

15 Interviews

Here is a series of interviews with some of the leading experts in experiential marketing worldwide:

David Polinchock CXO, Brand Experience Lab, Global (DP)

Richard Norby and Kirsten, Live Marketing, Chicago, United States (RN)

Erik Hauser, Founder of IXMA (International Experiential Marketing Association) and EMF (Experiential Marketing Forum), Global (EH)

Kevin Jackson, Jack Morton Worldwide, United Kingdom (KJ)

Justin Singh, One Partners, Australia (JS)

Spero Patricios, Launch Factory, South Africa (SP)

Ian Whiteling, Events Review, Global (IW)

Paul Ephremsen, ID, United Kingdom (PE)

How would you define experiential marketing?

DP: We define it as the sum of everything you do. The experience has to represent what you say you stand for.

RN: Many people have started to think of it as a marketing channel, equating it to marketing in face-to-face or live environments. I think of it differently, I think of experiential marketing as a technique that can be applied to any channel. The key points are to involve the audience intellectually, physically and emotionally. As long as you have those three types, you have experiential marketing. It allows you to create a deeper connection with them and a more memorable meaningful experience.

EH: It is a more holistic approach to marketing, it's a marketing methodology. It's not a catch phrase, buzzword or tactic. A methodology that appeals to both the rational and emotional side of the consumer mind. Previously traditional marketing was a monologue, through mediums such as TV – they said 'Here it is'. Now it's turning into a conversation. It allows brands the opportunity for people to tinker around with their brand and make things the way they want it. It's really the methodology that's customer-centric instead of product-centric.

KJ: Experiential marketing is any communication that has an emotional richness, and that allows for some connection that isn't there by the mere fact of communicating. Experiential marketing involves changing beliefs and behaviours. Unless you engage the communication with an emotional trigger, it won't work. It must bring you into the message.

JS: The way we define it as a company is 'We are not purely an experiential live agency, we are the antithesis of advertising.' We create experiences where people choose to engage, which is the opposite of big traditional advertising agency models.

SP: It is an interaction between the brand and consumer on a physical, one-to-one level. The key thing is that it must be an interaction.

IW: Communication or engagement of an audience using as many senses as possible.

PE: Experiential involves live interactions with brands and consumers. Memorable interactions that involve the senses and a degree of creativity, that allows the brand to create emotions that a consumer can relate to.

How do you see the evolution of live marketing?

DP: In an ultra-marketed world, one of the best ways to break through the clutter is to engage in one-on-one interaction.

RN: Part of the evolution comes out of two big influences: one is the collapse of mass media and as it becomes fragmented – things have to become specific to each type of people. If you combine this with another influence, which is the internet and web 2.0 – which is creating richer experiences for people on the web, providing them with opportunities for them to interact, it's a multi-way communication between companies and their customers. The web development companies have also begun to blur the lines between people's professional persona and their private

personas. It's within that context that we see it becoming more effective to create experiences for people so that they can connect in this rich and meaningful manner.

Because there are so many marketing messages, it's crucial for them to have these relevant meaningful experiences – that's why participants understanding what the product, the brand is really is so much more beneficial, not only to the company but also to the end user.

EH: Experiential is a methodology that can be applied equally across any media: there are some great experiential TV commercials that are not simply about the product. There is a misconception in the market that it has to be tactile in nature; that you have to physically touch it. You do not have to touch to feel it. You can move people just using sight and sound, not just with a live event. Having said that, the live event is one of the better media to yield experiential methodologies, as it is multi-sensory.

Going back to television or print, to say that experiential marketing cannot be on a print ad is like saying that a picture could never make you cry. There are several memories of adverts that when you look back to your childhood, you never forget, and you remember the brand. It's about connected meaning and relevance between the product and the audience. If you can achieve that, then you wind up with these campaigns that are timeless and unforgettable. That is the ultimate win. Sometimes people put together campaigns that are funny just for the sake of being funny, but not connected back to the brand. In that case, you can forget whom the ad was for. Experiential marketing is about being authentic and genuine, as consumers can see right through brand pretences.

KJ: I think the evolution of live marketing has already started. It's human nature to want to belong to something. It allows audiences to join into the communication; that's one of the most important aspects, being part of something. Everyone is on a journey, and the brand journey and consumer journey are joining together in this thing called live marketing. That's why it's so important; it's the live part, the growing part of the communication mix. People want to connect to something, that's why they go to festivals.

JS: I think the one thing that is certain is that the live marketing-based opportunities will increase. The proportion of budgets invested by clients is increasing. Live event marketing has been planned separately, and now it is being integrated into the broader communications plan and the overall strategy. I also believe that experiential-based communication is the future for lots of smaller, more targeted programmes.

SP: A lot of brands are still doing it on a promotional level, but to make it a conversation and an interaction we must come up with creative ways to make it interactive. Sampling is not experiential. There is still quite a way to go because people view it in a different light, and it's executed in different ways.

IW: It came about due to necessity, essentially within the last five years, with the opening of more global markets. This means increased competition for every single business, along with fragmentation of media, which has meant that companies can no longer mass communicate through one channel such as TV.

On top of that, there has also been an increased awareness amongst business and consumer audiences, which means that they've become wise to the traditional forms of marketing. One of the best ways of getting around this is to create a unique experience that communicates brand and product messages directly to the consumer or the target business.

PE: It went through a confused stage with no central body in the UK, and definitions were blurry. People who were doing sampling and roadshows were talking about it, and a division started forming between the field marketing agencies and the experiential agencies. ID's view involves the commonality in the use of people on the field, and that's where the similarity stops. Experiential is about creativity and creating an 'on-brand moment'. Field is about a functional service that facilitates sales. Originally the term didn't exist; activities in the field with live scenarios were there, but what has evolved is the discipline itself. Creative people have jumped on the bandwagon and realized that if this is creative, we should be involved. More traditional media are realizing that consumers are being bombarded with messages, and therefore the marketing environment is playing into the hands of the experiential discipline. More agencies are trying to get into this space.

