Assessment Findings & Suggestions

Cattaraugus County, New York

August 2007

Destination Development inc.

Ideas to increase tourism spending

In August of 2007, a Community Tourism Assessment of Gowanda and Randolph, including the corridor between the two communities, and the community of South Dayton, was conducted, and the findings were presented in a three-hour workshop. The assessment provides an unbiased overview of the community – how it is seen by a visitor. It includes a review of local marketing efforts, signage, attractions, critical mass, retail mix, ease of getting around, customer service, visitor amenities such as parking and public restrooms, overall appeal, and the community's ability to attract overnight visitors.

In performing the "Community Assessment," we looked at the area through the eyes of a first-time visitor. No prior research was facilitated, and no community representatives were contacted except to set up the project, and the town and surrounding area were "secretly shopped."

There are two primary elements to the assessment process: First is the "Marketing Effectiveness Assessment."

How easy is it for potential visitors to find information about the community or area? Once they find information, are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale? In the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment, we assigned two (or more) people to plan trips into the general region. They did not know, in advance, who the assessment was for. They used whatever resources they would typically use in planning a trip: travel guides, brochures, the internet, calling visitor information centers, review of marketing materials, etc. - just as you might do in planning a trip to a "new" area or destination.

The community has five opportunities to close the sale:
      1) Personal contact (visitor information centers, trade shows, etc.)
      2) Websites
      3) Brochures and printed materials
      4) Publicity (articles)
      5) Word of mouth - the most effective means

We tested all of these methods by contacting area visitor information services and attractions, searching the internet for activities, requesting and reviewing printed materials, looking for articles and third-party information, and questioning regional contacts. We reviewed both commercial and organizational websites promoting the area, state tourism websites, read travel articles, and

looked at AAA Tour Book reviews and suggested activities.

The marketing assessment determined how visible the community was during the research, and how effective the marketing was in convincing a potential visitor that the community would be worth a special trip, a stop, or an overnight stay. The key to the marketing assessment is to see if you have a primary lure that makes you worth a special trip of a two-hour drive - or further away. The question on most visitors' mind is: what do you have that I can't get closer to home? What makes you worth a special trip?

Where most communities fail is when they merely provide a "list" of what the community has, whether it's truly "unique" or not. Nearly every community in North America promotes the usual list of diversions: local museums, unique shops and restaurants, plenty of lodging, golf, outdoor recreation (bird watching, hiking, biking, boating, etc., etc.), historic downtowns, scenic vistas, and so on. Of course, nearly every visitor can do this closer to home. So, what makes your community worth a special trip?

Always promote your primary lure first - what makes you worth that special trip, THEN your diversionary activities. Would to go to Anaheim, California if Disneyland wasn't there? Do you think that Universal Studios and Knotts Berry Farm get upset that Disneyland gets all the glory? That they are diversions? Of course not. Eighty percent of all tourism spending is with diversionary activities. Disney does the heavy lifting in terms of advertising and promotion, and the diversionary activities ride on those coattails.

In a nutshell, the Marketing Effectiveness Assessment looks for things that make you worth a special trip and an overnight stay. The secret shoppers look for details, details, details. To be successful you must provide itineraries and specifics - not just generalities. Are your marketing efforts good enough to close the sale?

The second part of the assessment process is the On-site Assessment. During this part of the assessment, we spent several days in the community, looking at enticement from freeways and highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop), beautification and overall curb appeal, wayfinding (ease of getting around), visitor amenities (public restrooms, visitor information, parking), activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping), critical mass, customer service, area attractions, pedestrian friend-

liness, gathering spaces, evening activities, and the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness.

The community benefits from tourism when visitors spend money, and they do that in the local gift shops, restaurants, hotels, etc. Therefore, the On-site Assessment includes a candid look at private businesses as much as public spaces and amenities.

For every shortcoming or challenge we note during the assessment process, we provide a low-cost "suggestion," where possible, on how the challenge can be corrected or overcome. The suggestions are not termed "recommendations," as they were developed without consulting the community first about possible restraints, future plans, or reasons the suggestions may not be appropriate. Hopefully this assessment process will open dialogue within the community, leading it to adopt some or all of the suggestions, taking them from suggestions to recommendations.

