

HotelExecutive Insider

'Sweet Emotion'

By Rob Rush, President & CEO, LRA Worldwide



A few years ago I wrote an article for Brandweek about the Grateful Dead, arguing that they were the greatest brand managers in history. I could have just as easily made the argument that the Dead were pioneers of the "emotion economy," where establishing an emotional connection between company and customer is the key to profitable growth.

Think about it – we're talking about a band that generally didn't record and release studio albums. They connected with their fans via the most personal means available to a hugely popular act — by continuously touring and interacting in concert. Eschewing all industry standards, they allowed their fans to legally record concerts, making the music accessible to all and creating a market of recordings as de facto emotional currency. And by establishing these strong emotional connections with their fans, show by show, bootleg by bootleg, the Dead grew from a niche hippie following in the '60s to a vast community of hippies and yuppies alike in the '90s. Amazingly enough, this emotional connection persists – and the community endures as a recognizable entity – despite the fact that the Dead has not toured as "The Dead" since Jerry Garcia passed away in 1995.

As you may be able to tell from the paragraph above, I consider myself a full-fledged member of that community. And if the words didn't clue you in, perhaps a visit to my office for a glimpse of the full-color framed photograph of Jerry would do the trick. Deadhead or not, it is easy to appreciate the intensity of the emotional connection between the Grateful Dead in their fans...and draw some parallels to all of the present-day discussions of the importance of "emotion" in the customer experience. That is the subject of my current article in this week's *Hotel Business Review*, "[Sweet Emotion – Brands Look to Send Customers on an Emotional Roller Coaster](#)"

(Which, strangely enough, doesn't discuss the Dead. Go figure.)

As my company, LRA Worldwide, works with more and more clients on designing the optimal customer experience, we are focusing intensely on how to shape that customer experience to build the emotional bond between customer and company, with the ultimate goal to cement the future relationship. Even companies in industries that you wouldn't normally associate with "emotion" are seeking this competitive advantage. A professional sports league – sure, that makes sense. A homebuilding company? Less apparent, but no less important.

Give the article a read to find out the who, what, when, where and why of the "emotion economy." And feel free to reach out with questions or for discussion – my e-mail box is always open!

Cheers,

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