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WRITING
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with Pat Iyer



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Lights! Camera! Action!
Marc Haine

An author who discovers new ways to experience different aspects of the world can change your life. Marc Haine, author of *Lights! Camera! Action!* has created an original and practical way to understand and change how we do business. Why this title? Read on, and learn how to inject some positive drama into your business life.

- Shakespeare said “All the world’s a stage.” Marc shows how true this is.
- Your business achieves greater success when everyone is working from the same script.
- A playgoer wants entertainment. A customer wants caring service. Committed performances provide both.
- There’s an important difference between selling to someone and serving their best interests.
- If you come up with a unique lens through which to view how people can do business, you will attract a following.

Pat: Hi, this is Pat Iyer with *Writing to Get Business*. And I have with me Marc Haine, who I met through a networking group that I've been involved in. Marc is located in Edmonton, Canada and is an author of a book that draws on his experiences working in the theater industry. He's taken that model and applied it in a unique way.

Marc, welcome to the show.

Marc: Thank you very much.

Pat: I know that we talked as we were getting ready about the title of this book. And I would love it if you would share the title and tell us what was your vision when you came up with the idea of creating this book?

Marc: Well, the title is called *Lights! Camera! Action!* and it's about business operational excellence through the lens of live theater. My background is I've been a business consultant for small businesses and entrepreneurs for the last 25 years. And recently, in 2017, I got tempted and taunted to step on stage at a community theater group,

and it was something I'd never done before. It was something that scared me because my first thought was, "I can't remember what I had for breakfast, how the heck am I going to remember my lines?" But I stepped onto that stage and we went through three, four months of rehearsals and I did something brand new.

It was out of my comfort zone and I enjoyed it so much. But what I really enjoyed more than anything else was by the time we had opening night, we had by that point been in rehearsals for about four months, twice a week. We've obviously been rehearsing on my own time, so hours and hours and hours of rehearsals. It was a comedy farce, but by the time you do all that rehearsal nothing seems funny anymore. It's just par for the course.

And the one thing I realized was standing up in front of the audience and going through the play, suddenly, the audiences was laughing, and they were hysterical. I realized at that point that we had this content that they enjoyed. And it thrilled me so much that the very next day, I came back into the theater about an hour or two hours early. I just sat on the stage and I looked at what we had created because as a community theater group, we didn't have any staff. As a community theater group, we're all volunteers.

- We built our own sets.
- We had to go and find the furniture we needed for the sets and all that.
- We had to move all the furniture from the playhouse to the stage.
- We had to build out the stage.
- We had to set up all the tables and the chairs and the linens.
- We had to coordinate the caterers and all the volunteers.

I sat there after our opening night, two hours before we were going back on again, and I sat there, and I marveled at what we had created. I thought to myself, "What would happen if businesses put that much focus and energy into opening their store every single day?" And that really was the catalyst for *Lights! Camera! Action!* It was at that point, I realized that all my business experience over the last 25 years culminated into this realization that opening a business is no different than putting on a show every single day.

Pat: It's an intriguing concept. How do we keep that dazzle fresh?

Marc: Well, and that's really interesting because that's what I cover in the book. You see, I call it *Lights! Camera! Action!* and that's really my framework of being able to subdivide kind of business operations. So, the *Lights!* section really focuses on the why we do the business that we do. It's really getting people to focus on their internal culture, focus on what they're trying to accomplish, and really trying to stay on task on what is our objective. And so, when we think of it from a business perspective, you can think about mission vision statements. You can think about your premise for the business as a whole. But when you look at it from a stage production side, you're looking at what kind of script should we get?

- What will entertain our audience?
- Who's going to be the director?
- What kind of environment do we want our actors to produce in, right?

And so, that's the *Lights!* section.

Then the *Camera!* section is everything about becoming camera ready. So, that becomes more... it becomes less of the foundational stuff and more of the infrastructure of the production or the business. So, it's like, what is this going to look like when your customers walk into your store? What are your staff going to look like? How are they going to act? I talk a lot about training, about rehearsals, and I talk a lot about what it takes to get people on the same page, and you know everybody working off the same script.