It's important to note that to increase the community's tourism industry, fulfilling one or two of the suggestions may have little impact, but implementing a number of them, if not all, can have a profoundly successful impact on the community's ability to tap into the tourism industry.

Implementation of these suggestions must be a community-wide effort, involving both privately owned businesses as well as local, county, and state agencies, where appropriate. Every local organization plays a role in tourism, downtown revitalization, or economic development efforts. A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO, CVB, Chamber, TPA, etc.) cannot be successful if the tourism effort is not community-wide.

In many cases, issues may come up that you are already aware of and are already working on. In that case, the assessment validates those efforts. But more often than not, the assessment will point out things that you are painfully aware of but can't mention or bring up without paying a political price. Local politics can be a killer of the tourism industry.

While marketing efforts are important, product development is the most important factor of a successful tourism industry. Visitors want activities, not just things to look at. How much time can a visitor spend enjoying activities - that cater to their interests - in your community? Does your community have

truly unique attractions the visitor can't get closer to home? You must be able to deliver on your marketing promises – otherwise visitors might come once, but they won't come back. It's much more cost effective to bring people back, than to always go out and entice new visitors into town. "Been there, done that" communities eventually run out of visitors and find they don't have a sustainable tourism industry, or simply become pit stops or gateways on the way to somewhere else.

After spending several days reviewing marketing materials and assessing the community, we have looked at all of these issues, developed some suggestions and ideas the community can discuss and possibly implement to help increase tourism spending locally.

SUCCESSFUL TOURISM TRANSLATES TO CASH

Tourism is successful when the community imports more cash than it exports. When residents spend their hard-earned money outside the community, the community is exporting cash – often referred to as "leakage." Tourism helps fill that gap, importing cash into the local economy without the necessity of having to provide extended social and other services. Visitors come, spend money, then go home. When you import more cash than you export, you have a positive "balance of trade." Communities with successful tourism programs easily see that the industry subsidizes the community, whereas other communities find that they subsidize visitors – providing services visitors use without them leaving enough money behind to cover the cost of those services.

The primary goal of the tourism industry is to bring more cash into the local economy. This doesn't happen when visitors come into the community, get out of their cars, and take photographs. And it doesn't happen when visitors go swimming in the lake at your city park all day, sunning, and eating the lunch they brought from home. And it doesn't happen when visitors hike down your trails, enjoy your interpretive centers, or stroll through your lovely arboretums. These are all great things to do, and, of course, you do want your visitors to do these – but, you also want to entice them into your shops, your cafes, espresso stands, restaurants, galleries, B&B's, hotels, ultimately opening their wallets to make purchases. That is what helps your local economy, your small merchants, your hoteliers, and your tax coffers.

To entice visitors to spend money in your community, you need to have places for them to spend it – you need to have the right mix of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and lodging facilities, all in an attractive setting, as well as the attractions that make them want to visit you in the first place.

THE THREE TYPES OF TOURISM
1. Visiting friends and family

The number one reason people travel is to visit friends and/or family. If you did nothing to promote tourism, you would still have tourism in your community. However, when friends and family come to visit, do local residents take them out to eat, shop, dine locally? Or do they head to a neighboring community? Do your locals even know what you have to offer? An effective tourism marketing effort also includes educating locals as to what you have and how to find it through effective wayfinding signage, gateways and advertising.

2. Business travel

The second most popular reason for travel is business. Included in this category is educational travel: colleges and universities, as well as conventions and meetings, corporate travel, vendor travel, etc. Like leisure travelers, this group is looking for things to do "after hours" while in the area. The most successful convention and trade show towns are the result of their secondary activities or "diversions," not simply because of their convention and exhibition facilities. Think DisneyWorld, Disneyland, San Antonio's River Walk, to name a few.

3. Leisure travel

The third, and most lucrative of all types of visitors, is the leisure traveler. They have no personal connections to the community, but are coming purely to enjoy themselves. They stay in commercial lodging establishments, eat virtually all their meals in local restaurants, and their top diversionary activity is shopping and dining in a pedestrian-friendly setting.

