

## **LARRY WYATT DEMYSTIFIES THE CREATIVE CHARRETTE PROCESS, THE FIRST STEP IN ENTERTAINMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

November 13, 2013 – (Pasadena, CA) The creative charrette is often the very first step that a developer embarks upon when launching a theme park, attraction or entertainment destination project. Through the charrette process, developers will gain a better understanding of how to make educated and rational decisions about how to spend their money and move forward.

Quite simply, a charrette is a collaborative meeting comprised of an independent outside panel of experts that brainstorm a concept or idea over a 1-3 day session.

Larry Wyatt, founder of Wyatt Design Group, has become a master of planning and facilitating creative charrettes for the theme park and attractions industry after doing so for more than 20 years with major studios, museums, and entertainment groups worldwide including: Warner Bros., Paramount Studios, Hershey’s Chocolate World, WAT&G Architects, and many others.

A properly orchestrated charrette will quickly focus the program, configuration, and scope of a project, resulting in reduced planning costs, risk, and improved odds of success,” states Larry Wyatt, Founder of Wyatt Design Group.

A creative charrette is relatively inexpensive compared to a full design effort that could easily take months and veer off into the wrong direction by not engaging all necessary disciplines in the very beginning. “A properly orchestrated charrette will



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quickly focus the program, configuration, and scope of a project, resulting in reduced planning costs, risk, and improved odds of success,” states Wyatt.

Walt Disney was actually the originator of the creative charrette applied to the attractions industry. He planned “storyboard” conferences with pure creative designers or “imagineers” together with financial, architectural, and physical planning experts. Charrette is a French word meaning “cart” or “chariot” and its use stems from 19<sup>th</sup> Century architect students feverishly working up to the deadline to deliver their papers via a cart, hence they were said to be working ‘en charrette’ – in the cart.

Larry Wyatt’s creative charrette process includes the following steps:

**1. Select a panel of experts/consultants** - Together they must have the wealth of knowledge and experience capable of sketching on the back of a napkin a project that is 75% accurate. A team typically consists of a team leader, attraction market feasibility economist, architect, planner/architect, engineer, storyteller, and creative content visualizer.

**2. The Creative Process - Must have a large wall space and comfortable work area.** Larry’s preferred method of using Post-it notes and panels all over the walls is akin to storytelling and storyboarding. Each big moment of the story, historic or cultural reference, experience, economic factor, demographic data, bubble diagrams, and other free-spirited ideas goes on a sticky note. During the day, the wall becomes more organized and a conceptual flow can be identified. At the end of Day 1, walls are literally covered with ideas that have begun to show potential—but no conclusions are drawn yet. That’s reserved for Day 2, after a relaxing team dinner, away from the meeting room where participants can discuss the results in a more relaxed setting and marinate overnight on the day’s free-spirited exchange.

Day 2 the team gets down to work by identifying two or more basic concepts that are defined by content or theme, physical planning diagrams, program of elements and capacity, rough business planning principles, and range of costs. Depending on the output desired, charrettes can extend for 3 or more days—even a week.

Everyone shares in the results and final presentation to the owner—a culmination of several hours of collaboration within a group of experienced professionals with a broad range of planning disciplines. The result is a more comprehensive process and a more complete graphic representation of the effort.

**3. Come Prepared: A successful charrette requires significant preparation** - It is important to have as much prior information from the owner as possible: general demographic data, information on competitive or similar projects, site plans and/or aerial topographic maps of potential site(s), goals and objectives of the owners, etc. Photographic images and videos of potential benchmarks or themes are prepared in digital and/or graphic form to project or place on the walls for inspiration and to create a visual language for all participants to share.

**4. Location - No distractions.** A charrette should be held at a location separate from any particular business, at a hotel or conference center with meal and snack service (and adequate caffeinated beverages) so the process can continue without interruption. It is ideal to be held at the location or near the project--if already selected---for easy site scouts as needed or to physically experience local culture, environment, or competing projects.

Read more on how a charrette is performed on [Larry Wyatt's blog](#).

At the end of each day of the charrette, as team leader, Larry provides a report to the client for feedback. Some owners make comments and suggestions which help define the discussion. Sometimes the owner changes the perspective of what the



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project should be about based on economics or other components brainstormed in the charrette. As a rule, the team must be ready to shift the creative process based on the owner’s reaction. As a team leader, Larry must be sensitive to steer the team in the right direction.

At the end of the charrette—depending on the number of days devoted to it-- the project can be conceptually planned and programmed, with color sketches, diagrams, images, outlines, and LOTS of documented brainstorming covering the walls of the room. Through the process, the developer is provided a united “vision” that will guide the project forward to closer and more comprehensive development through collaboration with some or all of the charrette participants---at the option of the client,β of course.

Whatever the owner’s next step is, a cohesive project has been identified with a compelling creative concept that fits the site, meets fundamental economic criteria, and raises the critical issues that must be verified to make the project a reality—a solid first step in the project’s further development.

**About Wyatt Design Group:** Wyatt Design Group, Inc. is a multi-disciplinary entertainment design studio based in Pasadena, California, specializing in exhibitions, attractions, and leisure destinations. Its core staff has expertise in master planning, site development, architectural and interior design, and attraction design. More information on Wyatt Design Group can be found at <http://www.wyattdesigngroup.com>.

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Press Contact: Tracy Balsz [marketing@wyattdesigngroup.com](mailto:marketing@wyattdesigngroup.com) 323.428.9075 direct



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