

Pine & Gilmore's Annual

thinkAbout

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www.StrategicHorizons.com/thinkAbout

Getting Real:



Day One AM

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As a new consumer sensibility arises, businesses must learn how to quench the thirst for authenticity.

In our speeches, workshops, and executive education sessions, we often make the point that we didn't invent the Experience Economy; we discovered it. Our book *The Experience Economy* merely documented what we saw happening in the world of business so that others could see it as well and react to it by staging more engaging experiences.

Four years after the book's publication it's very clear that we didn't begin to guess at how far and how quickly this fundamental change in the very fabric of the modern economy would progress. Experiences now proliferate, with ever new and additional venues and events on the scene competing for attention. It's also clear that as a result of the shift to the Experience Economy, a new consumer sensibility has arisen: the desire for Authenticity with a capital "A".

In a world increasingly filled with staged experiences – an increasingly

unreal world – consumers decide to buy or not to buy based on how *real* they perceive the offering to be. Businesses today must learn to understand, manage, and excel at *rendering Authenticity*. Finding ways to tap into this emerging standard of selection and criteria for purchase will become essential. To be blunt: business offerings must get real. This new challenge perhaps can be defined best as the *management of the customer perception of authenticity*. In an age when consumers want what's real, this becomes the new business imperative.

Success awaits those who gain an understanding of what's real and what's fake – or at least what elements contribute to forming such consumer perceptions – about the output generated from their own enterprises. In this opening session of the 2003 thinkAbout, we will lead participants on a foray into the field of authenticity.

We'll begin by discussing what great thinkers have thought about this surprisingly amorphous topic, starting with William Shakespeare. Certainly you're already familiar with perhaps the most famous passage from *Hamlet*, in which Polonius advises his son Laertes thusly:

This above all,—to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

As Shakespeare makes clear, not one but two components comprise authenticity: first, the relationship between a person and his own self, and second the relationship between that person and others. As night and day, each flows from the other.

Authenticity, therefore, centers on (a) being true to one's own self, and (b) being what you say you are to others. In the first dimension, the importance of being earnest, consistent, and such *self-directed* traits make one authentic. In the second, being trustworthy, honest, and such *other-focused* qualities keep one authentic.

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From there we will discuss how businesses can render their offerings using five distinct genres of authenticity to which any company can appeal, thus enabling current and prospective customers (whether consumers or other businesses) to perceive your offerings as real, genuine, authentic. We will, of course, put forward a few surprises along the way!

We're very much looking forward to relating the full set of ideas from our forthcoming book on authenticity for the first time here at our own event. We

know that our provocations will be but great fodder for our thinkAbout participants to join the discussion.

The foundation we create here is crucial for those companies looking to succeed in the Experience Economy, for the vitality of our economy will directly flow from our individual and collective ability to master the discipline of authenticity in the years and decades to come. To create increased economic value, everything most be rendered more real.

Really? Really.