The average leisure visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet typically only spends four to six hours with the primary lure. They then spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities - things they could do closer to home, but will do while in the area. A good example of this is Branson, Missouri, the "live music-theater capital of the world." This town of 6,500 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. The primary "lure" is the 49 music theaters. The average visitor attends two shows a day over about four hours. During the other

hours of the day, the visitor will shop in local outlet malls, head to the water parks, theme parks, and other attractions, play a round of golf, hike, bike, fish, do some bird watching, and participate in any number of other activities they could do closer to home, but will do while visiting Branson.

THE THREE STAGES OF TOURISM

1. Status quo

If you take no action to develop the tourism industry, you will still have an element of tourism, simply because some travelers will pull off local high-ways or freeways for gas, food, or lodging, as well as the fact that the number one reason for travel is to visit friends or family. If you have residents, you will have some tourism.

2. Getting people to stop

The first priority of developing a successful tourism industry is getting people to stop. Imagine how successful businesses in the community would be if just 50% of the vehicles traveling through pulled off the highway and spent just 30 minutes in your community – buying gas, an ice cream cone, a sandwich, a gift or souvenir?

If there's a strong pull, imagine the money spent if visitors stayed two hours in the community, which nearly always translates to additional spending.

The first goal is to get those travelers to stop.

3. Becoming the destination
To become a destination community you must have attractions and supporting amenities that convince visitors to spend the night. And those attractions must be different from what the visitor can get closer to home.

Overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and nearly ten times that of visitors using your community as a pit stop on the way to somewhere else.

THE FOUR-TIMES RULE

Visitors will make a point of stopping or staying in a community if it has enough activities that appeal specifically to them and will keep them busy four times longer than it took them to get there.

In other words, if a person has to drive 15 minutes to visit you, do you have enough for them to do to keep them busy for an hour? (4 times 15 minutes) If a visitor has to drive an hour, do you have the activities and amenities to keep them busy for four hours?

The more you have to offer, collectively, the further visitors will come, and the longer they will stay, and of course, the more they will spend. This is why it is so important for communities to market more than just their immediate geographic areas. By marketing neighboring activities and attractions, you present much more for a visitor to do, and you make the visit worth the trip. Visitors don't care about city limits or county lines – so market the broader package and you'll be able to keep people in the area long enough to translate to another meal, some more shopping, and hopefully, an overnight stay.

SELL THE EXPERIENCE, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Nearly every destination marketing organization is charged with promoting a geographic area, yet visitors couldn't care less about those boundaries. They are looking for activities that cater to their interests, and location is second to the experience. ALWAYS promote the primary lure first, then the location. If I want to go see Andy Williams, I don't care whether he's in Muskogee, Oklahoma or in Branson, Missouri. Visitors, by the millions, head to Disneyland, DisneyWorld, Dollywood and other attractions. They are not going to Anaheim, Orlando or Pigeon Forge.

Always sell the activity - the experience - THEN the location.

LURES, DIVERSIONS AND AMBIANCE

Too often communities promote the list of diversions that nearly every community has. The primary lure is the activity that a visitor can't find closer to home.

Always promote your primary lure, then the diversions. Do not try to be all things to all people. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had "something for everyone?" Of course not - you go there because they have something specific for you. Find your niche and promote it like crazy.

Historic downtowns provide ambiance - they are not attractions, diversions, nor are they a primary lure. It's what's in the buildings that makes a downtown a destination.

The same can be said for scenery. Unless your vista is a world-class scene, such as Niagara Falls or the Grand Canyon, scenic vistas create wonderful ambiance, but don't translate to spending, and they only last a few minutes. Then what?

All too often communities promote their heritage as a primary draw. How far would you travel to visit a mining museum? A timber museum? An agricultural center? A county historical museum? Heritage must be outstanding and pervasive throughout the community to be a primary lure, such as Plimoth Plantation or Salem, Massachusetts.

Thousands of communities are the "capital" of something. For instance, in California, Borrego Springs is the grapefruit capital of the world. Gilroy is the garlic capital. Modesto is the tomato capital. Gridley is the kiwi capital. Oxnard is the strawberry capital. Fallbrook is the avocado capital. But here's the question: Have you ever gone anywhere because it was the capital of a fruit or a vegetable?

Your local heritage is important to the community and can set the ambiance, even becoming a diversionary activity. But to the vast majority of potential visitors, it's not a reason to make a special trip.