And then the *Action!* side is, of course, the service and delivery. That's where it's show time and that's where people come out and they deliver your vision to the masses. And that could be the customers coming in through your door, or it could be the audiences coming in to see your play. The two go hand-in-hand.

Pat: I'm thinking, as you're talking, about something I heard about the Disney empire, which you know focuses very carefully on all these details about what's going to make an exquisite customer service. And the properties, at least the one in Florida and I assume the one in California, are all connected by underground tunnels. Snow White

will only appear in the Magic Kingdom. She is never allowed to appear in another part of that property because that would be out of sync. That would disrupt the flow or be a pattern interrupt, or what upset the visitors who may or may not pay any attention to the fact that Snow White is not where she belongs. But she's never allowed to be there because of the strict way that they control their productions.

Marc: Take it a step further and imagine for a second that Snow White, or the cast member who is portraying Snow White, just gets off her smoke break and then comes face-to-face with some kids smelling like she's been smoking a cigarette. Imagine what that does to the Disney brand and yet all too often in businesses, we have our cast members going off shift. They go out back for a cigarette break or even go out front god forbid. It drives me crazy. Can you tell it's a pet peeve? But they go out front and they're smoking out front and then they go back into their job. And I think it's really important in business that we create those kinds of effects, those kinds of effects that I am here to play my role whether that is a food and beverage server, whether that's a clerk, whether that's a receptionist in an eyeglass... in an optometrist office.

Whatever it is, I think all these different businesses have kind of their set. They have their design, their physical design, their customer touchpoints, and then you have your characters who have to play a role.

You're laughing at me. I'm such a geek, aren't I?

Pat: No, I'm thinking about the employees who don't learn their lines, and they go off script, and they get angry with the customers. And impatient and shout back or get sarcastic and how that affects the perception of the brand when that happens.

Marc: Absolutely. Well, it's... You know you mentioned customer service with Disney, but I think it goes a step further to being more like customer experience. And in my book, I talk about experience expectations. Every time we get into a situation, we have an expectation about what's going to happen during that situation. Unless it's something brand spanking new, then we don't have that expectation.

Sometimes we'll reach out to people and say, "I need to go for a massage. I've never been for massage. What's it like?" and you start asking people. And so, that kind of creates our basis for what we can expect in that situation. But think about the very first time that a customer walks into your operation, what is their experience expectation? What do they expect that their time with you is going to reap?

When I talk about customer experience expectation that also equates to employee experience expectation as well. You know my number one customer in any organization is always my employee first, right. So, we create the experience for the employee and then the employee will create the experience and help create the experience for the customer.

Pat: You're also making me consider the difference between a couple of different coaching programs that I have been exposed to, the sales pitch for both of these. One coach signs people on and takes their first down payment and then gives them what he calls a cooling off period. Yes, they sign up, they put down a deposit, and then he has a conversation with them after a cooling off period, anywhere from three days to a week later to talk about their expectations and make sure they're the right fit.

Coach B, who I was recently exposed to, pushed her program on day two of a three-day event. And then on day three, there was lunch with her for those people who had signed up. And then at 4:30, at the end of a day that started at 10:00, she was meeting with them for the first time. Her point was in teaching us, was that there should be a very short period of time from the time that a person puts down money and they get the experience or the product, or they get started in the program. That the shorter you can make that the better.

I'm just curious about your thoughts about the cooling off period versus the immediate let's get going, maybe, so you won't have second thoughts about what you've... the thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars you've just spent.

Marc: Right, well, I think there are two premises on this. So, we must take a look at what the agendas are. So, coach number one, his agenda is "I want to make absolutely sure I'm going to be of service to you when

you are ready for me to be of service to you." Understanding that the cost of the purchase is going to be one where buyer's remorse might kick in and people are going to pull out their hair going, "I don't know what to do." Coach number one takes the route of trust first, right. "I'll take your money. We'll sign you up. We'll have a little bit of a debrief afterwards, but I'll give you some time to really think about is this what you want."

