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The Experience of a Lifetime: Erik Hauser & Experiential Marketing

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Above: Proctor & Gamble set up posh Charmin toilet tissue-equipped restrooms in New York's Times Square.

By Kimberly Reyes (@CommDuCoeur)

April's [National DTC Conference](#) in Washington DC had its share of highlights – a doctor's perspective from Howard Dean, loads of laughs from No Kidding, Me Too!'s Joe Pantoliano, and a host of qualified speakers talking about everything from the rise of empowered patients to how to market to consumers during a recession. But it was [Erik Hauser's](#) presentation on experiential marketing that really gave us a lot to think about as interactive specialists in

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Pharma marketing.

Believe or not, Erik Hauser is a celebrity in his own right. Currently the VP, Executive Creative Director, EURO RSCG, the world's fifth-largest global agency network, Hauser is a leading voice and large proponent of the adoption of experiential marketing. He founded his extremely successful boutique shop, [Swivel Media](#), in 2000 and launched [The Experiential Marketing Forum](#), as well as The [International Experiential Marketing Association](#). So what's Hauser so passionate about?

In an industry that can't seem to shake of our lust for numbers, the idea of developing campaigns around consumer emotion at first seems a bit radical. Sure, it's easy to count eyeballs, but how do you measure ROI on a multi-sensory experience? After we examine the definition of experiential marketing, the payoff becomes obvious.

1. Experiential marketing involves logic

Making experimental marketing work involves evaluating the thought process that follows a sensory experience. Instead of simply trying to sell your brand based on demographic data and targeted media messaging, you, as a marketer, will have to experience the full consumer purchase cycle.

Experiential marketing is often part of a multi-platform effort that does so much more than turn eyeballs into cash – it locks in fans of your brand. The consumer gets the feeling that you really understand them, and with the rapid growth of empowered patients, showing that your brand is patient-centric is key.

2. Experiential marketing facilitates action

It's a well-known fact that consumers trust each other exponentially more than they trust the brand. They know your motivation and objectives, and know that your ultimate goal is to sell them your product. But when a trusted friend recommends a product or brand, it comes from some place different: their friend is saying *I am telling you about this because I know that it will help you*. Experiential marketing leads to viral, word-of-mouth results. The consumer is testing, feeling, and experiencing the product. The consumer knows what it does, how it works, and is likely to pass this information along to friends.

3. Experiential marketing has long-term effects

Experiential marketing creates lasting associations with your brand through meaning and relevance, but it also opens up new data to your market research

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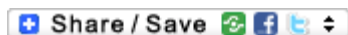
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that was not available through traditional promotional venues. You get to experience first-hand how a consumer reacts to your brand and your messaging, and how they interact with your product after making the purchase decision. Most important, the face-to-face connection and the memories you make with consumers will stay with them long after the event.

In the Pharmaverse, there have been few who dared to take the experiential route. Obviously, you can't set up a table in the middle of Times Square and hand out prescription meds. But that doesn't mean that there's not way to harness the power of experiential marketing to build your brand. For instance, if you're promoting a weight-loss drug, you can [take a tip from Tyra](#) and outfit consumers in fat suits and draw further attention to the adversities of obesity by setting up an athletic course for the participant to complete. It's a well-known fact that one of the side effects of diabetes is a decrease in sight. Consumers will experience just how tragic eye conditions related to untreated or unmanaged diabetes are with goggles that simulate blurred or decreased vision. These types of experiences are a call to action for patients suffering from a condition, or for caretakers who are concerned about the health of their loved ones, and may lead to the recommendation of treatment options.

In a book by Max Lenderman called [Experience the message: how experiential marketing is changing the brand world](#), Hauser offers the following quote: "The ultimate medium for marketing is people, and to reach them it involves giving them a fantastic brand experience. They then will do the marketing for you."

How can your brand use experiential marketing to create lasting memories for your consumers?



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