BE DIFFERENT OR THE BEST

Why should a visitor come to your community if they can enjoy the same activities closer to home? Too many communities promote "outdoor recreation" as their primary draw. Unfortunately, that is the same attraction promoted by nearly every community in North America.

If you are different, then you have a reason for travelers to choose to visit you. If you are the best, then visitors will generally flock to your doors.

If you have great hiking trails, then market their unique qualities. Be specific and paint the image of how wonderful they are in the minds of your potential visitors. If you have one fantastic restaurant in town, let people know about it – a unique dining experience is something many people will travel far to enjoy.

Ashland, Oregon, previously a depressed timber town, began its Shakespeare Festival, which now runs nine months of the year and draws hundreds of thousands of visitors who spend an average of six nights in the community. The Shakespeare Festival made Ashland different from any other community.

Leavenworth, Washington, another dying timber town, adopted a Bavarian architectural theme and produces dozens of Bavarian events every year. Some now say the town looks more genuinely Bavarian than towns in Bavaria. It is now one of the primary tourist destinations in Washington state, hosting more than 2.5 million visitors annually. They offer a different experience, an experience that is pervasive throughout town.

Okanogan County, Washington is an outdoor recreational paradise – just like 37 of the 38 other counties in Washington. So why go to the Okanogan? Because they are the best. They researched guidebooks, newspaper and magazine articles, and pulled quotes they could use in their advertising efforts. Like, "Pinch yourself, you're in Okanogan Country with perhaps the best cross country skiing on the continent." This, and other quotes like it, make it worth the drive to visit Okanogan Country. The third-party endorsements show that they are the best.

Set yourself apart from everyone else, and you'll see that in being unique, you'll become a greater attraction.

CRITICAL MASS MEANS CASH

Although it may not be the primary reason why visitors come to your community, shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors. Besides lodging, it is also how visitors spend the most amount of money.

Do you have a pedestrian-friendly shopping district? If not, can you create one?

Many communities have been highly successful with the development of a two or three block long pedestrian "village" including visitor-oriented retail shops, dining, visitor information, restrooms, etc., all in an attractive, landscaped setting.

The general rule of thumb in those two or three blocks (not spread out all over town) is 10+10+10: Ten destination retail shops, which includes galleries, antiques, collectibles, home accents and furnishings, artists in action, book stores, logo gear (clothing), souvenirs, outfitters, tour operators, activity shops such as kites, jewelry, wine or tobacco shops, and other specialties. The second ten is for food: ice cream, fudge and candy stores, soda fountains, sit-down dining, coffee shops, cafes, bistros, delis, etc. And the final ten are businesses open after 6:00 pm. This includes entertainment: bars, dance clubs, theaters (movies and performing), retail shops with activities (piano bar in a wine shop), etc.

The important point is to group these businesses together to create the "critical mass" in a pedestrian-friendly setting. This will attract visitors as well as locals, and make it worth their while to stop and shop. People are always drawn to the critical mass – the opportunity to have multiple choices, multiple experiences, all in a convenient and attractive setting.

TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The goal of successful tourism is for people to come into the community, spend money, and go home. Tourism is nearly a $650 billion dollar industry in the U.S., supporting millions of jobs. Ninety percent of tourism industry businesses are small businesses of which 90% have less then 15 employees. Tourism provides the opportunity for entrepreneurs to get started, for small family-run businesses to thrive, for artisans and craftspeople to find a market, and creates a basis for unique niche-retail environment including wineries, artists, crafts, etc. Tourism provides a diverse market within the community, expanding its potential. Enhancing the community through beautification efforts creates an attractive setting for both locals and visitors, key in revitalizing a community's downtown. And a tourism-friendly town will attract non-tourism industries faster than others – new businesses will see the community as a visitor before they make a final determination about the community. Tourism is the front door to your economic development efforts.

The benefits of a healthy tourism industry can rejuvenate a town, foster community pride, encourage economic diversity, and lead the way to a vital, successful community.

NEXT STEPS

The findings and suggestions in this report can provide your community with many ideas, strategies, and goals to reach for. We hope that it fosters dialogue in the community and becomes a springboard for the community in enhancing its tourism industry, leading to greater prosperity, rejuvenation, and enjoyment by all the citizens.

