

Pop-Up Escape Rooms – Business of Pop-Ups

Last week, I attended a discussion by local (Ottawa) entrepreneurs on the topic of “Power of the Pop-Up: Creating a Lasting Impression in a Temporary Space”. The panelists represented a variety of business owners who work in the maker/artist environment.



I was attending with my mind on two different contexts – Pop-Up Escape Rooms and [my Etsy business – Mini Escape Goat Buttons](#).

It was an awesome talk and I spent more time thinking about applications to the pop-up escape rooms than buttons, but that’s okay because now I want to share my notes and thoughts with you!

Prepare for a ramble of unofficial quotes from the awesome speakers and my thoughts on their usefulness to pop-up escape rooms.

So What is a Pop-Up Shop?

Well, it’s a quick brief chance to draw in customers. It’s a way to show off your product to your market and make them want to seek you out to get it again.

What's a Pop-Up Escape Room?

Same thing. It's a short game (usually) in a unique place, not your brick and mortar facility, where a new market/audience is exposed to what an escape game is. It's an opportunity for marketing your facility and gaining new customers. Also see: [Mobile Escape Games](#)

Here are some key ideas I pulled from the talk, and how they equally apply to pop-up escape room games:

• **Every Relationship Is A Risk**

- You need to provide an honest experience, as you're likely dealing with 1 customer at a time.
- With an escape room, it's more like 3-5 players at a time but the sentiment holds. You have only a few minutes to form an impression on these new players. Give them your dedicated attention and wow them with your game!

• **Less is More – Just Start**

- There was some argument over this, but I appreciate the idea. Don't overwork your idea to death. Just build something that's quick to setup and get it out there so potential customers can enjoy it.

• **Alternatively – There Is Never Enough Time**

- Make do with your space and decide where you are going to devote your time and energy.
- Especially relevant to escape room owners, entrepreneurs who try to do everything and burn themselves into the ground with exhaustion...

• **Give Them Something To Share – Make It**

Instagram Friendly!

- Build a photo wall, make your space pretty, and encourage visitors to post on Instagram and tag you!
- More escape rooms need to embrace this. A pop-up game can still have photo props and you should set a space (with a pretty backdrop and not just the crowd) where players are encouraged to pose.

• Everyone Google's [verb] First

- The idea being that everyone searches your company name on Google as their first step before visiting you. And it's absolutely true. So you need to develop an online presence. There are few things worse than searching for a company and not having anything come up in Google.
- This means website, this means social media accounts, this means just getting out there and being written about online.

• Less Competition – More Collaboration!

- The panelists talked about working with “competitors” or “colleagues” to share ideas and promote each other.
- LISTEN UP ESCAPE ROOM OWNERS
- I could write a whole blog post on how the escape industry needs to wake up and get better at collaboration and support. Encourage each other to be better, and recommend other companies in your area! More awesome games means more interested players!

• Leases – You Won't Know Until You Ask

- Speaking about renting out mall spaces or storefronts for short-term rentals, the panelists encouraged going for it!

- Some things to consider:
 - What crowd do you bring in? (to the mall/plaza/area)
 - What do you offer? (that isn't already available)
 - What do you bring to that space? How do you both (landlord and you) benefit?
- In many malls, a % of sales goes back to the mall on top of a lease payment.
- But if you don't ask or counter-offer on parts of the lease agreement you don't agree with, then you won't know what is possible.
- The panelists stressed, don't be intimidated by landlords and know where your line is.
- This can apply equally to attending a convention as a pop-up escape room or negotiating a storefront lease.

Below are samples of the Insta-fabulous panelists' businesses.



Yup! Love this #local super talent @strutjewelry. Phenomenal jewellery from a phenomenal lady. Meet her at the @magpiejewellery locations this weekend! . . . #shoplocalottawa #shopottawa #ottawashopping #loveyourlocal #ottawamakers #strutjewelry #magpie #magpiejewellery #trunkshow #ottawa #rideau #glebe #westboro P.S. it's been a while Ottawa... I missed u.

A post shared by [Shop Local Ottawa \(@shopottawa\)](#) on Feb 8, 2018 at 6:06pm PST



Finally got to stop in and try some bonbons 🍫

A post shared by [M E L I S S A \(@melissadube87\)](#) on May 5, 2018 at 5:40am PDT

Instagram friendly background 101



Valamode has now found a home, and is now open!! Congratulations @luxurymatchmaker for all your hard work☺☺☺ #luxuryconsignment#funplayinginclosets #designerfashion #ottawafashion #streetstylephotography #valamode #polishedmobileesthetics #ottawa #613 #supportlocalbusiness #ladyboss

A post shared by [Vanessa Fabiani \(@fabiani_v\)](#) on May 2, 2018 at 1:06pm PDT

Instagram friendly background 102



H E A R T W A L L // Who's feeling as good as the @minigeeksshop mini now that summer is upon us?! #heartwall #ottawalife

A post shared by [INDIE SHOP, MARKETS, WORKSHOPS \(@freewheelingcraft\)](#) on May 23, 2018 at 1:25pm PDT

Really just the best example of an Instagram friendly backdrop. This Heartwall is incredible.