Coach Number two has a similar agenda in that she has something to sell, but in her mind... so in that kind of strategy, you are getting people to buy in. You're getting them excited. They buy in and you are there to make your sale. Now talking to her, she will probably say, "I want to make absolutely sure when they realize that this is what they need, I want them to commit and I want to be of service to them as quickly as I possibly can."

And both premises are sound. It depends on the customer side, right. At the end of the day, I have one client who had signed up for a coaching session and she put down the deposit, but then after a while turned around and said, "I bit off more than I can chew. I'm not... I don't feel I'm ready. I don't feel that I can afford the money. Like I put the deposit down, but I don't know where I'm going to get the other half from." And so, then it was a question about having the conversation with that person and saying, "Okay, in order for you to get the best out of what we have to offer, here's what we can probably do." And we come up with something to, to be able to cater to her needs and be able to fulfill her expectation.

At the end of the day, which one is right, which one is wrong? I think it's going to be how it feels more than anything else. I think coach number one will really build up that trust factor so that even when people talk themselves out of it, it's like, "But you know, he was so upfront with me the first time when we first dealt with him. He was so up front with this thing that this is a person that I want to do business with."

It's interesting.

Pat: It is. Both programs were approximately the same amount of money and both programs got in probably the same percentage of people as according to the number of people at the event. I should take that

back. Coach number one closed 25% of the people who were at the conference. Coach number two closed, I can't do math, but say 50 people out of 800.

Marc: Okay.

Pat: And coach number one got 50 people out of 200.

Marc: Right.

Pat: So, what is that?

Marc: So, coach number one yielded a lot more. I'm not going to even try to pretend to be math either, but obviously the ratio is there, right?

Pat: Right, exactly.

Marc: And somebody committing to something... And I've been to tons of conferences where you know you have all these different programs. And you know especially nowadays, we have this idea that we escalate. You know we get the easy yeses first. We put a program together that's \$10 for a white paper or a free download. The cost for the download is just your email address. Then we go into the next phase where it's a \$49 three-hour seminar session. Then it goes to \$197 session or whatever. And so, now we have... we're manipulating the way that people perceive value by letting them test out to say, "Do I trust you?"

Well, for \$10 I'm going to try it and see if I trust you. Once I can build trust on that resolve, then I could take the next step and say, "Do I trust you for \$50, right?"

Pat: Yes.

Marc: And so, coach number one with his approach basically made it a no risk, even though probably the second coach will probably have a money back guarantee. "If you don't like it after 30 days, we'll refund you all your money," but there's still this thing about you know number one, "Am I being sold to?" So, are you looking out for my best interest or are you looking out for your best interest?

I think that's where the challenge really happens when we're in these kinds of environments where we're doing kind of these big-ticket item sale jobs.

I don't know if that qualified as an answer.

Pat: Yeah, no I'm with you. I'm with you. I find it fascinating to watch the sales dynamics. The use of the pressure, the psychological pressures, the psychological triggers, the persuasion factors. The way that risk is removed or dealing with objections in a preemptive way. I like watching it even though at times I'm very tempted, but I have learned not to get pulled along by the current because it is so easy to see a program as the answer to the situations that you're struggling with. And sometimes it's the answer, and sometimes it's not the right thing for you at that point.

Marc: Right.

Pat: But let's go back to the book because we could ruminate on this all day. You have the model that you just shared, and you went through the *Lights! Camera! Action!* stages and related that to being in business. Is this a model that came to you all at once or did you start with a broad outline and then you began filling it in and saying, "Yes, these factors belong with lights and these factors belong with camera, for example?"

