



Tourism Development Plans and the Myth of Community 'Ownership'.

Those of us in the business of consulting who have done, and continue to do, local and regional tourism plans involving the state tourism authorities in an overseeing/steering committee capacity, have been repeatedly told that the community must have 'ownership' of the plans.

This is one of those myths that is perpetuated by those on high who think they know what these studies are all about but in reality haven't a clue, and proceed to waste consultant's time and usually taxpayers money by insisting on going overboard with the community consultation and 'ownership' process.

As part of our annual tourism research programs during the past two years we have looked at the way 37 communities view this tourism plan ownership issue. Naturally, there must be consultation, but the six main findings of our research should hopefully put a stop to this 'ownership' nonsense:

- 1) There is a lack of understanding as to what this 'ownership' of a tourism planning project means. This lack of understanding also applies to some state tourism authority representatives.
- 2) In every community in which we conducted this research there was an attitude best summed up by one successful operator, 'We don't want to own the bloody plan, we have given our input, now just get on with it'.
- 3) Of those who attended the consultation meetings and could be contacted for our research, only 22% had bothered to follow up the implementation process. Only 16% read the entire plan report and 13% just read the report Summary.
- 4) Once the plans had been released and the initial publicity faded away, the majority of people who had been involved in the consultation process were occupied with their own businesses and interests, and did not give the plan much further thought.
- 5) Where implementation of the recommended actions had not been constantly publicised, after three years relatively few people remembered a tourism plan had been done or were even interested, because businesses had changed hands, people had left the area, or their world had just moved on.

- 6) Because community consultation is the 'in' thing for just about any study, be it tourism, health, agriculture, transport, etc. many community representatives are now fed-up with having to attend constant rounds of consultation meetings.

I'll have more to say on the tourism planning issue in the next newsletter.

In This Edition:

- Tourism Development Plans and the myth of community 'ownership'.
- Local and Regional Tourism Organisations; 12 Practical Guidelines for Success.
- Airline Travel – The Shape Of Things To Come
- Free publication: 'How to Conduct a Productive Brainstorming Session'



**Our mission statement:
IF YOU ARE NOT THE LEAD DOG
IN THE SLED TEAM, THE SCENERY
NEVER CHANGES . . .**



LOCAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANISATIONS – 12 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS (not necessarily in order)

- 1) **SET WORTHWHILE OBJECTIVES & ACHIEVABLE GOALS.** Nothing destroys a tourism organisation more quickly than lack of results, unfinished projects, parochial in-fighting, impossible dreams, and good old-fashioned inertia. Review progress every 6 months.
- 2) **DON'T MARKET IN A VACUUM.** Develop strong communication links with other local and regional bodies of similar interests, and integrate promotional activities wherever possible.
- 3) **BE REALISTIC.** Promote your strengths - but don't be blind to the area's weaknesses.
- 4) **WORK TO A PLAN.** Using a SWOT analysis as a basis, develop a practical plan addressing such issues as tourism strengths, opportunities, visitor trends, strategic objectives, achievable actions, target markets and marketing activities. Keep it simple. Don't get trapped into the 'weight of paper' syndrome.
- 5) **PROMOTE LIKE A 'PRACTICAL PIG'** (Build the house of bricks - not the house of straw). Recognise the difference between tourism marketing which makes you and/or the committee feel good, and tourism marketing which generates increased visitation levels to your area. Pursue the latter.
- 6) **TAP INTO THE MEDIA MERRY-GO-ROUND.** Aggressively exploit every available opportunity for editorials.
- 7) **BE TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR INDUSTRY.** Aim to involve as many segments of your tourism industry as possible. Keep them informed.
- 8) **KEEP THE LOCALS COMMITTED.** An ongoing awareness campaign at the local/regional level is essential.
- 9) **HAVE SOMEBODY RIDING SHOTGUN** - to keep you on-track. Keep uppermost in mind the reasons why your organisation exists. Don't allow the objectives to become blurred.
- 10) **ENSURE THE WORKLOAD IS SHARED.** Too many thinkers, too many theorists, and too few workers is one sure way of shortening the effective working life of an RTO or LTO – or any organisation.
- 11) **THE NAME OF THE GAME IS 'COMMUNICATION'** - both inside and outside your area. Keep 'static' (distortion of the message) out of it.
- 12) **TREAT YOUR TOURISM ORGANISATION AS A BUSINESS, NOT A CRUSADE.**

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AIRLINE TRAVEL – THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

In a previous newsletter I mentioned the escalating airline charges in the USA for checked-in luggage and the new charge for a blanket and pillow. Now in an industry first, U.S. budget carrier Spirit Airlines is introducing charges for carry-on bags that don't fit under the seat and must be placed in the overhead bins – and the charge varies from \$20 - \$45.

As well, several airlines are apparently considering the introduction of charges for on-line bookings and for passengers travelling with infants. There is also a strong rumour going around that a couple of budget overseas airlines are considering paying airline staff commissions as incentives for selling all the add-on charges.

But there is more ... Several months ago the Irish budget airline Ryanair floated the concept of charging for use of their aircraft toilets.

Most people (including me) thought this was another Irish joke or publicity stunt. It wasn't. The airline plans to charge for use of the toilets for flights of 1 hour or less and is working with the aircraft manufacturer to develop coin-access aircraft toilets. Charges are likely to be 1 Euro or 1 British pound - this currently equates to around AU\$1.33 - \$1.52.

One international aviation commentator has expressed the opinion that this is the start of a process to reduce the number of toilets on board to one, and eventually take all

toilets out of aircraft that are used on shorter flights. Why? Simply because an aircraft toilet can be replaced with up to 6 more seats and it does away with toilet servicing costs - so more profit.

With an ageing population in many countries and the introduction of aircraft without toilets, I can visualise the scene when disembarking from one of these flights - a stream of senior citizens with back teeth awash elbowing younger people out of the way to get off the aircraft to be first at the terminal toilets. When 'oldies' are bent on getting to a toilet, you stand in their way at your peril.

Joking aside, this is undoubtedly the shape of things to come. Low-cost carriers are steadily embracing the concept of a-la-carte pricing, keeping base fares low to lure passengers, while increasing profit margins by charging passengers for every possible additional 'service' the airlines provide. It has been reported that budget airlines like Ryanair make 25% of their profits from add-ons to the so-called 'cheap' airfare. The report also states that extra charges on Ryanair flights have increased by up to 700% since 2006.

Granted, all this is currently happening overseas, but in addition to the low domestic airfares in Australia and depending on the airline, we are already paying for food, checked-in baggage, exorbitant airport charges and taxes. Be prepared for our domestic airlines to follow overseas trends. They will have no option because it's the bean-counters who are in control.

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