How would you compare live brand experiences to other marketing channels?

DP: Live brand experiences as a marketing channel have great power because you are engaging the audience. It is an opportunity to bring the brand to life. Hamley's is a store with products on the shelf, everyone including employees and guests acting as friends – the store has such a life and vibrancy. Also the Apple store – it's alive, you're excited and enthusiastic. These are as opposed to other stores that don't stand out that have no engagement experience at all. I am giving cash, so they have to give something back tangibly. Experiential marketing is that heart and soul of the consumer experience.

RN: I think that there's a fundamental shift away from 'one size fits all' marketing. Experiential marketing plays well in this one-to-one, or one-to-few kind of world that we are transitioning to. It's not so much that it's a new channel; we have to look at all the channels and see how they can be more experiential. It's not just your live strategy, it's about engaging people physically and emotionally, more than ever before across every channel.

EH: It's not one tactic, but rather a methodology that can be utilized across any media. It's not just live events, but much more.

KJ: The thing I've always loved about brand experience since 1998, the thing that brand experience does that no one else does, is it's aware of the context in which you are exposed to it. If you're at home watching TV there's no contextual relevance. DM is the same. Live marketing makes you ready for the message, gives you the message, and gives you a way to behave and believe. That's the important thing.

JS: I think that it almost speaks for itself. At One Partners it's about people actively choosing to engage with the experience, rather than the traditional model of trying to ambush people while they are unaware.

SP: I don't say that we should do away with other channels where experiential has an upper hand. Where people are bombarding consumers with messages, the consumer is starting to fight against that. Experiential has an advantage because we can start interacting with consumers and they will want to interact back. The other mediums will never go away, and experiential should be used with them, even though it does have the upper hand.

IW: I think it is more holistic, and it also gives something back to the target audience which no other medium achieves with credibility.

PE: It's more interesting. Consumers seem to enjoy and want it, and there are stats here to back that up. It's more memorable and directors have voted it the most memorable medium. It's obviously an opportunity for consumers to touch, taste, feel and interact with your product or brand. It's a good way of conveying complex information that couldn't be placed in a product or advert because it allows explanation. It has the ability to generate word-of-mouth and it can increase sales. It's direct, and therefore you can choose who speaks, and log who you've spoken to.

The greyest area is that it's potentially easy to measure, but in reality it seems difficult to get an industry norm to what you would expect results to be. On paper of course you know who you are talking to. You could then, in theory, contact that person in 12 months' time and find out what effect you had on them. The difficulty in doing that is it's not a broadcast media, volumes are lower, and it's difficult to isolate the effect of the medium when that same consumer has been exposed to other media. It's also relatively high for the cost per interaction compared to other media. The challenge is to talk about the effect per interaction, in which case it would be far higher.

How do think things have changed or are changing regarding marketing budgets and what portion goes to experiential marketing or live brand experiences?

DP: We are seeing big changes. Traditional marketing approaches are being seen as less effective. The challenge in trying to figure out where the budget lies is that there are many categories: for example outdoor in the United States is one of the largest categories. This could include an ad in the background or an experiential campaign. Therefore it's hard to measure exactly, and soon the challenge will be for companies to create an experience across all their advertising and marketing channels.

RN: It's a little bit scattered right now. Obviously there's been a move of money away from mass media, with a lot of it going to digital and live events. Within live events, we've seen people going to more experiential approaches. With a technology brand, instead of giving people 100 demos, they are getting away from that; they'll do fewer demos but they'll make the demos experiences where people can see how the applications can work in their daily lives. Companies are shifting away from older traditional approaches to things that are more experiential.

EH: Again, running under the assumption that experiential is a methodology, companies are starting to realize that they need to utilize that methodology. The minute it becomes about product, it becomes about price, and that's a deadly spiral. You need to form a bond beyond price with the customer. You need to appeal to the emotional side; you need to tug on the heartstrings a little bit. It's about forming a connection but not quite falling in love. You're not going to get that deep with most of your customers.

KJ: First, there is no such thing as an experiential marketing budget. It is a new thing. The recognition is that it needs to be done.

JS: I think, first, there's no general rule of thumb in terms of what the proportion of budget is spent on experiential. We work with clients on an individual project-by-project basis, though other brands, such as Nokia, have a set portion that always goes to experiential marketing. Budgets are increasing. We work with Unilever, Electrolux, the big banks, Samsung, and more – all of them have increased their budgets over the last few years. In terms of what they spend with us, they have at least doubled in the last couple of years. There's also more scope for revenue for agencies like us; we are the lead agency for the Unilever deodorant project. Specifically in terms of channels, a big component of what we do is digital or we guide the media, working with the media agency. More and more clients are looking to their media agencies and asking them to allocate money to experiential marketing without knowing what it costs. We create branded experiences that people choose to engage with in any interactive medium, such as digital, mobile or live.

SP: I believe that they are changing. It's hard to measure though. The traditional mediums have measurement tools, but in experiential you can't measure what your competitors are doing. In regard to our clients, there has been a 25 to 35 per cent shift from traditional to non-traditional media in a 24–36 month period.

IW: It's no secret that companies are dedicating more resources to live marketing in all its forms, from internal to external on the internal side, in response to a skills gap that many developed countries are facing, and a need to retain and motivate their staff. There's also been a shift in talent from traditional media to experiential marketing. Classic examples include the Peter Cowey move within Fitch from advertising to live medium. It will be interesting to find out his next appointment. More interestingly, Larry Deutch recently moved from Ogilvy in the United States to Jack Morton Worldwide. This move is particularly noteworthy because Deutch was working on the experiential side of Ogilvy. He wanted to move to a company that specialized in experiential. Furthermore, experiential activity is increasingly forming a focus of marketing campaigns from which other disciplines such as DM and digital are spinning off.

