



How To Be A Designer of Experiences

Depending on the time you have available to prepare, some experiences you create are more carefully designed than others, but the intention is always the same. It's never just about the content. You want to provide an experience that changes people in some way, that opens their minds to a new idea or helps them think of something from a new perspective, or allows them to make a new connection. The goal is to give them something they will connect with on an emotional level and remember for a long time. You may not succeed every time, but more often than not, you will be successful on some level.

Here are a few things to help create an experience that people will remember:

- From the very first communication, make participants feel special. Send a personal welcome note telling them how excited you are for the session, and letting them know if there is anything they need to do before the session to ensure that they get the full benefit.
- Before running the session, be sure to run through the agenda from beginning to end as if you are a participant. Think about when your attention might be lagging and when you might need a break and make those adjustments.
- Think about emotion — what do you want people to feel as they begin the experience and what do you want them to feel at the end? Often I try to instill curiosity at the beginning and want people to feel empowered and energized at the end.

- Whether in person or virtually, be sure to arrive at the session early (at least 30 minutes) so that you can set up the physical or virtual room exactly the way you want it and personally greet every person as they arrive.
- Give them something to take back with them — a photo, a certificate, a swag bag, a slide deck — something that they can look at a week, or a month, or a year down the road and remember the experience.

If you think about the experiences that you remember most fondly, chances are what you remember is not so much what happened, as how the experience made you feel. If we consciously design experiences for emotional impact, people will remember them with a smile, and will want to come back for more.

As we take what we've learned during this pandemic and strive to create meaningful experiences for our communities, let's make sure that we are intentional about what we create, that we are truly taking people's needs and desires into account, and that we are making the kinds of emotional connections that will keep people coming back for more.

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