This report offers a first step in reaching that goal. To fully realize the benefits of this assessment, the community should take these findings and suggestions, discuss them and evaluate them, and develop a plan for implementation.

A detailed "Community Branding, Development and Marketing Action Plan" builds on the results of this assessment, adding in-depth research, evaluation, and community input to develop a unique brand and implementation program. The assessment process essentially provides a look at where you are today.

The next steps in the planning process is interviewing local stakeholders, providing public outreach, and reviewing past and current planning efforts. This determines where you want to go as a community.

The third step involves research, feasibility and market analysis, and determining your brand - what you are or hope to be known for.

Then comes the "development" portion of the plan or the "how to get there" program: determining what product development initiatives need to be undertaken to reinforce and grow the brand. This also includes defining the roles of the various local organizations. Brand-building takes a village - everyone pulling in the same direction, each with it's own "to do list."

Finally, there's the detailed marketing plan: how and when you will tell the world who you are and what makes you special: the place to live, work and play.

This Branding, Development & Marketing Plan should be an "action plan" as opposed to a "strategic plan." You want a to do list, by organization, not just general strategies, goals and objectives.

For every recommendation the following elements should be detailed:
1. A brief description of the recommendation
2. Who would be charged with implementation
3. When it would be implemented
4. How much it will cost
5. Where the money will come from
6. The rationale for making the recommendation

The recommendations should provide all the necessary steps for your community to be successful in attaining its goals of a more diverse economy with an enhanced tourism industry and to become a more attractive and enjoyable community for both visitors and citizens.

If you move forward with the development of the Action Plan and hire outside services, always hire the most qualified team you can find (issue a request for Statement of Qualifications) and then negotiate the scope of work and cost with them. If you are not able to reach an agreement, then move to number two on your list. A good plan will provide a program to get local residents and the business community pulling together to enhance the community, building its unique image in the minds of visitors and residents alike. The result of your efforts will be a prosperous, enjoyable environment to live, work, and visit.

Gowanda
First impressions are lasting impressions

Suggestion

Gateways into every town provide a sense of arrival. They slow traffic so we notice what's available. Always put your gateways where you will make the first best impression - not necessarily at your township limits.

Just like residential subdivisions, your community gateways are a direct reflection of the overall community in terms of quality. They also can create a sense of community pride. Look at your gateways and what's around them. Do they reflect the community? Do they create a good impression of the town?

The gateway signs into Gowanda are very nice and in good locations (top right and bottom left). Suggestion: Keep the trestle painted (below). First impressions are lasting impressions. The scenery (bottom right) creates a very nice entrance as you head north into town.

Suggestion

The gateway is attractive and the landscaping around it well-maintained. (top right) A good first impression like this slows visitors down, gets them to take a "second look" and translates to increased spending. Good job.

Very often, signs for auxiliary organizations and churches are displayed in unattractive ways, such as this chain link fencing (bottom left). Not only is it ugly, taking away from the overall ambiance of the area, but easily rusts, and the auxiliary signs create sign clutter. Auxiliary organization and church signs should be located in a place visitors can stop to take note of when and where the organizations meet.

Display the signs in a decorative foundation, something along this line (bottom right). It's attractive, and much more fitting with the community. Avoid steel pipes and fence materials whenever possible. Use building and landscape materials that are reflective of the community.

In this case, the Welcome sign is beautiful, but the neighboring auxiliary signage eliminates the appeal of the gateway into Gowanda.

Suggestion

Replace these as well (bottom left and right). In both cases they are already rusting and are simply ugly. What is your first impression of Gowanda if you were coming into the community on either of these roadways?

While organizations should be commended for developing welcoming gateways, each should be professionally designed since first impressions are so important to increased spending in the community.

Baker City, Oregon, has created this very attractive structure (top right) to house its auxiliary signs. This is located right next to the visitor information center, making it very easy for people to stop and make note of meeting times, etc. as they are getting other visitor information.

Suggestion

Replace this gateway sign (top right) with one of the new ones. The new signs are terrific, and although this one isn't bad, having consistency is important. The newer signs are also more decorative.

Your "gateway homes" are very important since they are the first glimpse visitors have of the community, and they shine in Gowanda.

The autumn displays are a lot of fun (bottom photos). This shows community pride and endears the visitor to the community translating to increased visits, longer stays, and increased spending - the benefit of tourism.