PE: It all depends how far up the organizational food chain your client is. Some clients have an allocated budget for experiential (clients that spend more than 2 million pounds per year). With clients that spend

100,000 or 200,000 per year, it's unclear where the budget came from. It's still rare to deal with marketing directors; most are still dealing with brand managers or events teams. Procurement is signing the deals. Signing deals with multi-brand clients is the future, and historically it's been very tactical. People will start doing it through procurement and then becoming the 'official preferred supplier'. Changes include predicting the majority of turnover for the year, not just as and when stuff comes in. The knock-on effect of this is that only the strongest agency will survive. Roster, etc, will make it harder for smaller agencies. This will lead to more mergers and acquisitions, and consolidation.

Is experiential marketing effective across different sectors?

DP: From pharmaceutical to automobile and packaged goods, it has to be executed effectively for the audience, but yes, it is effective.

RN: Yes. Because, if you involve people emotionally, intellectually and physically – this is something you want, no matter what product you have. You are going to make an impression on people and move them further down the sales tunnel.

EH: I believe yes, if done appropriately. No matter whether you're in the business of widgets or software, it's the most effective methodology out there. Especially all this talk about dollars, especially in the recession in the United States. Even a brand like Wal-Mart who are subject to great commoditization says 'Save money, live better' instead of what it used to say, which was just 'Save money'. It's about what they are going to do for the consumer in terms of experience. It's a major shift in how they speak with their consumers, to shift from saving money to focusing on the customer experience in a Wal-Mart.

KJ: Yes, absolutely. I don't know of a sector where we wouldn't be able to do something (at Jack Morton), eg B2B, consumer, stakeholders, shareholders, etc.

JS: Yes, absolutely. It's a philosophy, relating to any brand or target audience. People appreciate experiences that are targeted towards them. Five years ago it was mainly used to target youth-based brands, but that's no longer the case.

SP: Yes. It is definitely effective across any brand.

IW: Due to the flexible nature of experiential marketing, I'd have to say yes.

PE: Interestingly, most of the business is FMCG (low-ticket items), food and drink, etc. On paper, you would think brands that are big-ticket items would be more into it, because there's more space to demo features and benefits. Also, the cost of acquisition, ie if you were selling a car it would be more cost-effective. It's therefore easier to justify the fact that it costs, for example, £1.50 per consumer when then they go on to buy an expensive vehicle. Maybe it's different for other agencies and their clients.

What are the pros and cons for a brand to outsource or keep an experiential campaign in-house?

DP: Experiential agencies have the experience, they bring to the process a route map of how to miss all the missiles, they know what tools and skill sets you need, they know how to activate an audience. The potential downside is that if it is not connected with the brand in an intrinsic way, then it becomes insincere and inauthentic.

RN: It's fine to do it in-house if your internal resources have the expertise and the depth of resources to do it. Most companies find themselves in a position where they don't have the internal resources to develop it, or they become too inbred either creatively or otherwise and need an outside view. This is especially relevant in challenging economic times where they might want to keep their internal headcount lean. One other advantage in turning to outside practitioners is that they are continually exposed to ideas and fresh thinking, and constantly exposed to things that are going on across the board.

EH: No brand should ever do their own marketing internally; they are too close to the brand to be objective. There always needs to be a third party, because if you work for a brand day in and day out then you lose objectivity. If you have problems in life you bring in a friend; if you have a problem in business you bring in a consultant. You cannot see it from an external perspective because you are way too close to it. There should be a position inside the company called an experiential marketing manager or department who manages the relationship between the agency and the brand.

KJ: Experiential marketing is just like any other marketing in some respects. You have brands and clients who try and cobble together their

own team, and others who say they need an agency to do it for them. The beauty of an agency is that they tend to be very experienced. One of my old bosses said that the agencies are like bees that pollinate ideas. They work with so many different clients and environments, and they understand the relationship and leverage for the good of the client. This is why you employ an agency of any type.

JS: I'm not sure, but it's a natural evolution. Look at clients that brought advertising in-house. Clients actively outsource it now so it will be the same. It's very hard for people inside a brand to see best practice across the board. If you want to save money then bring it in-house, but you might not get the best results. A specialist is needed. Customer experience management is something that should be brought in-house also, because it's important to maintain this throughout the whole organization.

SP: The age-old saying of 'You need to use experts in their field' is true. You need a lot more experience. Experiential companies can work on any brand and still have a project team, an infrastructure, that can focus on the cause. With in-house the skill set is wrong. It's simply not high enough. It's like when clients bring advertising in-house, they outsource again later on. To do real experiential, not just promotional marketing, you need to outsource because the creative process requires more, such as art directors, etc.

JW: Deutch was quoted as saying businesses are moving away from being attracted to integrated agencies, seeing a need for specific talent that relates to each discipline. The key factor of experiential is that it is very difficult for an agency to simply add it to their spread of expertise, because experiential requires not only creative, but also logistical and organizational skills that are generally only found amongst individuals who have direct experience organizing events. Although companies often have internal marketing teams, and occasionally specific event organizing teams, they rarely combine the two disciplines.

PE: It's about expertise; from venue strategies to understanding the idiosyncrasies, logistics, production, insurance, staffing, recruitment and training. It's all about specialist training now, and it's taken us 14 years to build what we see as a suitable infrastructure. It's not something that someone can do instantly. That's another difference between this and other mediums. With a poster or an ad it's an idea, but then it doesn't require a similar level of management once it goes live. There is a much more sophisticated level of infrastructure required to make

things go smoothly. This is even good protection against agencies that come in and want to become this type of agency overnight. Speciality staffing databases can't be built overnight.

