



The Need For Sanity In Tourism Development Strategy Studies: Part 1

When my company and several other tourism consultant colleagues started out doing these strategy projects many years ago, most of our clients expected reports that were straightforward, concise, easy-to-read documents that provided a practical approach and were readily understood.

Then the hierarchy, academia and the large accountancy firms got into the act and with their influence, the tourism planning consultancy briefs we received gradually required more and more stuff in tourism planning reports that was impractical in the context of giving clients clear, realistic and achievable action plans to follow. This situation continues today with far too many tourism planning projects based on a theoretical approach, the latest jargon, and suffering from the “weight of paper” syndrome with a mass of vague recommendations, ignoring the human and financial resources available for implementation.

Furthermore, from my experience in recent years it has become increasingly evident that the underlying requirement from some tourism planning project steering committees is “we want an objective opinion - provided it is the opinion we want”. This gives these committees the warm and fuzzies – it’s like having a wee in a wetsuit; it gives them a nice warm feeling but no one outside knows they have done it.

No matter whether tourism planning studies are conducted for or by state/territory governments, local government, regional or local tourism organisations, its time to bring back some sanity into tourism development planning projects and reports, dispense with the time wasting, impractical report-padding crud, the meaningless flowcharts and the overuse of acronyms that most people outside (and some inside) the industry do not understand.

It is also time to get realistic with the number of recommendations in tourism planning reports. Often there are too many recommended actions that simply overwhelm the implementation process.

For localised and subregional tourism strategy reports in areas with limited resources, around 9 – 12 key recommended actions over a three-year period is ample.

Just about everyone today is suffering from communication overload so any tourism development strategy document should be clear and concise - and you don't need a mass of paper to do it. In Part 2 of this subject in my next newsletter, I'll address the key elements in a practical Tourism Development Plan Action Plan.

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- Planning the establishment of a local tourism organization: 20 key questions
- Definition of a Tourism Officer

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Planning The Establishment Of A Local Tourism Organisation (LTO) : 20 Key Feasibility Questions

Experience over many years shows that when planning a new local tourism organization or committee, well-meaning business or community representatives tend to establish these bodies with no clear action plan (other than perhaps printing a brochure), and may be just duplicating the activities of an existing tourism organisation. Rarely is adequate consideration given to all the issues involved, and whether the LTO can be justified.

More often than not the decision is based on 'it seemed like a good idea at the time' with little or no thought given to long term financial sustainability and when funding becomes difficult, enthusiasm wanes – and the rot sets in.

The tourism industry across the nation is littered with a trail of LTO disasters, so before starting a new LTO either as a stand-alone body or sub-committee of another organisation, there are 20 key questions that need to be addressed.

- 1) What are the clearly identified reasons for establishing the organisation?
- 2) What will the LTO do that is not being done by an existing tourism organisation in region?
- 3) Is the tourism industry (operators and visitors) large enough to justify and LTO
- 4) What level of support can you expect from the local tourism industry and wider business community
- 5) What would be the objectives of the organisation?
- 6) What is a realistic estimate of the number of potential members?
- 7) What benefits will be provided for members?

- 8) How will members be obtained?
- 9) What will be the membership fee scale?
- 10) What sources of funding and in-kind support will be available to establish the organization.
- 11) Will sufficient financial support be available to sustain the organisation in the long term?
- 12) How will this long term funding be provided?
- 13) How will the LTO work with the regional tourism organisation?
- 14) What does the LTO intend to achieve in the first three years of operation (Years 1/2/3 Action Plan)?
- 15) What will it cost to administer the organisation and implement the Action Plan?
- 16) Will sufficient financial and other resources be available to implement the Plan?
- 17) Is there a sufficient level of commitment from everyone involved to ensure ongoing support for the organisation, and effective operation.
- 18) What sector representation will make up the committee?
- 19) Is it intended that the LTO will be an incorporated body? If not, do the committee members understand the legal implications?
- 20) Is it feasible to form the organisation?
This list of questions is not exhaustive, and there may be other local or regional considerations. Nevertheless, establishing a new LTO in an industry which already has an oversupply of organisations, requires careful deliberation if public money is not to be wasted.



Rob Tonge
and associates

Tourism Viewpoint

THE GRUMPY OLD REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT'S NEWSLETTER

Issue 4

Definition of a Tourism Officer (or Manager)

A Tourism Officer must be a market researcher, analyst, advertising and promoting professional, lobbyist, negotiator, diplomat, journalist, photographer, cartographer, administrator, organiser, small business adviser, display and exhibition expert, and salesperson.

A Tourism Officer must have a photographic memory to remember directions to every attraction in the area, the state of the roads, and the length of time it takes to get there.

A Tourism Officer must like people, have infinite patience and the telepathic sense to know what is going on, even when details have not been made available. A Tourism Officer must have boundless energy and enthusiasm, a sense of humour and a high level of dedication.

A Tourism Officer must be a motivator who makes things happen, and in cooperation with the management committee, provides leadership and guidance, and formulates the objectives, strategies and priorities that will enable the organisation to achieve its goals.

Most importantly a Tourism Officer must develop the cunning of latrine rodent to survive in this environment.

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Rob Tonge

Rob Tonge & Associates

Tourism Development Consultants
Sunshine Coast, Queensland
Email: robtonge@powerup.com.au
Phone: (07) 5446 1318

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