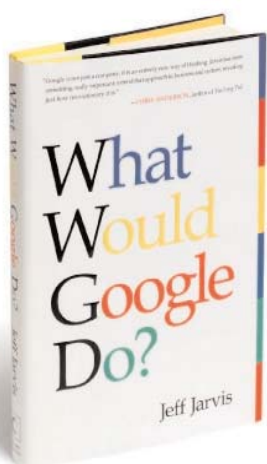


Googlex

What would Google do to the exhibition industry?



If you're looking for a management book to get the synapses firing, you could do no better than to read "What Would Google Do?" by author Jeff Jarvis.

The book is a collection of thoughts on how Google would run different businesses in the internet age by using Google and other high tech companies as a model. His main focus is not the metaphysics of who we are but a practical examination of not just what Google would do, but also what Google can do for you, your business and industry.

As the events industry has changed, the old way of doing things no longer applies and we're now living in a world where the internet is leading to a tech-led utopia.

In WWGD? Jarvis outlines the Google Rules for the brave new world.

The customer is always right: We've all heard this right? But how many of us actually pay that much attention to the moany exhibitor who still hasn't got his internet access. Trust is something we share. Don't tell customers what they can't do; let them guide your business.

Why not give those who take part in your events have control. They'll use the power but in return you'll get a much better event out of it. The problem is that most businesses are not that used to giving away control. Traditional business have revolved round telling customers what to do, how to behave, what to buy, blasting messages to the masses in the hope that percentages mean that you'll get over the line and make a profit.

In our recent Exhibitor Satisfaction Survey, exhibitors told us they want to be heard. They also want advisory committees that work. If you don't listen to them, especially in the current economic climate, you're in danger of losing customers.

Of course, there will be those that will say that giving exhibitors control is tantamount to herding cats. But by providing tools or a platform that is genuinely useful to them achieving their goals and you won't need to preach to them, in fact they'll start spreading your message for you.

Your goals are irrelevant. Serve the goals of the many, stand back and watch your goals

happen by accident.

Make mistakes well: Accept the fact that mistakes are made and look to your customers to correct and improve them.

We all make mistakes, even when we don't want to. Sent information by email to a person you shouldn't? Made comments about people without being 100% on solid ground? Made an assumption by not doing the proper investigations? You know who you are.

Human nature makes us shrink away from mistakes and wish them away. But correcting mistakes is embarrassing. Right?

But the truth is that correcting mistakes can enhance your credibility, standing up and admitting mistakes makes you more believable. When companies admit mistakes it tells their customers that they know their performance wasn't up to their standard and more importantly we have a better understanding of the standard we should accept.

Being willing to be wrong is the key to innovation. Learning from smart mistakes, rather than not producing or innovating at all is a superior strategy.

Be a platform others can build on: Events, exhibitions in particular, are a great networking tool. Just like Google, an exhibition should be a platform from which others can build their company, market their services and transfer knowledge to visitors attending an event. Provide a platform for others to succeed and when they succeed so will you.

What has to be remembered is that industries, or communities, already exist, doing whatever they want to do. What your event should be is a tool with which companies can organise their own business, which already exists to organise better. This is called "elegant organisation"; helping others, with elegant solutions, to achieve those goals through simple engagement.

Networks are built on platforms. A platform enables. It builds value. Platforms help users create products, businesses, communities and platforms of their own. An event is a platform.

Middlemen are doomed: Nobody likes a

middleman. For ever, event organisers have used agents to sell space at their event. But, for all middlemen, the clock is ticking and the question on value is looming. Every time an organiser makes a direct connection a middleman's value is diminished. If you make the marketplace more efficient, if you solve problems, if you add value your position is secure.

If you make your living telling people what they can't do because you control resources or relationships, if you working a closed market where information and choice are controlled then your days are numbered. We're talking about ad agencies, government bureaucrats, head hunters, travel agents and sales agents.

Be transparent: Before the internet, if you had a bad event there was little anyone would hear about it other than, perhaps, other participants at the show. But today, it's harder than ever to hide behind spin or fool your customers or employees. The result is that you should involve them, take part in conversations, ask questions and always admit your mistakes.