How should creatives come up with the big idea (the live brand experience)?

DP: Again our approach is a story-telling approach at the heart of everything we are talking about. We are trying to tell a compelling story; we approach it from a theatrical perspective. Write the right script; produce the right show for the right audience. Some people come up to us and want us to have a tactical perspective, such as 'bring our numbers up'. What they should do is say 'What is our story, how will we tell it effectively and therefore how will we execute that?'

RN: This is an excellent question, because most people start in the opposite of the right place: they start by thinking about the product. The first place to look at is the target audience, who they are, what their persona is, what are their key wants, desires, visions. Then you look the qualities or unique things about the product, you look to match them up. Then you have the material that you need to start brainstorming creative ideas. You need to thoroughly understand the target audience.

KJ: Well, to go back to an earlier point about budgets, there was a time when experiential was based on a creative, wacky 'let's just do this' method. Now creative has to be based on audience insight. It's no different to a TV campaign: understand the audience through planning, research, audience insight and creative platform, and translate it to creative wow.

JS: There are numerous models. There should be individual people who are responsible for this such as creative directors. We work collaboratively, but there are numerous methods, such as brainstorming. We think holistically about people. We think about what the target audience enjoys and what they're into rather than their media habits.

SP: The LORERIES are the South African Creative and Advertising Awards, and I head up their experiential ideas. When we measure creativity, we put the ideas up and they are ranked from 1 to 10. That's how we measure creativity on experiential.

IW: As in every single marketing campaign, it is essential to carry out extensive research before the creative process event starts and the main

key areas are objectives, and audience. We have said before creativity alone will not produce a viable experiential campaign.

PE: We get an in-depth understanding of the brand and the brand cues, then we try our best to come up with something that brings that to life, making it clear what product it is. With Crofts we wanted to educate consumers about ‘the drinking occasion’, changing perceptions of when alcohol should be consumed – moving it from a brand that people assumed was drunk occasionally (ie Christmas) to a drink that can be chilled over a summer evening. So we created an experiential environment Croft spot, hired a famous designer-gardener to create an area which we placed at places like Hampton Court, and then a scaled-down version which we took to places like Fireworks in the Park. It was a relaxing environment where consumers could enjoy it, and sample the product. It’s not a product-oriented event, it’s an emotional experience. That’s the type of thinking that would go into most campaigns.

What’s most important when planning experiential marketing?

DP: First and foremost today is utmost respect for the audience, who they are and what motivates them. Be respectful of their time in delivering that experience. A brand has a personality just like everyone on this planet; you have to be respectful of the brand story so that it’s authentic. Otherwise, it is just tactical.

RN: There are a number of things; first, I want to reiterate understanding the target audience. Probably equally important is be very clear on your objectives. Also take into account the resources – what are you going to have available to execute this? People come to us and say we want the best programme ever, but they have a tiny budget. At the end of the day the two don’t go together. Also be realistic of the timeline.

EH: Make sure first and foremost that you set up the proper metrics and proper objectives, make sure that the client buys into it and that they are very clear and not subject to change. State that we are going to measure it by x.

JS: The most important thing when planning is an audit: consumer, product, retail, getting relevant information and being able to derive the right insights that will drive the strategy. We have got planners who are from a traditional agency background and it can be quite similar.

SP: It’s a process. The big idea always has to come across.

IW: A key part of the planning process is making sure that every aspect of the experiential activity matches both objectives and is also effective with the target audience. Key elements would include engaging content, venue or location of the activity, and appropriate methods of delivery. If all elements can be satisfied, you will be well on the way to planning a successful campaign.

PE: Considering the consumers' mindset is important, and also the relationship between volume expectations from the client against the depth of the experience. Remember your consumer profile in detail.

What's important about the situation and background of a brand when they approach you for experiential marketing?

DP: We use a softer language. When I talk about the brand story, it's an understanding of the brand objectives and what they have been doing.

If you copy what BMW does, it will not work because the experiential campaign was designed to be relevant to BMW. If a new technology is brought in and used incorrectly, people do not say 'I didn't use it right', they say 'It doesn't work'. People are very critical in the United States.

RN: The key things we look for about the situation of a brand are: what do people think of it currently? What is the competitive landscape, how do they position themselves? Also, is the brand authentic? It has to be real, you have to say what the brand really is. We do an analysis of these things; we will definitely get into the perception, the competitive landscape and the market share too.

KJ: Situation analysis is very important in its entirety in the experiential context. In an experiential planning model, the brand/company journey runs parallel to the consumer/internal journey.

JS: Again it depends on the brand. Some brands are suffering with cut-through and engagement, or if you have a product in a low-interest category, this might cause an opportunity to engage. We will do a situation analysis, and we also get briefs. Most clients don't look to their experiential agency to undertake situation analysis in terms of a broader strategy. We work with some clients across their whole organization, looking at all experiential touch points.

SP: We have a strategist on our team. We look at what the client has done, and we also look at their competitors. We access their adverts and advertorial, we analyse them and their competitors, and then come up

with the concept in line with the client's marketing strategy. That's why it's not just promotion. It's more strategic.

IW: It's essential, because experiential is all about experience as a result of any preconceptions that the audience may have. Often the aim of experiential campaigns is to actually change perceptions, or develop perception of the brand.

What role should live brand experiences play in the overall marketing communication strategy?