First impressions of Gowanda were that it must be a great place to live. People were friendly, homes well maintained, and much of downtown was beautiful.

Suggestion

Local businesses: Always promote what it is you're selling. I had no idea what "Starcraft" is. (top left) I thought it was probably a video game store. Mount signs on wood, instead of cheap metal posts, to fit the historic ambiance of the community.

B&B? (top right) What is Manor Guest House? Remember, first impressions are lasting impressions. You'll be judged by 1) your signage 2) curb appeal 3) your entranceway. This sign does little to "close the sale."

Curb appeal can account for 70% of your sales at restaurants, wineries, golf courses, retail stores and lodging facilities. If this restaurant was in Dunkirk or Silver Creek would you eat there? (bottom left) It doesn't have any curb appeal. Add planters set against the building to soften the harshness of the concrete sidewalk and building front. An awning over the doorway and some hanging baskets of flowers would finish the look.

Burger King, across the street, (bottom right) understands the power of beautification and first impressions. Which restaurant would you eat at?

Suggestion

Note the streetscape in the two photos to the right. Neenah, Wisconsin has been working on downtown revitalization, and part of the process has included beautification efforts. Notice the before and after pictures. By adding the planters, merchants saw sales increase by double-digits.

The same is true for this restaurant (bottom left). It is already a nice looking restaurant, but the addition of six or seven more planters, perhaps a couple of hanging baskets would add a lot of appeal. Consider adding a couple of tables for outdoor dining as well.

Make it "inviting" - a "not to be missed" attraction. Consider low-voltage rope lighting over holiday icicle lights, if used year round. If not, take them down after the holidays. Somehow icicle lighting doesn't ring true in August.

Suggestion

Radio Shack (top right) does a great job with its beautification efforts. They deserve a gold star. Very nice.

Add a few planters (bottom left) up against the building to help pull people in. This building wrapped in a mural would be awesome. The benches and decorative trash receptacle look great. The sign should also be updated to give the restaurant a fresh "upscale" look. Overall, the restaurant may serve good food, but as a visitor, it had no appeal that would pull visitors in.

"31 Jamestown Street Restaurant" has a very nice sign and menu board. (bottom right) Add a perpendicular or "blade sign" to make it easier for people to see as they drive past. Add additional planters.

Suggestion

Storefront signs should be perpendicular to the street (blade signs) and of a fairly uniform height and size, making it easier for motorists and pedestrians to see what is available. Rule of thumb: No lower than 7 feet, no higher than 9 feet, and no wider than 42 inches. For example: 24" tall (max) x 42" wide (max).

Signs should be decorative to increase the perceived value of the shop or restaurant.

Note these examples of blade signs in Leavenworth, WA (top right), Nantucket, MA (bottom left), and Carmel, CA (bottom middle). Every successful downtown shopping district we've seen uses decorative blade signs.

Signage is a great investment - if done right. Look at the readership, per advertising type (below right) - on a national scale.
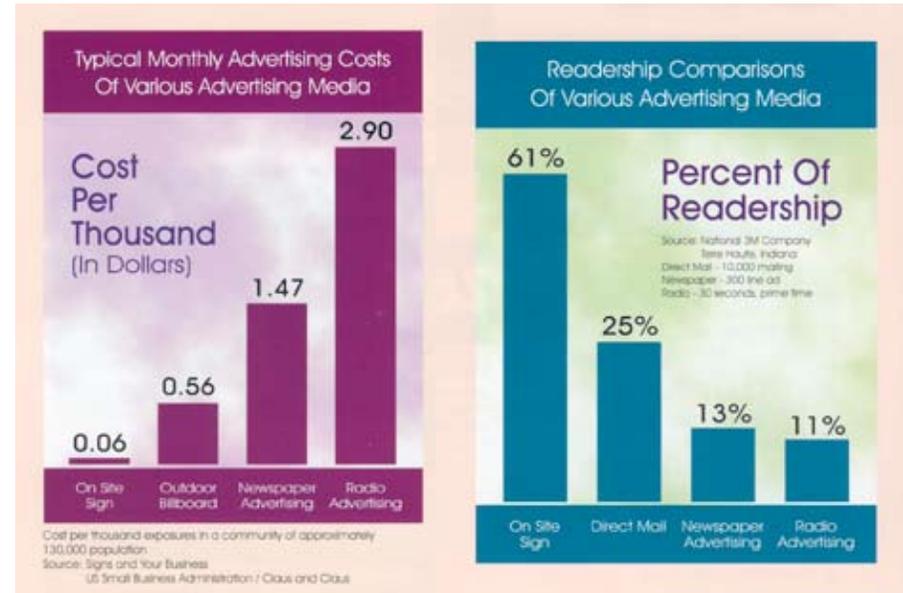
Suggestions