Be honest about visitor levels. Provide research that tells the truth about what exhibitors and visitors think about your event. Give intelligence on the market your event addresses, good and bad.

Small is the new big: The mass market is dead; long live the mass of niches. Remember COMDEX. An apparent colossus of an event. Then it went all horribly wrong. Dead in a couple of years. The show was too big, too controlling.

Big used to matter. Big meant economies of scale. (You never hear about "economies of tiny" do you?) People, usually guys, wanted to be CEO of a big company. The Fortune 500 is where people went to make, well, a fortune.

There was a good reason for this. Value was added in ways that big organisations were good at. Of course, it's not just big organisations that add value. Big planes are better than small ones, because they are faster and more efficient. Big buildings are better than small ones because they facilitate communications. Get Big Fast is the motto for start-up events because big events can get bought, get more access to capital and use that capital to get even bigger.

But small has happened.

Small means an organiser makes a far greater percentage of the customer interactions. Small means the organiser is close to the decisions that matter and can make them, quickly.

Small is the new big because small gives you the flexibility to change the business model when your competition changes theirs.

Small means you can tell the truth on your blog.

Small means that you can answer email from your customers.

Small means that you will outsource the boring, low-impact stuff to others, while you keep the power because you invent the remarkable and tell stories to people who want to hear them.

Small is the new big only when the person running the small thinks big.

Don't wait. Get small. Think big.

Free is a business model: Google's success proclaims a fundamentally changed economy, in which knowledge is the currency. In this economy, free is a business model; the definition of "big enough" has changed and scarcity is overtaken by abundance (Google has positioned itself to profit whenever new content is created).

Free is impossible to compete against. The most efficient marketplace is a free marketplace. Money gets in the way. Money costs money. Right? Free is a great way to make money. You just have to know how you are going to get paid for being free.

To be fair no one is advocating doing everything without revenue. What's suggested is free as a tactic towards getting paid in other ways: through advertising, or by premium services. Free is only a tactic though, not a business model.

Once upon a time, in the bad old days of business, giving away a product without charge was unheard of. Estee Lauder gave samples to celebrities and Gillette sold its razors cheap and made money on the blades.

Freemium Tactics

1 – Time limited: Thirty-days free then you pay. Upside: easy to do, low risk of cannibalisation. Downside: many potential customers will be unwilling to commit enough time to give product a real test.

2 – Feature limited: Basic version free, more sophisticated version paid for. Upside: best way to maximise reach. When customers convert to paid, they're doing it for the right reason and re more likely to be more loyal and less price-sensitive. Downside: need to create two versions. If you put too many features into the free version, not enough people will convert.

3 – Seat limited: Can only be used by a few people for free. Upside: easy to implement, easy to understand. Downside: might cannibalise the low end of the market.

4 – Customer type limited: Only small firms get it for free. Upside: charges companies accordingly to their ability to pay, hooks the fast growing ones. Downside: complicated and hard to police.

The problem with free trials is that they discourage full participation during the trial period. Why spend time learning to use something you may not feel is worth paying or later? Time limited models may enjoy higher conversion rates from those who continue to use the product throughout the trial period but they may limit the number of participants. Creating a version that offers a useful experience for the free user, without the risk of being cut off when the clock runs out, can increase overall reach. Even if a small percentage converts, it may be a smaller percentage of a larger number.

But free didn't become a serious option until the Internet gave us low-cost online distribution. Adobe did it with its PDF Reader in 1994, Macromedia with its Shockwave Player in 1995. Both became the industry standard, and those companies were able to make money by selling the products' authoring software.

Those products and services that rely on quick customer adoption the strategy has become so common that a term has been coined for it: freemium.

When the service is free, word spreads. One London-based venture capitalist was an enthusiastic investor in a freemium-type business called Skype. They led an \$18.8 million investment in Skype, which resulted in a handsome return after the \$2.6 billion buyout by ebay.