DP: It should play a much bigger role than it's currently playing today. It is at the heart of who you are and what you deliver; it needs to be in-depth across every channel. It should not be a tactical afterthought or add on. When Volvo launched the XC70 in the UK, the tagline was 'Life: Live Better Together' – all about people doing things together. We created an experience where the whole movie theatre moved the car together by moving at the same time in seats, the only way to play the game was to do it together, bringing the message to life. People said it was cool because the experience was relevant to the brand message.

RN: I think that it's important to make everything that you can as experiential as possible. When you think about the various ways that you are going to touch people, you want to create experiences in as many ways as possible. Therefore, the theming of your media, DM, live events is the same.

This is an area where very creative agencies or clients sometimes fail because they get bored of doing the same things. It's the constant reinforcement that works, to connect with the potential customers.

JS: It depends on the brand, the situation, and the brief. It shouldn't be preached to all clients and sometimes it isn't relevant to the brief.

SP: If brands don't include it in their strategies today, they will have a big threat from competitors in their category. Experiential must be part of the overall strategy. It is vital.

What should marketers think about when deciding on experiential objectives?

DP: They should think about what impact it's going to have on the audience. We create a report card about the audience, including things like 'Is it going to tell my story in a positive way?' Is there some kind of

measurement (doesn't have to be financial) so that at the end of this you can say it was or wasn't successful?

RN: You want to think about a couple of different types of objectives. Think about soft objectives like, did we create a buzz? Were people excited about it?

You can measure these things by surveying people and getting answers to questions, you can design questions to capture the emotional response. Then you also need to measure the business result by doing market studies that track purchase or questions such as 'How has this experience influenced the likelihood that you will buy this product?' Questions that say are they going to take action, as well as softer questions. Think of what type of results you want to see out of it before implementing it, so that you can put these measurements in place to allow you to demonstrate the value of these campaigns to stakeholders.

EH: They should think about sales, that's obvious, to build a programme that is sustainable and wrapped around one big idea. That one big idea will manifest itself across different media. Once you have reached the maximum point of sales then it's all about getting people to continue perceiving the brand in the way that they already do.

KJ: I think this is a real point of difference. There is real opportunity for marketers to be smart about where experiential objectives are. You can quantify down to how many leads it generated, what was the word-of-mouth generated, but they must have a very short, focused list of three objectives that are quantifiable. Experiential could step up to the plate and deliver similarly to DM. You can measure what we did.

JS: Experiential marketing today is looked at by clients and brands as a channel in the broader communications mix. If that's someone like Nokia, this might be to get the handsets into consumers' hands so that they are exposed to the functionality of the handset. There are broader opportunities which are more holistic. Brand experience should be managed across the whole organization. Every company should have CEM happening across their organizations, and if you really want to develop relationships with consumers, then you need to orchestrate the touch points that consumers have with their brand throughout the experience.

SP: You can't be all things to all people. You need a single-minded message. What is the product and who is buying the service. Clear goals. All campaigns are quite different, so it's good to know exactly what a client wants to achieve.

IW: I think experiential can be used to deliver on more objectives than any other single discipline. There is a tendency to perhaps set too many objectives due to the flexibility of live marketing, but focusing on no more than three is the key to delivering a successful campaign.

Every single experiential campaign should these days have an element of data capture because the information produced is invaluable and the technology is now available to delivery. It is particularly useful because every single experiential campaign should aim to deliver value, not only to the target audience, but also to the client.

There is a campaign by Haygarth which used classic live activity integrated within a digital mobile technology to deliver a truly interactive campaign with huge amounts of data.

‘Rock up and play’ for Nokia was basically when they were trying to reach the under-24 age group, and they found the best way to do this was to use festivals and music events.

PE: Short-term vs long-term. Is it just about trying to drive sales at the cost of the experience, or is it about changing people’s long-term perceptions? Think about the length of time you want to commit to with your experiential agency. Measure changes over time. Don’t appoint an agency for three months and expect to achieve long-term objectives.

Is experiential marketing especially effective for specific target audiences?

DP: It’s hugely effective for all target audiences: my 70-year old mother will get equally excited about an experience as my 7-year old daughter.

The great thing about experiences is that they are not culturally or economically limited. I can be rich or poor and enjoy an experience. I can be Catholic or Muslim. They transcend all the traditional limitations.

RN: That’s another interesting question. It’s effective for all audiences, but the form it takes will differ depending on the audience. You will create a different experience for, say, young consumers than, for example, doctors. Even if you are appealing to both doctors and nurses, the experience for the nurses will be different than for the doctor’s because what is emotionally impacting will be different to the two groups within one market.

KJ: Yes, absolutely. Even with the great things that people are doing with seeding brands, and seeding with hard-to-reach groups, it’s experiential that can change people’s beliefs. I’m not saying that experiential is the answer to every problem, though maybe it is with all those tough

audience groups such as youth and high net worth individuals. It's experiential that will change those people's beliefs.

SP: You have to know who they are because the campaign will vary. What is effective for one target market is not necessarily going to be effective for another. You must design something specific to that market.

IW: Experiential can work across a variety of different audiences but it can be especially effective at reaching those who are harder to engage with, such as the 18 to 24 age group. Once again, it depends on creating the right experience for the right people.

PE: We did a survey on that last year. Older people are relatively less open-minded about participating. Youths are always willing to participate as long as the activity is credible. More important is the profile of the person – is the activity in relation to the environment that you're doing it? If you're at a festival they are there to enjoy themselves, so don't try and sell them a credit card. If you were at an airport then maybe a credit card is more interesting than doing nothing.

Is there an experiential marketing mix, and if so what is it?

DP: I don't think there is, everything should be reinvented. Because the experiential marketing programme needs to match who you are as a brand, each brand should look at the set of tools available to them based on who they are and who their audience is.

RN: You should be as experiential as possible across all of the marketing mix. As much as you can, try and connect emotionally, physically and intellectually; it's about looking for ways to experientialize all elements as much as possible.