From across the street, I can, for the most part, tell what's in each of these shops (top photo). But, if I'm walking down the sidewalk or driving past (bottom left)...I can only tell what one business is. This is why perpedicular, or blade signs, are so important.

Soften the transition between facade and sidewalk with planters filled with shrubs or flowers (bottom left). Merchants wouldn't consider leaving the inside of their shops stark and bare - yet the exterior is just as important - that's what the customer sees first. Make it attractive. Pull customers in!

Can you tell what's in any of these businesses? (bottom center)

How about these? (bottom right)

Use blade signs to let customers know you're there! Create a "buying co-op" which can reduce the cost of new signs by as much as 35%. Create a Design Review Committee, made up of downtown merchants: a jury of peers.
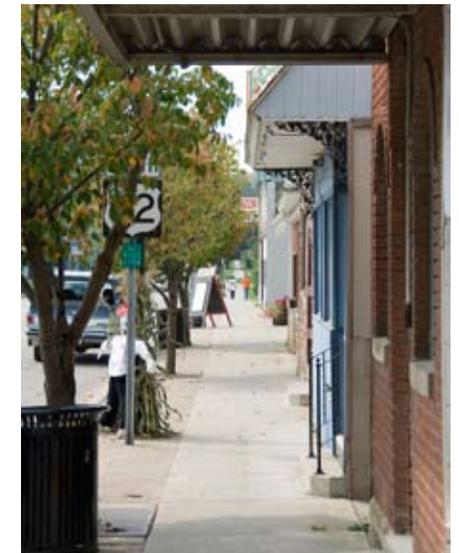
Suggestion

This is a nice store (top right), but the sign can only be seen from across the street, and then only partially.

This store (bottom left) has no signage of any kind. We had no idea what it is or if it's still in business, or if it's one or two businesses. Both of these merchants should add blade signs.

The key to effective merchant signage, after making sure customers can read it, is to always promote what it is you're selling - the lure to bring customers in. The name of the store or business is secondary. If people can't tell what it is you're selling, they're likely to just walk on by.

Can you tell what kind of shop Kelly's Famous Laffin Crab (bottom center) was? Seafood restaurant? How about the Black Swan (bottom right)? The Laffin Crab, by the way, is out of business - it sold kites and windsocks. Potential customers didn't even go in the shop, since they couldn't tell what kind of merchandise was offered. The Black Swan sells t-shirts. Go figure.

Suggestion

These shops (upper left) also need blade signs. Signage on the face of the buildings can't be seen from the sidewalk or street.

Collectibles? Antiques? Home accents? Second hand store? (bottom left) The "Attic Place" doesn't do enough to tell customers what you're selling. Suggestion: Promote the lure, then the name of the store. Add perpendicular (blade) signage - the only sign is so high, customers need to be on the other side of the street to see it.

"The Wood Merchant" (top right) saw sales increase once they let people know what they had to offer: "Handmade gifts and furniture."

Grandma's Attic (bottom right) is an antique store in Omak, WA. They also sell ice cream, and have a little sign promoting that outside the door. But what really attracts the customers is that the shop owner gives free ice cream to local kids, who are supposed to sit at the table outside to eat them. She says she makes more antique sales from people coming in for ice cream than anything else. What is the lure to pull customers into your store?
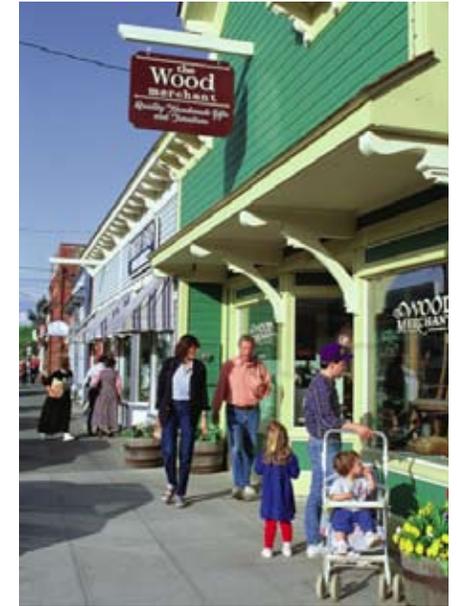
Suggestion