Freemium works because you reduce the main stumbling blocks of product adoption, whether this is an exhibition or conference. Users who don't have to pay will often start evangelizing the benefits to others. Mobs form in a flash.

How can you make your

freemium event soar?

1. Have a product that truly stands out.
2. Know your up-selling plan from the beginning.
3. Once you've decided that something will be given away for free, don't change your mind.
4. Harness the collective intelligence of your users.
5. Identify a range of revenue sources.

Google doesn't want to own the content of its searches. It wants knowledge to be free so it can organise more of it. They then send lots of traffic to it and puts ads on the search pages. The revenue from the ads then gets split between Google and the content provider.

Google understands free. When it bought Blogger it stopped charging for the service and added advertising. When it launched Gmail it made the service free and served targeted advertising.

Can events be free? If you take the Google model they can be. It needs organisers to re-evaluate their business model, but as we know, getting the events industry to change is like push a juggernaut through treacle.

Following the advice proffered by Jarvis might well make your company more innovative and improve the events you run. It may also improve your standing with your customers and employees. It might, like Google's owners, make you rich!

But one question to ask is: "What has Google done?" Google has turned itself into a marketplace for information-seekers and the advertisers who want to reach them. Change information-seekers to visitors and advertisers to exhibitors and you've got Google.

Ten things Google has found to be true

1. Focus on the user and everything else will follow.

From its inception, Google has focused on providing the best user experience possible. While many companies claim to put their customers first, few are able to resist the temptation to make small sacrifices to increase shareholder value. Google has steadfastly refused to make any change that does not benefit the users who come to the site:

The interface is clear and simple.

Pages load instantly.

Placement in search results is never sold to anyone.

Advertising on the site must offer relevant content and not be a distraction.

By always placing the interests of the user first, Google has built the most loyal audience on the web. And that growth has come not through TV ad campaigns, but

through word of mouth from one satisfied user to another.

2. It's best to do one thing really, really well.

Google does search. With one of the world's largest research groups focused exclusively on solving search problems, we know what we do well and how we could do it better. Through continued iteration on difficult problems, we've been able to solve complex issues and provide continuous improvements to a service already considered the best on the web at making finding information a fast and seamless experience for millions of users. Our dedication to improving search has also allowed us to apply what we've learned to new products including Google Mail, Google Desktop and Google Maps. As we continue to build new products while making search better, our hope is to bring the power of search to previously unexplored areas and to help users access and use even more of the ever-expanding information in their lives.

3. Fast is better than slow.

Google believes in instant satisfaction. You want answers and you want them right now. Who are we to argue? Google may be the only company in the world whose stated goal is to have users leave its website as quickly as possible. By fanatically fixating on shaving every excess bit and byte from our pages and increasing the efficiency of our serving environment, Google has broken its own speed records time and again. Others assumed large servers were the fastest way to handle massive amounts of data. Google found networked PCs to be faster. Where others accepted apparent speed limits imposed by search algorithms, Google wrote new algorithms that proved there were no limits. And Google continues to work on making it all go even faster.

4. Democracy on the web works.

Google works because it relies on the millions of individuals posting websites to determine which other sites offer content of value. Instead of relying on a group of editors or solely on the frequency with which certain terms appear, Google ranks every web page using a breakthrough technique called PageRank™. PageRank evaluates all of the sites linking to a web page and assigns them a value, based in part on the sites linking to them. By analysing the full structure of the web, Google is able to determine which sites have been "voted" the best sources of information by those most interested in the information they offer. This technique actually improves as the web gets bigger, as each new site is another point of information and another vote to be counted.

5. You don't need to be at your desk to need an answer.

The world is increasingly mobile and unwilling to be constrained to a fixed location. Whether it's through their PDAs, their wireless phones or even their cars, people want information to come to them.

The rules of free

1. You can never stop free: If the only thing stopping your product is a secret code or scary warning, someone will defeat it. Reclaim Free from pirates, sell upgrades.

2. You can make money from Free: People will pay to save time. They will pay for status. People will pay if you make them. (once they're hooked). Free reaches new consumers, it doesn't mean you can't charge some of them.