EH: The mix is bringing the brand together; it's spending the client's money where the audience is. That's the mix. If the audience is online, go heavy online. I see ads sometimes and think, there's no chance that the audience is in the place I saw the ad.

KJ: Look at what we at Jack Morton call a 'touch point map'. Where does the consumer come into contact with the brand, and what is it that we can do experientially to support those touch points? They can record the totality of a brand's interaction when, for example, a consumer buys an airline ticket. Getting on the flight can be a touch point journey, or we might have to communicate with employees about a new company direction. The touch point audit is an interesting way to look at it.

JS: It depends on if it's seen as a channel or as an approach.

SP: I do think that it depends on the campaign. We would include radio, TV, print and all the mediums. It must be carefully designed so that one drives you into the next. For example, the TV drives you to the mall, the mall drives you online, and then online drives you to the store.

IW: It all depends how broadly you want to view experiential. If experiential is a technique, then every marketing discipline should try and embrace the experiential concept which can bring the target audience closer to the campaign, such as building interactive elements into a DM campaign. If you look at it as a technique, then it could be argued that this is how every other discipline should aspire to be like.

PE: It's a specialist service, so that's a dangerous outlook from the perspective of an experiential marketing practitioner. Maybe from a marketer's view that's OK. From an experiential point of view we need to specialize; we must be in a specific box, otherwise you compete with people like large communications agencies for business, and you will never win. Experiential marketing is one channel.

Why integrate amplification channels?

DP: That's where the experience conversation comes in. If I do something at events or something at retail, but it's not integral to who I am, they may enjoy the tactic but they don't connect with my brand. Once you start talking integration, you need to deliver that message across every single thing you do. If we are the car dealership that is friendly, then everything we do needs to be friendly, from the sales people to the website and the ads.

I have many choices as a consumer and the minute you let me down as brand I can go to another brand. Also as a consumer I have instant communication ability with the world, I can tell everyone about it from numerous different means of communication and technology.

EH: Again, it is about the great idea, and that idea will manifest itself differently across all media.

KJ: I think clients are doing that for themselves. Both within agency networks, or even independent agencies, clients are saying 'I don't care who's coming up with the idea, or even how you deliver it, but here's the objective – how do you deliver it?' It doesn't matter whether it's an ATL, experiential, DM or brand ambassador amplifier programme. The

client is the leader or conductor, in that more and more we are working with other marketing disciplines across multiple agencies.

JS: From a messaging perspective, if you can have one consistent message to your market, it is best practice. Again it doesn't matter what the channel is, it's always good to integrate. It's part of a total message that a brand is communicating.

SP: You cannot look at one thing in isolation. That's how successful marketing works; every channel is entrenched. You just use a variety of integrated mediums, especially as a big brand. It's not an easy process, but if you understand the strategy well enough, and you understand what the client wants to achieve, with good strategy and creatives you can then implement in line with the overall plan.

IW: It's dangerous to assume that every campaign needs an experiential element because then there is a danger that it will be carried out gratuitously. However, if after analysing the audience and objectives experiential is chosen as the right way to deliver a campaign, it would make sense to base it at the core of the campaign because of its cross-disciplinary nature. Once the form of the experiential campaign has been planned, other disciplines can be looked at with respect to how best they can support and enhance the core strategy, such as building in a digital or DM element. Other elements can spin off the core element.

PE: You should be integrated where possible. The reason is that you make the most effective use of the live space and broadcast. My favourite experience is a campaign called 'Living by the book' by BT. There was a new phonebook being launched, and if you had this book you could live your life by it. They found some live space, and they created a Perspex box. They also ran radio promotions which gave it broadcast elements. People were offered a chance to live in the box with £1,000, the book and a phone. Then, rather than getting just the people who passed the site, they got 22 million exposures. What a great opportunity to take a boring product and make it an exciting experience. By using other media in an integrated way you make it massive. They got lots of PR as a result as well.

What is the importance of brand ambassadors in live brand experiences?

DP: Utmost importance because what makes me connect to the brand is the person with it. Everyone under your employment is your brand ambassador. When you are staffing your company you should think,

‘Is this person a brand ambassador?’ We have all been to a restaurant where a mediocre food experience is fantastic because of the people serving and greeting you.

RN: They are critically important because people relate to other people, and they experience those people as your brand – this is another mistake that I see clients make. They think ‘I can go to this agency and get college students or stay-at-home people who will come and work as temps’ – you are taking pot luck, some may be great and some may be miserable. You save \$2 but you can do untold damage because people are representing your brand. We look for people who are professional, who relate well with the target audience and are capable of communicating the company’s message.

Sometimes programmes fail and they (clients) don’t realize it because that’s how they staffed it. A brand ambassador is the living embodiment of how a brand represents itself. In the mind of the target audience, the experience they have with the staff reflects on the brand; they need to have all those characteristics because that is the overall experience with the brands.

EH: You can have the best strategy in the world and if the brand ambassadors do not represent the brand then you flush the money down the toilet. It really boils down to something that I found out, that we hire people not CVs. I hire people who have relevant experience but it is not all about the résumé.

KJ: I think that whatever you call them, brand amplifiers are about how experiential marketing drives word-of-mouth. While only a certain number of people can experience the experiential campaign, it’s the word-of-mouth that will drive the large numbers, resulting in a significant number of people being exposed to it. Brand ambassadors are all crucial in the word-of-mouth programme.

JS: In terms of live experiential marketing where you are physically engaging people in the real world, they offer a human face. For some brands, especially Telco, it’s a great way to humanize the brand. It offers flexibility of message, so whatever people ask, there is a specific response that a brand can give instantly, while in other communications the message is not responsive or flexible.

