

ARDA 2008 Article

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Title: - Time to Re-evaluate?

Put a frog in a pan of boiling water and it will jump right out again. Put a frog in a pan of cold water, heat it up slowly until it boils and the frog will stay in the pan – it doesn't notice that its world is getting hotter. In the last ten years our world has changed dramatically around us, - have we responded to it or are we like the slowly warming frog?

Six Triggers of Change

I am no social commentator, and the six triggers of change I list below are of course open to debate and argument. These six triggers, in my humble opinion, have changed dramatically, the way the world thinks and acts; the way your consumers decide when and how to spend their money.

Nine Eleven was a grim day in humankind's history. A single day that changed the world. But what did it change? – We all remember where we were that fateful moment that we learned of the unfolding drama in New York. We all had different responses, yet one overriding common response that I have noticed in talking to people is how it made all of us reconsider our life priorities and question our motives for living. We rediscovered the meaning of family, of our children and of love. We vowed to spend more time doing these things, and determined to devote more time and resources to pursuing them.

December 26th 2004, - this time the biggest natural disaster in recent decades, - the Asian Tsunami. For the first time ever, the whole world united in grief and united in giving. Christian, Moslem, Jew; Asian, American, European; poor man, rich man; we all united and gave what we could and watched the drama of human suffering, and poignant pinpricks of hope randomly and rivetingly revealed on our televisions and computer screens. For the first time ever, the whole planet came together in one act of caring and love for our fellow man.

Global Warming. Love him or hate him, but big Al has a point, and although he didn't invent the science of climate prediction and its consequences if left unchecked, he, like many other world politicians has put it center stage on the global political agenda. Why? – Is it a cynical attempt to win political favour or does the world really care about its own future. I prefer to believe it is the latter, and evidences again that our global society is changing and accepting responsibility for its actions. – Yes, the caring side of humanity is on show again – and this time it's fashionable.

The Internet. Sir Tim Berners-Lee had no idea of what he was starting at the Berkley Union in the mid eighties. Twenty years later and the internet has changed our lives. Irrevocably,

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radically and unpredictably. We now expect instant information from any corner of the globe. We expect to be able to shop, download movies, store TV, interact with our friends and instantly communicate with anyone, anywhere. The internet has driven a “now” society, but it has also created other less obvious changes. Single handedly it has changed our perception of what we want from our information. The internet is the great leveller, it abhors deceit, concealment and propaganda; it seeks truth, reveals secrets and promotes transparency; it builds communities across thousands of miles, it unites your owners, it has spawned social networking – it has redefined today’s consumer.

The digital era. Technology has done for our generation what the industrial revolution did for our forefathers two hundred years ago. It has transformed our lives. Living is easy, and how we love it. Cellphones, smartphones, ipods, big TV’s, thinking cars, GSM, PC’s in the home, wireless communication, downloads, uploads, reloads. And they say we’ve only just scratched the surface. Through technology we are living longer, Western nations have pension crises, Eastern nations are growing at dizzying rates, China is about to put a man on the moon, and the world is 24/7.

The age of cheap travel. Like never before. True story, - I recently booked an airfare from London to Rome return for just 8c, yes, just eight cents plus taxes! – Regular low cost carrier (Ryanair), now the largest airline in Europe. Millions of ordinary people now fly frequently for pleasure. Vacation home booms have been fuelled by cheap access through such flights, business barriers have disappeared, and your granny now thinks nothing of flying – and she probably still remembers the Wright Brothers!

What does it all mean?

So what does all this mean for us in Leisure Real Estate and Vacation Ownership? – Are we the frog in the slowly heating pan, or did we see the gas get turned on?

All of the above changes in society mean that our prospects don’t respond in the same way as they used to. – they now seek truth and transparency, seek to satisfy first their desire to trust you, love to buy but hate to be sold to, and have a very different view on work life balance than they did just ten or twenty years ago. – How then do we sell them?

Route one – keep on doing the same old same old.

Route two – adapt, evolve and move with the times.

Technology on the sales deck.

Technology is a part of our everyday lives. Consumers expect to be entertained. Consuming has moved from necessity to experiential.

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Technology is at its best when you don't notice it; when it delivers magic without you knowing. – One such experience is at the movie theatre, - when did you last go to the movies and consider the awesome sound system surrounding you , flooding your senses with a torrent of emotion? When did you ever consider that Spiderman probably couldn't actually swing from building to building, or James Bond couldn't run up a 45 degree crane jib? – But such special effects hold us spellbound. We suspend our disbelief and believe.

Technology on the sales deck is now at the point where it can deliver, and can be an integral and profitable part of the sales process.

Interactive systems such as Generator now have the ability to dramatically improve sales performance when combined with the right sales management and sales process training and evolution. Consumers who can see their future vacation dreams build before their very eyes are much more likely to buy, and seduction is the key.

Seduction targets desire, and desire comes from the heart. The Art of Seduction and the Science of Seduction are central to making technology work on the sales deck. It is essential to ensure that your sales technology partner has equal measures of experience in sales psychology, creativity and building technology.

Interactive sales systems must be robust, reliable and proven. The sales function of a vacation ownership operation is mission critical.

Installed professionally, supported competently and designed effectively, an interactive sales system can deliver huge advantages to a developer. These include –

- Consistency
- Clarity
- Visibility
- Transparency
- Control
- Performance Gains

Consistency in terms of ensuring that the very best sales pitch that could be designed for your company is now being delivered at every sales site by every sales person, every tour (assuming that sales management are equally committed).

Clarity in terms of non-confusing presentation of information by each and every one of your salespeople. We know that the biggest reason for cancellation is post-purchase lack of understanding – caused initially by a triumph of emotion over understanding on the sales deck. At Generator we have seen rescission rates fall dramatically as a result (up to 80% falls).

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Visibility in terms of both sales usage reports right down to the minutia of how much time each salesperson spends in each area of the sale on every tour, and right up to being able to compare one deck's performance with another, or one period with another, and for the first time ever, know precisely what caused it. - Great for coaching, observing reasons for failure or success, and determining how to change and evolve your own sale and salespeople.

Transparency that resonates with today's consumer, creating more trust and therefore more willingness to enter into purchase agreements with you.

Control over your sales force to ensure they are not opening you to compliance issues, to ensure that they deliver on your brand promise, and that they help to differentiate your company from the old public perception of timeshare.

Performance gains that consistently exceed 20% on revenues and 50% on EBITDA.

Generator Systems recently launched G3. G3 delivers a personalized tour for each and every tour party, based on what it learns about them in the discovery process. To see the look on tour's faces as they see their own preferences and dreams embraced in your vacation club or resort is simply magic. More sales naturally result.

Yes, the world has changed. And it's probably not going to change back to how it was. As an industry we have to adapt and evolve, and perhaps nowhere more-so than that bastion of tradition, - the sales deck.

Will you suffer a comfortably warm slow demise, or will you notice that the water has changed and consider it might be time to change your own surroundings? Will you croak, or jump?

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