3. Redefine your market: Ryan Air shifted its focus from seats to more profitable travel businesses such as car hire rentals. It even made their seats free to make cash around them.

4. Sooner or later you'll compete with Free. Somebody will find a way to give away what you charge for. It may not be exactly the same but at a 100% discount that may matter more. Your choice: match that price or ensure that quality overcomes price difference.

5. Free makes other things more valuable: Every abundance creates a new scarcity. When a product or service becomes free, value migrates upwards.

6. Manage for abundance, not scarcity: When resources are cheap, you don't have to manage the same way. Company culture can shift from "don't screw up" to "fail fast".

Google's innovations in this area include Google Number Search, which reduces the number of keypad strokes required to find data from a web-enabled mobile phone and an on-the-fly translation system that converts pages written in HTML to a format that can be read by phone browsers. This system opens up billions of pages for viewing from devices that would otherwise not be able to display them including Palm PDAs and Japanese i-mode, J-Sky and EZWeb devices. Wherever search is likely to help users obtain the information they seek, Google is pioneering new technologies and offering new solutions.

6. You can make money without doing evil.

Google is a business. The revenue the company generates is derived from offering its search technology companies and from the sale of advertising displayed on Google and on other sites across the web. However, you may have never seen an ad on Google. That's because Google does not allow ads to be displayed on our results pages unless they're relevant to the results page on which they're shown. So, only certain searches produce sponsored links above or to the right of the results. Google firmly believes that ads can provide useful information if, and only if, they are relevant to what you wish to find.

Google has also proven that advertising can be effective without being flashy. Google does not accept pop-up advertising, which interferes with your ability to see the content you've requested. We've found that text ads (AdWords) that are relevant to the person reading them draw much higher click-through rates than ads appearing randomly. Google's maximisation group works with advertisers to improve click-through rates over the life of a campaign, because high click-through rates are an indication that ads are relevant to a user's interests. Any advertiser, no matter how small or how large, can take advantage of this highly targeted medium, whether through our self-service advertising program that puts ads online within minutes or with the assistance of a Google advertising representative.

Advertising on Google is always clearly identified as a "Sponsored Link." It is a core value for Google that there is no compromise on the integrity of our results. We never manipulate rankings to put our partners higher in our search results. No one can buy better PageRank. Our users trust Google's objectivity and no short-term gain could ever justify breaching that trust.

Thousands of advertisers use our Google AdWords program to promote their products; we believe AdWords is the largest program of its kind. In addition, thousands of web site managers take advantage of our Google AdSense program to deliver ads relevant to the content on their sites, improving their ability to generate revenue and enhancing the experience for their users.

7. There's always more information out there.

Once Google had indexed more of the HTML pages on the Internet than any other search service, our engineers turned their attention to information that was not as readily accessible. Sometimes it was just a matter of integrating new databases, such as adding a phone number and address lookup and a business directory. Other efforts required a bit more creativity, like adding the ability to search billions of images and a way to view pages that were originally created as PDF files. The popularity of PDF results led us to expand the list of file types searched to include documents produced in a dozen formats such as Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. For wireless users, Google developed a unique way to translate HTML formatted files into a format that could be read by mobile devices. The list is not likely to end there as Google's researchers continue looking into ways to bring the entire world's information to users looking for answers.

8. The need for information crosses all borders.

Although Google's headquarters is in California, our mission is to facilitate access to information for the entire world, so we have offices around the globe. To achieve this, we maintain dozens of Internet domains and serve more than half of our results to users living outside the United States. Google search results can be restricted to pages written in more than 35 languages according to a user's preference. We also offer a translation feature to make content available to users regardless of their native tongue and for those who prefer not to search in English, Google's interface can be customised into more than 100 languages. To accelerate the addition of new languages, Google offers volunteers the opportunity to help in the translation through an automated tool available on the Google.com website. This process has greatly improved both the variety and quality of service we're able to offer users in the most far-flung corners of the globe.