SP: Depending on the campaign, brand ambassadors are a vital part. They must be trained correctly, understand the brand, and understand the objectives. They are a major cog in your experiential wheel.

IW: Brand ambassadors are key, as they create an important human element with which to communicate with the target audience and can significantly boost engagement levels. It is vital that brand ambassadors are well briefed and trained, otherwise they can undermine any experiential activity.

PE: Hugely important. You could do the best planning, creative, etc, then if the person who has the final interaction with the consumer is poorly briefed, off brand, or doesn't create a positive interaction, it is pointless. It's all about the personal touch with human beings. That's the biggest risk the sector faces, employing a sub-standard staffing agency which doesn't select, train or pay staff well enough. The barriers to entry to starting a staffing agency aren't big enough. Many brands have been bitten by that and are starting to use credible, sophisticated staffing agencies.

Scrutinize the agency in terms of their recruitment agency. Do they distinguish between booking and recruitment? How up to date are their records and employment laws? What training programmes do they have in place? Are they operating legally regarding taxation on staff? Can you get references with staff in the field? How long have they been working with their clients? What do industry forums say about that agency? How regularly and on time do they pay their staff, and at what rates? How do they motivate them? How do they train event managers? There should be generic training, and each job should be training face to face if possible. If not, there should still be remote training.

What are the pros and cons of placing live brand experiences in different locations and environments?

DP: The first factor in choosing is the target audience; is my target audience there? Is it so far away from where they can actually experience the product and brand that the memory is lost between store and location of the event?

RN: This is very similar to the approach with different target audiences. It's not so much that there are pros and cons to the different locations, it's that they have to be treated differently.

There has to be an appropriate level of engagement and it cannot be overly intrusive. In an exhibit or store you can be more aggressive with it because people expect that in that environment. On a shopping street people aren't looking for people to come up to them; in those environments it has to be very attractive but not aggressive or intrusive. It's about changing the approach depending on the location or environment.

EH: An agency can miss the mark and come off as being non-authentic or having relevant meaning to the brand by choosing the wrong environment.

If all goes well in the media, it is signed off and it is done, live events are fluid and you deal with a lot of people and things go wrong. You need a contingency plan for everything and there need to be fail-safes for every individual element of the campaign. If it goes horribly wrong, it lacks appropriate planning.

KJ: I would have to answer that with the Jack Morton ‘flawless, faultless’ delivery mantra. If the experience is about the brand, if your actions say more about your brand than your words, then the experience has to be superb. That’s why we are obsessive about delivery. It’s not like a TV commercial where you can reach out to 34 markets around the world with the same ad. An experience has to be delivered within the confines of the facilities that you’re working in, so we are driven by our flawless, faultless delivery because we don’t allow it to go wrong. This is vital.

JS: It’s primarily about logistical issues. With live marketing in an uncontrolled environment you must have weather contingencies.

SP: A brand often says ‘It’s expensive to talk with low numbers’, but reach is very important to clients who are used to reaching people in large numbers through adverts. In regard to different locations, if executed well, it has to be an interaction and not an interruption. The campaign has to be skilfully created and carefully designed so that it interacts successfully with the consumers, in any one of those environments.

IW: Used appropriately, experiential can be effective in any environment, from classic product sampling in retail locations through to a business conference. Location is always vital.

PE: Top-end grocers are great because they are by the POS. People are in shopping mode. If FMCG were in shopping malls, the same could be applied. Additionally, people are potentially more in leisure mode and have more of a time frame to talk to people. Brands that require more in-depth description would be perfect, for example technology brands. Other environments are good because of volume, such as train stations. Things that require basic communication such as sampling would be good for this. Offices are very expensive in terms of cost per contact, but highly impactful and valuable (though logistically difficult). Festivals have a specific target audience, but it has to be a more impacting experience. Also, it’s not near a POS, so sales are irrelevant unless it’s drink or food. But there is a big plus in terms of gaining credibility.

What do you think about measuring and evaluating experiential marketing campaigns?

DP: You absolutely have to, but we have to understand that they have to be measured differently from traditional campaigns. We shouldn't let our fear of measurement prevent us from doing these programmes. Television ads have a cost per thousand; but I am not creating a real impact so much as esoteric awareness.

What we should do as an industry is figure out a standard measurement system. Something needs to happen because each agency creates different metrics and they are not aligned between providers of different parts of experiential marketing. We need to learn from the positive aspects of television measurement such as Neilson, because on the positive side, buyers like that security of comparison. At the moment the buyers don't know how to compare our measurements.

RN: It's very important to ensure you formulate your metrics at the beginning of the planning process. Some people wait until they are well into the planning process but you need to have them upfront. And then you can say 'is this going to help me achieve my objectives?' If it's not, let's change the course of action in the plan to something else that is going to achieve the objectives.

EH: With live there are a myriad of techniques. If the client wants to drive purchase then we measure sales. If I'm looking to change perception then that's the programme we build. I tend to break stuff down to the lowest level: what is the purpose of the programme?

KJ: Every client, every brand, and every product has to measure the effectiveness of their programmes. Jack Morton has spent the last 14 months developing their proprietary measurement tool, which is called Engage. It's unique and makes a real difference. You need to predict outcomes. I mean, look at TV; you can run an ad at a certain time and know how many people are going to see it, and clients need that confidence. Justify expenditure; that's the world in which we live.

JS: This is a hot topic. There are various levels of measurement and evaluation. We have to get really good at establishing objectives and KPIs. In terms of measurement we would measure on a number of levels. If there is an experience at the point of retail you can track sales and scores in terms of the objectives.

