

Why 'I Will' Shouldn't be On Record Time for Some Clarity

The power of myth remains very powerful even in our modern world.

The passing of Nelson Mandela demonstrates this very clearly. Some of the less comfortable parts of his early life have been passed over to focus upon his extraordinary achievements and ability to unite people. His myth has also become part of the DNA of South Africa – it seems that it is now part of what holds it together and its purpose as a nation.

If myth is all about shades of grey a lot of the world and our lives are being presented more and more in granular black and white. Truth and honesty is good of course, but it allows less opportunity for stories.

The explosion of cameras (a billion are being produced every year) is providing a growing temptation to record every facet of our lives and particularly significant moments. The development of Google Glass (specs), for example, is reflective of this trend.

Look on YouTube and you will see endless significant moments recorded and then posted for all the world to see. Marriage proposals that touch even the most hard hearted and Thomas Jullien's fantastic film using pictures taken by 852 different people on Instagram, that are all the same.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfDUBjBbs_A

There are perils for all of us as well, however.

The Big Moment

Having that moment (any moment) captured forever, reduces the opportunity for distortion considerably. The grand proposal can be reduced to its constituent parts and then cheapened by over exposure.

The look of 'surprise' and 'excitement' is open to re-interpretation. Could it be horror, confusion or clumsiness that is really being played back? Is the look away not shyness or recognition of the significance, but more a struggling to know how to respond, to be appropriate, to 'deal' with this new situation?

Without the ubiquitous camera the focus remains on the 'response' and how that shapes lives. This may be a loss for

the anthropologist, but not necessarily for the rest of us. Human beings have a capacity, for the purposes of self-preservation, to re-interpret events and parts of their lives to their own ends.

Couples (those that said “I will”) tend to enter into a shared conspiracy. They mentally write their history to make the events of their lives work to their desired outcome. Significant events become more significant, glamorous, romantic, or even negative, depending on what fits the script. It is part of the glue that makes our lives and relationships work and feel more solid.

A camera in the middle of all that glue can undermine and un-stick what could be cherished and powerful moments.

Brand Honesty

This is important for marketers. The ability of customers to focus on the black and white, because so much truth is available to see, can unglue the mythology of a brand. Nike, Starbucks and Angora fur producers have felt exposed in recent times. It means a brand has to be more truthful and have deeper values, because if they are a fraud they can be more easily exposed.

Where you want loyalty, business shouldn't always be conducted just in black and white. People and their relationships are more complicated than that and inevitably that's where research comes in.

From all of us at Clarity, enjoy this festive season and before reaching for that camera, just decide how significant the moment is!

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