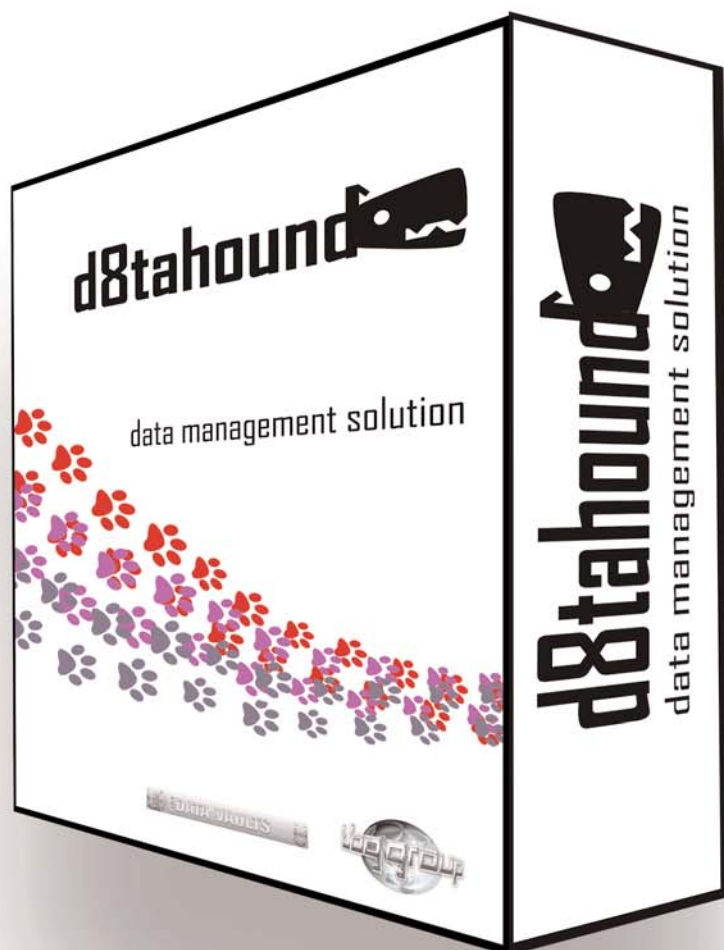
9. You can be serious without a suit.

Google's founders have often stated that the company is not serious about anything but search. They built a company around the idea that work should be challenging and the challenge should be fun. To achieve this, Google's culture is unlike any in corporate America, and it's not because of the lava lamps and large rubber balls everywhere, or the fact that the company's chef used to cook for the Grateful Dead. In the same way Google puts users first when it comes to our online service, Google Inc. puts employees first when it comes to daily life in our Googleplex headquarters. There is an emphasis on team achievements and pride in individual accomplishments that contribute to the company's overall success. Ideas are traded, tested and put into practice with an enthusiasm that can make you dizzy. Meetings that would take hours elsewhere are frequently little more than a conversation in the lunch queue and not many walls separate those who write the code from those who write the cheques. This highly communicative environment fosters productivity and camaraderie fuelled by the realisation that millions of people rely on Google results. Give the proper tools to a group of people who like to make a difference, and they will.

10. Great just isn't good enough.

Always deliver more than expected. Google does not accept being the best as an endpoint, but a starting point. Through innovation and iteration, Google takes something that works well and improves upon it in unexpected ways. Search works well for correctly spelt words, but what about typos? One engineer saw a need and created a spell checker that seems to read a user's mind. It takes too long to search from a WAP phone? Our wireless group developed Google Number Search to reduce entries from three keystrokes per letter to one. With a user base in the millions, Google is able to identify areas of conflict quickly and smooth them out. Google's distinguishing feature however, is anticipating needs not yet articulated by our global audience, then meeting them with products and services that set new standards. This constant dissatisfaction with the way things are is ultimately the driving force behind the world's best search engine.

Who let the hound out?!



- Database management and warehousing
- Online update and self cleaning module
- Viral marketing and lead generation module
- Data acquisition
- Full report and statistics
- Fully secure user and administration access
- Secure data access and download
- Exhibition and conference registration module

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