Marc: Yes, so when I came... when I actually was sitting on that couch, I had that epiphany about everything that we could do. And you know whenever I've consulted with hotels and restaurants and casinos, I... whenever we started something brand new, this is the effect I wanted people to have. I wanted people to walk into a business and go, "This is absolutely amazing, right. This is the show that I expect."

In fact, it was so funny. In Northern Alberta, I worked on a small hotel and the building had been there since 1946 and the bar had always been there. You know in the late 40s, it was just a bar, a tavern. After a while it became a honkytonk. After a while it became a strip club at one point, I think in the late 70s. And then it became like almost like a roadhouse kind of bar. And the owners called me in, and we worked on putting together a concept that would really make it feel valuable to the community.

It had to be that gathering place, right. And I remember when we opened the doors to this brand-new brand. It was basically a big city pub in a little rural area. And I remember I talked to this one older fellow and he goes, "This is really nice." I said, "What's the number one thing, like what's the thing that sticks out in your head that's the biggest change?" And he went, "It don't stank." I thought, "Okay. Well, if that what it takes for you to really notice that there's a difference, that it doesn't smell, then that's great," right.

So, when it came down to *Lights! Camera! Action!* I had that same feeling that day that I stood on the stage because we did all this preparation work. I think when you're involved so tight into your business, sometimes you don't remember why you're doing it in the first place. And so, when you see the reaction, so in my case with the pub, seeing the reaction from people who have been longtime residents of that community all of a sudden walk in to see something brand spanking new and just really blown away with it, was the same feeling I had when I was up on stage. Having people react to what was going on stage, even though for us it was old hat, for them it was something brand spanking new and it was a true experience.

When it came down to this idea, this epiphany, it really came out, "Okay, so how do I take this idea now? How do I manifest it?" And *Lights! Camera! Action!* became kind of this, "Okay, well, this is a play on the thing." I really had to figure out, "Okay, so if I'm going to define *Lights! Camera! Action!*, what is that going to represent as a framework?"

And in fact, if you go to my website, I have, I think it was the same set. I think by the... before we tore it down, I went on set and I just recorded a quick little my thoughts on this idea of *Lights! Camera! Action!* And the framework is actually much different than its original incarnation. Because originally it was... I didn't have this theory of the Lights! section, where we have to start foundationally at what is our purpose? Why are we doing what we're doing? And because I didn't have that in the very first one, it's kind of misconstrued now in that old version of that video.

But I literally had to sit down and say, "Okay, well, from the concept of business, what do the lights represent, and can I tie that to stories of the theater?" And the same thing with a camera and action? I mean,

action was really easy because that's service delivery at its best. So, it's executing everything that came before it. I had to think about you know let's think about lights, camera as a framework. Where do we start? Where do we end up? And so, that's where the lights being the foundational step came in and that's where... and you know, once I figured that out then camera and action just followed suit.

Pat: I love the creative process that you're describing where you took a model from a whole different world and said, "How can I apply that to taking care of customers in a business environment?"

Marc: Well, but again, I was sitting on that couch looking at... looking over the empty room and realizing that this is exactly what I've done for businesses when I've gone in and consulted for them is we create this new product and we create this new experience. And we're always looking at the experience. So, for me the distance wasn't... the epiphany was, "Oh, my goodness, putting on a theater production is exactly like setting up a business."

The concepts are identical, and I had never ever seen that done in the context of business and theater. And so, that's why this book, I think, is really groundbreaking because it really sells business practices in a commonsense way. When people read about it and they read the stories that are in it as well, they go, "Yeah, no, I can see that." You know, I talk about dealing with difficult employees, and you mentioned about the whole Disney thing.

I was working in a casino at the time, and I'd been walking down the corridor and I could hear the server finish off with the customer. And I didn't see her body language, and I didn't see anything about the interaction. I just knew from her voice and from what she said and how she said it, that something was wrong.

