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Events and entertainment company CEO on the importance of adaptation

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Empire Entertainment CEO J.B. Miller at the Games for Change Festival.

DOSSIER

AGE 58

GREW UP Mamaroneck, Westchester County

RESIDES Larchmont, Westchester County

EDUCATION Bachelor of fine arts, New York University Tisch School; MBA, New York University Stern School of Business

FAMILY LIFE Miller uses his off hours to spend time with his wife and watch their 2-year-old and 5-year-old grow up and discover the world.

MUSIC FAN Miller enjoys listening to music and attending concerts in his free time. He said his favorite musician is "Rolling Stones, if I had to choose".

MOST MEMORABLE EVENT: Miller looks back fondly on his work on the grand opening of Atlantis, Palm Island, in Dubai in 2007. Miller describes it as an "iconoclastic project," which featured what he calls the biggest building projection ever done and largest fireworks display attempted.

J.B. Miller felt drawn to the entertainment industry at an early age. Whether he was auditioning for roles in musical theater, watching comedy performances or attending concerts, he would dream about building a career as an entertainer. He went through phases of wanting to become an actor, director and producer.

Now as the president and CEO of global conglomerate Empire Entertainment, which he founded in 1993, Miller works behind the scenes for companies and stars such as Beyoncé and Oprah Winfrey, putting on personal events and others such as the Time 100 Gala. He works out of the firm's SoHo office.

Miller says this role gives him the autonomy to dabble in a little of all his interests. He oversees the company's projects but also takes part in scriptwriting, hiring talent and planning logistics. He says that in order to consistently engage audiences, he and his team have to stay ahead of the latest trends.

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There are challenges, of course. The industry allows no room for failure because, Miller says, at the end of each event, only one metric counts: how entertaining the final product was.

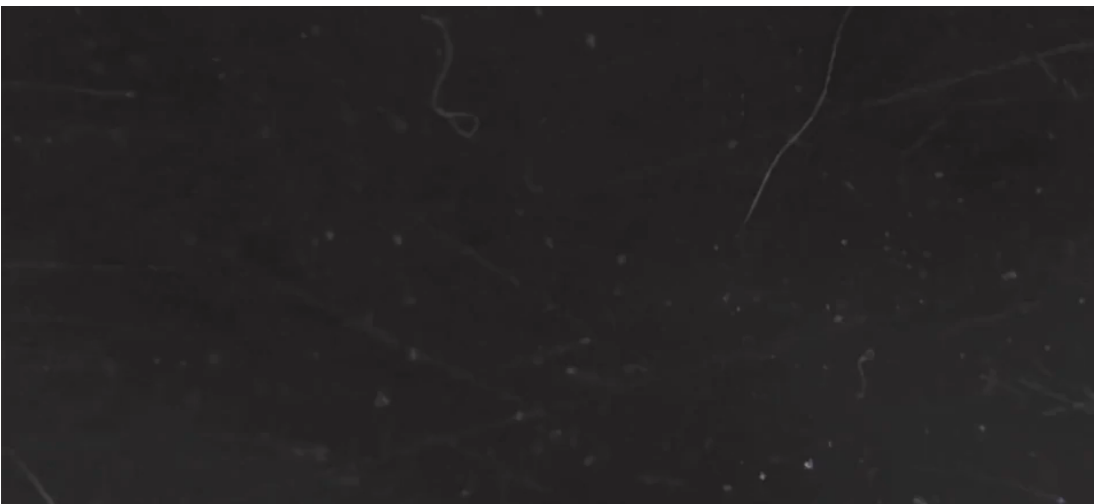
“As soon as it’s over,” Miller said. “The first thing [the client] says to you is, ‘That was amazing. How are you going to top it next year?’”

For Miller, this means constant innovation. He and his company look to expand their research to find out what appeals to the public. He also pushes employees to use AI and other tools to generate ideas, crowdsource, set up stage design plans and come up with efficient solutions.

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“All industries are driven by innovation,” Miller said. “But I think our industry is a little bit different in the sense that people are looking for us to always have that innovation available to them.”

And the company’s work is paying off. Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, Empire Entertainment is projected to produce \$65 million in global revenue by the end of the year. The company has its headquarters in SoHo and Tokyo with a staff of about 32 employees at each location and clients around the world.

Aside from producing pop culture events, Empire also works with social and government organizations including the United Nations, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dartmouth College, Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Carnegie Corp.

In the ever-changing entertainment industry, Miller has learned to adapt. Rather than resist, he finds that embracing the unexpected yields a much smoother experience and a more successful final product.

“In our world, not only is there no consistency, but the stakes are so so high on every single thing that you do. You don’t get a second take there,” Miller said. “The show must go on.”

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