



## *Does it make sense to bring things back from the dead?*

The other day I took my kids to the zoo. Nothing special you say, except that the prime attraction was animals that were extinct over 100 million years ago.

Yes, the zoo has got its' hands on some stomping, moving, roaring (and in some cases squirting) dinosaurs. For my kids – that was the ultimate attraction – a dream come true which could not be ignored. Their desire to see these animals up close produced an intensity of nagging beyond the resistance of mortal man – so, off we went on a day when the rest of the city decided they also wanted to go to the zoo.

Between the excitement of “the plod-i-cus has taken over the duck pond!” and “that dinosaur said ‘hello to me (the allo-a-saurus)” it truly was a day that will be burned in the memory of the kids for many years to come and to be honest, it really was well done – animatronics on steroids, a T-Rex that was slightly unnerving if you are less than 8 feet tall and a “fossil dig” there was lots to keep the kids happy.

Anecdotal evidence is that the dinosaur exhibition has been a huge success for the zoo. As a (somewhat) experienced zoo visitor, the normal and overflow car-parks were full within 45 minutes of opening, and for the first time we saw all of the food stalls open and doing a brisk business.

*When the over-flow car park at the zoo is full only 45 minutes after opening, you know they must be on to a winner*

It seems that nostalgia marketing is all the rage at present. Perhaps it's the impact of the economy and consumer sentiment starting to long after the “good old days”... but just in the last couple of weeks I have seen things I thought were relegated to the history books.

Examples are Mellow Yellow (the drink not the song) – in my

supermarket after an absence of 15 years from the market. It even looked like I remembered it, or perhaps that's middle aged senility kicking in.

Museums have also undergone somewhat of a renaissance. Over 26% of the Australian population visits a museum annually – up a remarkable 500,000 people since the last review 5 years previously. OK so we are still a bunch of philistines (all of our museum attendances combined equal the traffic through just one museum in the USA each year (the National Gallery), but the point still remains – it appears as though a longing to see the things of yesteryear is dominant in society today.

So what have you lost in your business which deserves to be bought back from the dead? Nostalgia can be a powerful tool when used correctly. Here are some examples:

**Service** – Fashion retailer Noni B (if you're not sure, ask your mother) claimed old fashioned attentive service was behind a 2% increase in sales, which translated to an increase in

profit of 12 times, and no debt on the balance sheet (compared to reduced profits for nearly every major clothing retailer over the same period)

**Products** – Ego Pharmaceuticals saw a rise in revenues of 33.5% (to \$99.8m) last year off the back of “consistently delivering effective, high-quality and innovative products to meet a diverse range of needs”... in other words delivering products that suit a specific defined need (sound a bit of an out of date idea?)

**Specials** – Apart from Mellow Yellow, there are several other notable specials returning to the market. Pac-man made a return (albeit briefly) to the games space recently. The “staycation” (remember when it was normal to have a holiday at home and a novelty to go away on a holiday – not the other way around?)

**Values** – An interesting survey (called “The Nest” released in December 2012 stated that 78% of children and teens said old-fashioned values outranked material “stuff” It went on to say that kids cherish being with their family and see it vital to their value as an individual

So what is it in your business that you need to bring back from the dead? Are there some things in your business DNA which you may have for a variety of reasons you don’t do anymore?

Are your customers including in their conversations with you or your team comments like I wish somebody still did X?

*What is in your business DNA that you need to bring back from the dead?*

While not suggesting a wholesale return to the “good old days” where you needed a ration book to buy groceries, is there a need to examine “retro opportunities” to (re)engage with your customers?

From a technical perspective, retro marketing works because in a period of uncertainty, nostalgia is a way for consumers to re-appropriate their history. The most

emblematic brands exploit their rich history and heritage to reassure consumers (IPSOS Research)

In a tenuous economic climate, you can’t afford to not review every opportunity to get business in the door.

January is a great time to think about your business and what you need to do to be successful in the New Year. What opportunities do you have to bring back the products, services and capabilities you once employed to drive customer loyalty... After all, if extinct animals can drive people to a zoo, surely some good “old fashioned values” in your business might just have the same effect?

Not surprisingly, I have another date with my kids at the zoo before the end of the school holidays. I suspect lions, tigers and bears will once again be relegated to the “boring” category, while the exotic and extinct dinosaurs will be the flavor of the visit. If you happen to get an opportunity to visit before they return to the primordial soup from which they came (Texas), I’d encourage you to do so.