When I pulled her aside, I asked her what the problem was. And she went off on a rant about how stupid customers were, and she, you know, was fed up with them being so... And so, at that point she said to me... she says... I said, "Well, you know you have to be happy." She goes, "Well, if I'm not happy, I can't... you can't expect me to be happy. What? Do you want me to *act*?" And it's like, "Yes, I do" and then I fired her because she didn't get it, right. She didn't get that, yes, you absolutely are putting on a show. You're absolutely putting your

best face forward. It doesn't matter what goes on in your life. It doesn't matter. All the customer cares about are themselves, and you were there to be able to feed the customer their needs. They don't need to hear what bees are in your bonnet.

Pat: That's absolutely true, and it's those times when people deviate from that, that really stand out in our minds. You know that framework that people will complain about service to more people than they will tell people about wonderful service and how potent it is too, especially now with social media being so powerful that if somebody is unhappy, like I am with two airlines who won't give me my \$1,200 back from my airfare that I had to cancel in April. They'll give me credit, but I don't want credit. I want the money back. I could go on Twitter and Facebook and just be a bear about it and keep repeating the name of that airline, which is what one of my colleagues did and she got her money back.

Marc: Well, there's a theory about this.

Pat: If somebody's unhappy in the casino, they could be telling somebody you know across the world within five minutes.

Marc: Yeah, well, it's funny because I got hired by a community as their economic development officer. And the reason why they hired me was because at the time people were coming into the community, having a great experience in the community but then they'd go to a store and get really lousy service. And so, a municipality hired me to become their economic development officer to work with businesses, and we created a five-star service excellence program. Because what we wanted to happen was when people went down to our riverside and they did their thing, and they went boating, and they did whatever you know they were tweeting, "I had a great time in this community. Too bad when I went into the restaurant, I felt like I was a foreigner" or "Too bad that I was treated so badly at the hardware store" or, right.

And so, they wanted to change those perceptions. And when we spoke with people, it was the funniest thing because I talked to the gas station owner. And the retailer told me, he says, "We're a gas station. We're not in tourism." And to me, that was such a distance between what tourism is and this gentleman's mindset. Because anybody in a community who doesn't think that they're part of the tourism trade

needs to give their head a shake. Because I don't care who you are, anytime somebody comes into your community, you could be a gas station, you could be working as a clerk in a pharmacy, you could be at a hardware, you are part of the tourism trade period, right. And you have to be that hospitable as well.

Pat: Marc, how can our listeners find out more about you, the book, and what the services are that you offer?

Marc: Sure, so I have a website. It's marchaine.com. That's M-A-R-C. It's spelled the French way because my background is from the French Canada. So, it's marchaine.com. You can go to my website. I have a whole list there of everything that I do.

I am a consultant, a coach, as well as a speaker. The book is coming out in the next couple of months. It's in layout design, right this second. It should be available, I'm hoping, by the first of August, fingers crossed. And you can go on my website. We'll have the links to the book as well, but you can also go to LCA, that's *Lights! Camera! Action!* Go to LCAbusinessexcellence.com to find out more about the book. And as we get close to release date, I will be releasing my pre-phase chapter, which is called *Experience Expectation*.

Pat: Perfect. All right, thank you, Marc.

Marc: Thank you so much for having me. This has been awesome.

Pat: Marc shared with us some incredible points about taking some aspect of your life and thinking about how you can apply that to the structure of a book. His epiphany came from sitting on a couch, realizing that businesses were supposed to be structured and could be structured the same way that you could structure a play. And through his stories and his examples, he's connected in his new book these two worlds, giving us a chance to think about how we handle customer experiences, how we retain customers, how we interact with our employees, how we process people through our system and give them maybe not always a spectacular experience every single time, but at least a satisfactory experience and verging on spectacular whenever possible.

Marc is laughing at me. I can see he's thinking, "Oh, wow."

Marc: You got it!

Pat: Good, I appreciate that. Thank you, Marc, for being part of the show. Thank you to you as the listener who is either been listening to this podcast on our audio program channels or on our YouTube channel for patiyer.com. And be sure to check out the next show in our series and catch up with prior episodes of Writing to Get Business.