

# Experience counts



By [Gavin Mills](#)

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Sometimes we become very arrogant, creating experiences. The holy grail of our trade is 'behaviour change', but when familiarity breeds contempt, how easy it is to trade focus for superficial flash and butt-kissing brownie points.

Changing the way people behave is never superficial. When did a banner bring about any more influence than anyone entering, exiting, or doing your business...?

*Put like that, mind you, that's not bad... But to the point, they would not ...you get it!* When last did you see a guest take a bite of sushi, and collapse into a dithering pile of subservience at your feet...?

Consumerism is not driven by logic. Even logical and moral decisions are rooted in emotion.

Experiential activation is about *moulding* the experience, about orchestrating precise sensory stimulus - of all the senses - in ways that evoke specifically targeted emotional response and plotted journey. Sight, sound, taste, touch and smell are simply the conduits, not the target - which obviously is about mind space...

'Who shot the sheriff?'

Who cares - unless the sheriff is relevant in our lives.

We need to focus on things that are emotionally significant to the target audience... Things like honesty, credibility, consistency, velocity (or delivery), desirability, relevance and values.

## Let's consider a few examples...

I was watching Loyiso Goya a while back doing a skit on Helen Zille and our friend Jacob.

The gist was that the DA had no chance in hell of ever dislodging the ANC. Why? Because the leader is white. Helen Zille can dance herself into a coma, she can speak every official language since the birth of humankind, but she's still from the same bad guys that did apartheid.

...And so no trust, no chance...

Take the greatest story ever told. In the temple at 12, for three days he wows the high priests... Just past 30 - the new

Messiah with literally a cult following. He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, hailed as King of the Jews; and 3 days later, after one outburst of enraged insanity disrupting power players of both religion and trade, he's tortured and crucified - as the people's choice over Barabus, the bad guy of the time!

Three morals to this story: All can be tolerated - until you pee on the hands of power; when stars are born, give them enough time and enough space, and they will snuff themselves out eventually ...and if you want to lead the Jews, don't run around brandishing the flag of the Gentile.

## An 'amaizing' campaign

In a totally different vein, food brands have looked to dethrone maize as staple diet of the masses for years. Off they go, offering discounts, running promotions, incentivising with anything and everything from Noddy badges to Divine intervention. ...It's about church groups, stokvels, shisanyamas, imbizos... You name the ethnic boat, they're all on it - and all missing the point: They are acting like brand colonialists, fighting for their share of ethnic intestinal dominion! Where's the love, where the trust...

Behaviour change has very little to do with experiences in isolation, and everything to do with experiences in terms of embedded perceptions and values. Your cute little sushi sandwiches might go down a storm, but they're not going to sell your stuff in isolation - unless your stuff is sushi sandwiches. Your breathtaking décor is going to set the scene, but not going to sway minds in isolation - unless you're selling interior design. ...It's not as simple as that. *It never is!*

Getting people to change their ways is always complex - and more than skin-deep. Bombard their senses, of course - but make sure you do it in a way that seduces on their terms, relevant to their lives ...and with the promise of much, much more than just a cheap thrill or one-night stand.

## ABOUT GAVIN MILLS

Gavin Mills is the MD of Don't Forget George Events, ([www.dontforgetgeorge.co.za](http://www.dontforgetgeorge.co.za)), a specialist event production and communications company launched in 1998. He is as passionate about life as he is about his business, and believes it is up to voices of reason in a turbulent world, to help craft our future, not just accept it. Contact Gavin on tel +27 (0)11 791 3308, email [gavin@dontforgetgeorge.co.za](mailto:gavin@dontforgetgeorge.co.za) and follow @Gavinmills on Twitter.

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