

MY FATHER: “LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE—IT’S MUSIC!”

BY GASTÓN GAITÁN, IMAGES: THELEISUREWAY



I was nine and it was one of those special days that thread ideas through the years. He'd taken me for an ice-cream, there was the flavor of vanilla, chatter, and the clack, clack of table football punctuated by “goal!” Of course we had to play, of course he let me win, but not without a battle! I grew up in a magical environment. Dad had a table football business. They actually made them. I remember thinking something made for fun, but hand-made, designed, and painted by artisans.



DISCUSSANT AT MAPIC
Gastón Gaitán will take part in a round-table discussion at Mapic in room one, Wednesday, November 16, at 14:30.

It's now 2016 and things have changed. theleisureway (TLW) is international, we work with astute and creative clients, and the professionals on my team teach me new things every day. Sometimes when we are brainstorming, I find myself listening to the very tangible elements of the project and trying to follow the thread of emotions that make up the intangible factor that makes a project. I'm certain that what makes a project is what makes a family day out an experience. Families want to be together.

NO ISOLATED ACTIVITIES

We go to the mall as an adventure, a journey hoping for the moments that TLW has prepared. Customers come to shop, that's a given, but they are our clients and guests. A memorable day for the kids might be playing on a helter-skelter tower or climbing through a jungle. Parents get a lot of satisfaction from just being there, just watching, knowing the kids are safe and being kids. Obviously, none of this makes sense if it's just a kind of isolated activity. Here I have to remind you of my last article (ACROSS 4/2016, pages 60-61) and an important word at TLW: seamless. To create emotions along the customer's path, to create an ecosystem, and to add value to the mall, we need to really lean on our experienced team at TLW.

We know how to orchestrate a day out for the family as they move freely through the mall, distributing footfall and adding real tangible and measurable value to every square meter of the stakeholders' asset. Adding value is a question of working towards a com-

plete leisure solution—it's a path, a route if you like, that we take with our clients. TLW has, based on experience and analysis, identified the phases that we take our clients through.

The creative process really kicks in in the fourth step of phase one, for example, after we have clarified the client's needs and the scope of the intervention and analyzed the catchment area. Subsequently, we compose the leisure formula, superimposing theleisureway's plan and positioning the key elements with the relevant traffic flows.

THAT CERTAIN “SOMETHING”

I'm with the creative team, with their piercings, cool glasses, and shoes by designers I've never heard of. Heads are scratched while ideas fly; all the training meets all that experience. I love it—I'm back in that ice-cream parlor. The team has such a range of responses to our clients' needs, from the highly technical understanding of materials, volume, and norms to the way they move naturally and effortlessly from sophisticated software to post-it sketches in pen with that certain “something.” That special “je ne sais quoi” that we call the “wow” effect, giving direction and form to the whole project. Now we have inspirational images, first ideas, schematic visuals in 3D, sketched adaptations to the intervention area, and the all-important preliminary concept. We are about to show the vision.

We must be careful, however, as this is still phase one. It's imbedded within the creative process and the team knows it's feedback time. This is when client collaboration comes into play and it really is vital that we exchange ideas on our preliminary material. Clients have an innate understanding of their project's direction and catchment-area market forces. Listening to them gives form to this initial stage, which will take us to the preliminary concept approval. This exchange, this input, however extended or brief, will give the rubber stamp to phase two and the clarity of the decisions made while working with cli-

ents at this point will make further steps much smoother.

LOOKING FOR DETAILS

We now have client approval and we find ourselves stepping into phase two. It's all about making the creative process tangible and giving form to the experience. The TLW team is now working with infrastructure and construction data from the client. We may be talking about functional design, area requirements for installation, or design definitions meeting safety standards or aesthetic values. We follow the thread, keeping the “wow” factor as renders and conceptual drawings balance tangible and intangible values and engineer the solution. It's a question of calculations, material specifications, technical drawings for execution, and product engineering working towards the key technical development manufacturing document. At this point, we would be looking for details related to infrastructure from the client in order to draw phase two to a successful end. This goal is reached when the client gives concept approval. This “goooooal” shows that theleisureway and its client are a team and that we are moving forward and getting results.

The most obvious reason I'm giving this schematic, step-by-step account of the TLW process for our integral leisure option is to give a sketch, a post-it vision if you like, of our path. I hope I'm also highlighting the relationship we have with clients along this path, however—one of communication, clarity, and involvement. A complete leisure solution requires traffic to flow through the mall and getting this requires the free flow of ideas. TLW is bursting with output. We are open for business and open to ideas. That is why I'll be at Mapic this year as a speaker and as a listener.

Let's fast-forward: Having received the client's concept approval, phase three would see the team working with items such as scheduling manufacturing, project execution coordination, and quality control including on-site controls. We then move to begin implementation.

THE WOW-FACTOR TAKES STAGE

Clients cooperate with logistical aspects. The project becomes real at this point. The thread of creativity we have been following has been brought to the



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real world and the “wow” factor takes center stage. It's an exciting moment—we are delivering the competitive edge. Curiously, such a technically demanding process leads to fun—to leisure. It takes you back to when you were a child. Again, this route we take with clients, this hand-in-hand approach, forms part of what I hope to get across during my Mapic round-table session. I'm hoping to highlight the role of leisure as a catalyst for shopping centers.



“We clarify the client's needs and the scope of the intervention and analyze the catchment area.”

The strategy I've illustrated in this article in simplified terms is a process we follow with our clients. Strategy is a keyword we give precedence to. It is essential to balance leisure according to a clear set of working criteria. Doing that and achieving the proper balance is our job. The result should be a special family day when people come together.

I look forward to meeting you at Mapic and exchanging ideas and thoughts. These occasions are real opportunities for those of us immersed in the business of retail and leisure. TLW will be pleased to take the time with you to talk about your projects and discuss how TLW can help with complete leisure solutions.

