

# speaker's notes

## To create meeting 'magic' look beyond the message



by john baldoni

The primary factors that determine the success of a meeting are meaning, message, media, momentum and motivation. When these come together, it becomes meeting "magic." The interplay of these factors encourages connections between leaders and organizations in ways that reinforce the message, identify strategic challenges and demonstrate authentic leadership.

### Meaning

Give people a good reason to attend the meeting, above and beyond the mandatory requirement that their body be in a seat. Ideally this reason should provide a clear sense of pur-

knowing what the company expects from them and why.

### Media

Help people visualize the message with supporting graphics that tell a story. Automotive companies excel at dramatizing the introduction of their new models with an entertainment-oriented video showing the product going through its paces, often in an exotic locale. Such events are often concluded with the product itself appearing onstage via some stunning special effect that adds to the entertainment value. Not everyone has this kind of media budget, but the cost of the media doesn't matter — just the

### Motivation

Get people excited about the message, then give them reasons to act on it. Motivation comes from within, so, above and beyond the business of the day, a meeting must give people a reason to believe in the message, the company and the future. Furthermore, one needs to be honest and credible in order to motivate people. If new challenges and goals are to be embraced, showing sincere appreciation and recognition for work already accomplished is a must. How this appreciation is expressed isn't as important as doing it in the first place, but being generous with praise and incentives always helps.

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pose and also relate to the company's core mission and goals to provide a rich, "we're all in this together" subtext to the event. A clear purpose and overall sense of importance creates a feeling of shared ownership and teamwork, uniting everyone in the room.

### Message

The core message of a meeting should include company news, insight or strategic thinking that can't be heard anywhere else. This kind of content sends a message that management values its employees enough to share their vision, expectations, challenges and strategies. For example, a national sales meeting is an opportunity for everyone in sales to come together to listen to senior leaders, share best practices, and socialize with one another. By using these occasions to share key information between management and employees, everyone involved walks away

effect. Some of the most powerful presentations feature nothing more than a presenter addressing the audience with a flip chart. However, the success and impact of the presentation often hinge on how well the flip chart is used to tell the presenter's story.

### Momentum

It's important to keep things moving. All successful meetings have a compelling pace. The facilitator doesn't dawdle or digress; things stay on track, follow the agenda, and build to a logical conclusion. Larger corporate events have the same structure, but with breaks and breathers built in. Coca-Cola excels at holding events for its independent bottlers that are a combination of meeting, entertainment and recognition, which peak at a special event meaningful to everyone. The key is to establish momentum and deliver a significant payoff, whatever the size of the meeting.

### Magic

When all the preceding "M" factors come together well, they form one giant M — magic. The magic you seek should inform, engage and inspire all participants in the room, which is a tall order for any speaker. There is no concrete strategy that guarantees meeting magic will occur, but it's a result worth striving for because it establishes an authentic connection among everyone involved, regardless of their position in the organization.

The leadership of any company should make a concerted effort to establish a meeting's meaning, message, media, momentum and motivation. Those who make the extra effort are sure to experience more meeting magic. ■

John Baldoni is a leadership-communication consultant who works with Fortune 100 companies as well as non-profits. He is the author of four books on leadership, including *Great Communication Secrets of Great Leaders* (McGraw-Hill, 2003). His Web site is [www.johnbaldoni.com](http://www.johnbaldoni.com).

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