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The Art Of Relevance

THE ART OF RELEVANCE

NINA SIMON

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The title of Nina Simon’s new book, The Art of Relevance, perfectly sets up our expectations as a reader. It could have been titled The Ultimate Guide to Relevance, or 10 Steps to Being More Relevant, but Simon would never choose such titles because she understands relevance is a moving target. Framing the pursuit of relevance as an art primes us to seek insights into process. Many of you already know Nina’s work from her popular blog Museum 2.0, her best selling book The Participatory Museum or her TEDx Talk Opening Up the Museum. However, for those of you who don’t recognize the name, here is all you need to know in order to be interested in this book’s author: “Nina is hungry for accountability. It is not enough to just talk about building relevance in diverse communities, she is deeply invested in what actually works and holding oneself accountable. Before reading this book my working definition of “relevance” was
something along the lines of “to be relevant you must be in tune with the current environment; you are topical and timely.” Simon replaces such milk-toast definitions of relevance with the following: Relevance is a key that unlocks meaning. It opens doors to experiences that matter to us, surprise us, and bring value into our lives. If we believe the products, services and experiences we create are relevant to a certain audience, but we aren’t unlocking new meaningful experiences for that audience, we aren’t in fact relevant to them at all. Take a moment to let that truly sink in. Many of us are likely attempting to market to, invite, and build for specific communities, but are we unlocking new information that is meaningful to the lives of those individuals? What would it look like if we did?

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