

# Effective activation: converting of minds and moods

 By [Gavin Mills](#)

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Wouldn't it be wonderful if activation were as simple as it sounded... Get out there, shake your rattle, and roll in shekels. But, as many have learnt the hard way, that's not how it rolls no more...

"How come?" some ask.

*"Desensitisation," I say...*

Mind-space siege by everything from divine intervention to super-smut has pushed just about every button known to exist. It almost takes an avalanche to provoke a blink... And brand activation, with marketing in general, is victim to fall-out.

The world is complex. People are complex. We have become over-stimulated, cynical, critical, aware... informed, most times seeing past superficial tinsel and dazzle. The days of slapping stuff on foreheads or forcing it down throats are gone.

*The game's still the same - but the new play is very different.*

In today's world, more than market sectors, it's all about minds and moods. Activation should be approached more like a *seduction* than a proposition and, as such, should be conceptualised and designed as a series of mini-interventions, each playing a role towards ultimate close-and-conversion.

It's a game of attraction, enticement, engagement, 'flirting', rapport, 'playing', persuasion, gratification and bonding.

## 1. Attraction

If you don't stand out, you're not in the game. You need the flash to attract attention. But try intrigue and innuendo to entice them closer: *Looks will reel them in, but you need more to land them.*

## 2. Engage

Most times, after weeks of crafting concept strategy, design and roll-out, front-line troops are 'trained' in an hour - and then we wonder why they screw it all up in one easy outing! Insanity. *Making a purchase is like entertaining romance: it's not just the purchase; it's the journey - before and after - getting lucky.*

### 3. Empower

*Nothing gets folk going quite like giving them the bandstand. If someone is made to feel like the life and light of the party, he or she will perform like a dancing monkey to retain that status.*

Initiate contact in a way that sets targets up in a position of self-perceived 'control' - by making people feel special, intelligent or even needed. Ask opinion, advice, taste... whatever word-art is needed in terms of the brand, and *beware of bandstanding or showing your hand by asking for personal particulars in the opening act!!*

### 4. Challenge

You've set up rapport and are getting on fine. Now you need to up the game by coercing participation - *and get ready for resistance*. You need some leverage. Many times, if played right, *better than a bribe is a challenge*. *She's enjoying the driving seat - and then you question whether she's up to it?* Most will rise to the challenge... but still be ready with sweeteners!

### 5. Reward

So far, we have engaged and earned attention. Beside branding and environment, we have done nothing to establish, build or entrench the relationship with the brand. Offering promo incentives at this time would be more a charity exercise than an effective promotional strategy.

Incentives related to 1st tier engagement should firstly 'dangle the golden carrot' and, secondly, reward participation with participation 'trinkets' for further instant gratification/incentive-to-purchase prizes, and to activate chances for the golden carrot.

The best devices for 'trinkets' are probably inspired by 'games of chance'.

### 6. Romance

So far it's all been about *them*, their well-being and their opinions. The second phase shifts focus from target *reveler* to brand *host* as main attraction. While the target is having fun participating for further rewards, there is ample opportunity to promote, stimulate trial and sampling *and seduction*. All the while, the big golden carrot is alluded to, and incentives and prizes up for grabs relate directly to brand and promotion strategy - and, just like the dirty deed, all linked to and activated by purchase.

### 7. Consummation

There is obvious marketing value derived from the intervention, even if targets don't run straight off and buy the product. But, if in a mall or retail environment, it's generally all about driving sales. And the best way to do this is by linking incentives to purchase. The original iPad participation mechanic, providing qualification for the golden carrot, is only activated upon purchase. The giveaways and discounts are only activated upon purchase. People buy, they score; they don't, we don't waste...

### 8. The deed

Everyone wins! Consumers get more than they bargained for: they get product and incentives; they have fun and stand in line for the golden carrot; the product sells; the promo does the deed - and you have tons of really good fodder for online and social media engagement and escalation!

The role of strategy and design can never be overplayed in marketing and communication. But the role of performance - especially in the face-to-face environment - should never be underestimated. Even if the spot is sweet as dandy, without a good show (or experience) enacted by an enthusiastic, well-rehearsed team, don't hold your breath. Activations with inadequate focus on 'show' would be like TV commercials where actors and crews just wing it.

## ABOUT GAVIN MILLS

Gavin Mills is the MD of Don't Forget George Events, ([www.dontforgetgeorge.co.za](http://www.dontforgetgeorge.co.za)), a specialist event production and communications company launched in 1998. He is as passionate about life as he is about his business, and believes it is up to voices of reason in a turbulent world, to help craft our future, not just accept it. Contact Gavin on tel +27 (0)11 791 3308, email [gavin@dontforgetgeorge.co.za](mailto:gavin@dontforgetgeorge.co.za) and follow @Gavinmills on Twitter.

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