An example is the Electrolux campaign in shopping malls. We tracked key scores because what they were trying to do was (they had

just launched cooking products) get them to believe that they had good cooking credentials despite the background in vacuum cleaners. We tracked various shifts in key brands scores, ie ‘Do you believe that Electrolux has good credentials in cooking products?’ We also generated measurable sales leads. But what was great was that we had measurable results on brand perception that showed shifts. This can happen instantly, not just long term. It’s part of the power and appeal of brand experience. We do a lot of music festivals for Nokia, and in post-event research we have tangible shifts in consideration of purchase. This is independent research.

SP: We haven’t found definitive ways to measure. There are a few things that we can measure; how many people arrive, how many interactions, and how many calls to action. We haven’t found a definitive easy way to measure similarly with television.

IW: Measuring and evaluating experiential campaigns is often said to be very difficult. Indicators and strategy must be worked out from the start. Evaluation is as important as creativity, logistics and organization.

Should marketers expect good ROI from experiential marketing campaigns?

DP: Absolutely, but they should see it as return on expectations, because right now the word ‘investment’ refers to dollar for dollar return. Not everything should directly be measured financially on that basis.

Again an example: when we did the Volvo experience, we knew it was a \$60,000 car. Can you measure by people buying the car? We looked at media mentions, how bloggers responded to it, people in the audience, we talked to the audience after the movie. We did things so that the client could look at what happened and say ‘that really kicked ass’ and they loved what we were doing.

RN: Absolutely but with a caveat: people use the term ROI very loosely. It is really an accounting term saying how much money I get back for the money spend. It is impossible to do that accurately for any element of the marketing mix, because there are too many elements that influence the sale.

If you go to an exhibition and they bought the products, how can you definitely attribute that sale to the exhibition? They may have seen an advert on the way or receive a recommendation.

You have to try and measure value – sometimes it’s immediate and translates into sales; other times it’s less instant, like awareness or brand

perception. It should accomplish something in the sales pipeline, either increasing awareness or moving people towards a preference.

EH: Taking into consideration the lifetime value of the customer, then the only way to engage them for long periods of time is through experiential marketing. You get a higher CLV (customer lifetime value). It's going to make them want to keep coming back for more.

KJ: Yes, because experiential is not just the 2,000 or the 40,000 that see the thing. The numbers we've got is that that 40,000 tell 17.5 people and then that group tells a further 1.65.

Say we've got 40,000 who experience the experiential campaign. They tell 17.5 people on average; that's 700,000 people. They then tell another 1.65 in a second wave, which is 1,155,000. So, in two waves, your 40,000 is multiplied. That's only two steps. That's the passion and engagement that experiential evokes. Those are the industry numbers. That's the ROI moving that number of people.

JS: Yes. If you're not expecting good returns, why do it? There's always a learning curve if you're a brand newly entering the discipline, so learn on the job. Advertising has been here for decades and lots of clients still don't know which of the ad channels works and which don't.

SP: Yes. If it's cleverly crafted, and the campaign is executed by a professional experiential marketing agency, they will get a brilliant return. It cannot just be placing individuals in a location to hand out products.

IW: Arguably, experiential campaigns can not only deliver effective ROI, but should also be able to measure in detail the key areas where the return has been generated. Return on investment is about measuring effectiveness, and how this is calculated is personal between agency and client. The actual means by which it's measured is immaterial.

PE: Every campaign should have some KPIs in terms of expected reach, interactions, OTS, data capture, voucher redemptions, instant sales if appropriate, hits to website, staff compliance, samples distributed and third-party evaluation or research. A company should evaluate things like changing brand perception, and have a budget to measure over time.

The industry still doesn't have a magic number at the end of it. You are painting a picture of all the things that you are expecting to change. I don't believe the other mediums do that either. It's hard to attribute success specifically to the experiential, because the cost of the other

mediums is much higher. It's also harder to know where the regulars came from.

Anything else you want to say on experiential marketing?

DP: There is nothing better than watching people enjoying a great experience. Brands adding fun to people's lives makes this world a better place.

RN: People fall in love with the creative side and the fun of the experience and the edginess or the excitement. That's all well and good but you can't do that to the exclusion of looking for positive business results.

It has to be directed at moving the target audience closer to achieving sales and achieving a business result. Otherwise it doesn't matter how great the creative idea, it was a waste of time and money for the company.

EH: Yes, live events are a great place for experiential, but not all live events are experiential, about connected meaning and relevance for the brand. Make sure yours is.

KJ: It will kick the ass of any other discipline. What I want to say is that it's sort of common sense. You would never go to a plumber from an ad rather than a recommendation. Look at Expedia, or eBay. You go onto the votes and reviews and you see what other people have done with it. Word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth. There's some great marketing through ads, but experiential fuels conversation, person-to-person.

Even TV like 'Lost', 'Dexter', etc is all about word-of-mouth. My personal opinion is that even kids are saying it's an advert. They're trying to sell us something. If you're 35 and under you've grown up discounting ads, because the whole cult of youth marketing, the guys that started it were 16, and now they're 35 they're still discounting them. Part of your own personal growth as a teenager is to find the brands you like; you want your mates to tell you 'go there'. That's why Playstation spends so much on skate parks, because the attributes of the brand match the attributes of the activity.

If you're a client and you go to an ad agency you get advertising; if you go to a fish shop you get fish. They won't say the meat at the butcher down the road is great. We, as experiential practitioners, can only do it through proof points. At Nike and Playstation, they've got that. Enough brands are doing it. Nobody wants to do it first. It's still working, it's still delivering.

JS: It's definitely an area that more and more people are extremely passionate about. From a client perspective, the response that we get from a consumer instantly is great and refreshing. It's great that it's professionalizing the medium. We are very strategic, and coming to an area that is traditionally executed, it's great that it's starting to gain a seat at the table and becoming more planned.

SP: Just do it!