



# Creating the Great, Good Places

“Fun is one of the greatest tools we have to create a world of understanding and—potentially—peace.”

As I write this, it's been just three weeks since the tragic events here in New York. I have had a difficult time getting back into my normal swing of things. Thankfully I have not suffered any direct losses as a result of the World Trade Center attack, although I live in a place just outside of New York that lost many members of its community.

In the weeks after the attacks, I spoke to many colleagues in the entertainment marketing field who all asked the same question: How do we go back to our business in the face of such a tragedy? What we do seems so trivial in the face of such tragedy...so unimportant. I, too, asked the same questions and wondered how I would get back to "business as usual" after these events.

At the same time, I've also had many conversations about Ray Oldenburg and his book *The Great Good Place*. I've talked to many friends and colleagues about what makes a community and what makes a 3rd place—the place Oldenburg talks about that is not home, not the workplace, but a place where informal social interaction happens. Places we know that we can always head to when we want to connect with someone.

During the dot-com explosion, it was clear that the 3rd place seem to be driving how offices were created—lots of recreational activities, lots of places to mix and mingle. The work place and the 3rd place had become one place. Part of this was driven by the fact that all of us seemed to be putting in more hours than ever before, with less time to spend outside of the office or home, but part of it also stemmed from the fact that those 3rd places seemed to be disappearing in the redevelopment of the American landscape.

Tragedies like the World Trade Center attack make us remember what really makes a community. People rushing to give aid without thought to their own safety, as evidenced through the almost 400 firemen and policemen who died at the World Trade Center. So many people offering to give blood and make other donations, that in New York, they actually asked people to stop donating! Even online communities came to life in this crisis. My parents were stuck in Fairbanks and one posting generated almost a dozen responses of

people to help, or put my folks up or do whatever they could. People I didn't know, in a place thousands of miles away, becoming a community in a time of crisis.

This past weekend, as I was driving into the city to have dinner with friends, I was thinking about everything and especially, what would I write about for Entertainment Management. After all, this fun stuff seemed so unimportant in the face of so much loss. But then it started to dawn on me. The 3rd Place, community and fun.

Several years ago, I was working for a dot-com looking to create a portal for the out-of-home entertainment market. As I went from meeting to meeting, I used to talk about how what we did was one of the very few things that people did that had to involve other people. It was always a social experience. How many times have we gone to a theme park or FEC by ourselves? How many people do you see waiting online for a roller coaster alone? And even when you do, you always know that the very loose social structure of the line will open itself up to embrace those alone.

As I thought more about it, the need for fun is a global experience. We may have fun in different ways, but we all like to have fun. Fun is one of the greatest tools we have to create a world of understanding and—potentially—peace. Hate can't thrive in an atmosphere of fun.

So, as we gather for IAAPA and wonder what we can do and how to get our sense of fun back, remember how important what we do really is. What we do is not unimportant or trivial—it is critical. Let's ask how can we create experiences that bring people together to share a common, joyous activity. What we need today is more ways for people to come together and share joy—and that's what we do. So celebrate the joy that you create. Publicize it, share it and shout it out. Not since WWII have we as a country needed or deserved the distraction of joyous and fun entertainment more than today. Let us become the Great, Good Places where people gather, share and become a community. For it is only when we are a community that we can stop the hatred that creates such tragedies in the first place.