connections, but with repetition over time, brand messages and associations can become "hard-wired" into the consumer brain, forming long-term memory that cannot be undone. This technique is hampered by staff and leadership turnover, when somebody new joins a brand and wants to make their own mark.

In our digital society, a sense of belonging and clarity can be hard for consumers to achieve; another reason to return to the familiar, hard-wired marketing of the past. Feelings of comfort when associated with a brand can remind of reliability and trust, making consumers more comfortable with purchasing. The concept of looking to the past alone creates emotion; Kodak tested the same print campaign featuring a photo of a small football team but with either the current date and "capture the moment" or "1985 – relive the moment" as the caption. The use of nostalgia brought more emotional engagement, favourability, brand perception and retention. Although there is the risk of arousing bittersweet emotion, as you can't go back to the past. Leveraging nostalgia and rosy views of the past can work, but ultimately not forever – somebody has innovate to create these campaigns and hard-wire messages in the first place.



Traveller rating	
Excellent	1
Very good	5
Average	0
Poor	3
Terrible	10

## Shopper Journey: Exploring consumer reviews

Consumer reviews are now a staple part of the path to purchase, and an impossible touch-point to ignore, but how can brands manage their reputation and learn from reviews; can they be a trusted source of rich insight or are they exception cases?

More than 80% of online shoppers say that reviews influence their purchasing. They should not be seen as a threat to brands (unless you do not deliver on promises); 87% of reviews are positive. "Word of mouth" has always existed, but is now spread further and faster. Threat of negative reviews is also lessened by consumers' common sense /apprehension; "I always see what others have to say about products, some are helpful and some are not", "I read reviews to see if there's a pattern. Usually, there isn't. Some people just don't know how to use some things."

To devise an effective online reputation management strategy, we must examine the consumer's path: they begin with search therefore SEO is essential – reviews should be easy to find or consumers will get suspicious, so they should also be made easy to write. When consumers cannot find many reviews or cannot find any negative ones, trust is diminished.

Consumers prefer researching online reviews to asking a sales assistant for advice because it is seen to save time, improve purchase confidence and provide credible information. So who is generating these reviews? The 1/9/90 rule for user generated content can be applied: 1% are power users – contributing regularly out of enjoyment of creating, self promotion / importance; 9% are casual contributors, who have had a very positive or very negative experience that they feel compelled to share; 90% are lurkers who read but do not contribute. Of those who do write reviews, 90% do so to help others make better buying decisions, 70% to help companies improve. Through understanding who writes the reviews, why and how consumers use them – we can find ways to meet their needs and use better understanding when gathering insights from them.

## Brand Barometers: CSR – perks and pitfalls



Corporate Social Responsibility activities can help brands to differentiate and boost loyalty and trust. Experiments have shown that favourability and likelihood of choosing can be improved by affiliation with social causes that matter to the shopper. "Brand fit" with supported causes plays a key role. Many studies imply that high fit (e.g. water company supporting provision of clean water) improves consumers judgements about the company, although there is a risk that motivation will be seen as commercial and not honest; scepticism is a problem for CSR.

Negative PR tends to spread faster than positive (e.g. iPhone's "antenna-gate"), and CSR can be viewed as a buffer / protective measure. One study found that a bank's reputation for CSR led to willingness of customers to overlook negative information more than the bank's reputation for good service (unless the negative information was regarding customer care). However, awareness of their CSR was low, despite promotion, apart from in groups with a specific interest. CSR awareness can be increased by choosing causes that appeal to customers' interests. Open communication can help to create this alignment with what customers care about. Recently campaigners to support women with hair loss conditions petitioned for Mattel to produce a bald Barbie, earning 60,000+ facebook fans in one week. Mattel initially declined the idea, pointing out their other charitable activities, but as support grew they decided to meet with the petition leader. The publicity and clear consumer passion could make this a big opportunity for Mattel to use CSR effectively to make a difference and strengthen bonds with consumers.

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