Is the "Wicked Glen" a biker bar? Do they serve food? (top right) Always promote what it is you're selling - the primary lure - before the name of the business. Let customers know that you have something they want. In this case we assumed it's a tavern.

Extend window displays to exterior spaces, but avoid outdoor merchandising. (bottom photos) Piling merchandise on portable racks and tables looks sloppy. Don't look like a second-class garage sale town.

What's your impression of this book shop (bottom right), in Nevada City, California? There is a huge difference between extending window displays to exterior spaces and outdoor merchandising. Avoid the latter except once or twice a year - for special events.

Suggestion

Would you walk into this shop? (top right) This beautiful display of merchandise in Grass Valley, CA, really pulls customers into the store.

Likewise, this outdoor display (bottom left) takes about 20 minutes every day for the shop owner to arrange, but she says it makes a huge difference in attracting customers. People can't walk by without coming in.

Beautification is an investment with an incredible return. The "softscapes" make shops more inviting, making people want to linger, and spending more money.

The beautification efforts downtown are very nice. (bottom right) The trees, planters, light poles, benches, and trash receptacles look great. Good job. Now, the downtown retailers have to do their part to add to this effort. While some do a great job, others do little or nothing.

Suggestion

(Top right): A very attractive streetscape and a model for the area. Take note other areas (and even across the street). Adding decorative blade signs would help pull customers into the stores as well.

There are some stunning homes in downtown Gowanda, like this one. (bottom center)

Little hidden alcoves, like this (bottom right), are fun, and make a town so interesting!

What a great event. (bottom left) Note: Because I saw a sign that said the Festival was coming, I made a separate trip back to Gowanda. Glad I did! Other towns take note. Gowanda did a good job of inviting visitors back for the weekend fall festival.

Suggestion

What a treat! These displays are wonderful! These showcase a lot of community pride, creativity, and outright fun, making Gowanda a great place to spend the day - or weekend.

Good job (middle, near right). Perfect for a news organization.

Suggestion

Gowanda has a pedestrian-friendly downtown, but have you heard of cross-walks? Put some in! Get the department of transportation on the job! Crossing the street can be dicey. There should be crosswalks at intersections, and even at the half-block areas. A lot of traffic seems to go through here.

Even simple painted crosswalks can help with pedestrian safety, but there are several different types of crosswalks that can enhance beauty and safety. A process of stamping decorative designs into asphalt, called StreetPrint, can give you crosswalks in any color, design, and style you might like. It's not paint, and the road is ready to be driven as soon as they finish the process.

Other kinds of crosswalks include lighted walks, where the pedestrian pushes a button before entering the road, which causes lights embedded in the crosswalk to flash, making it easier for drivers to see that the crosswalk is occupied. A low-tech safety enhancement for crosswalks is to provide a stand with flags for pedestrians to use as they cross, and they place the flag in another stand once they reach the opposite side.

Note: The park (below) is stunning and a nice feature downtown.

Suggestion

Can you read this banner? (top left)
Can you now? (top right)

Pole banner rules:
1. Make them colorful. Have them stand out, not blend into the trees.
2. Never use more than four words. People driving don't have time to read more than that.
3. Focus on experiences (activities), not buildings.
4. Use only one graphic image.
5. 1" high letters for every 12' of viewing distance.

Using pole banners for directional signs are excellent, but the same rules apply. Below are a couple of good examples in Appleton, Wisconsin (bottom left), and Mayville, NY at the Red Brick Farm (bottom center). Notice that these sell experiences or activities, not places or buildings.

Suggestion

Glad to see peddlers and solicitors are welcome (bottom left) - with a permit of course. If you don't get a permit, you end up here (see arrow)! Just kidding. Is there a problem with unlicensed peddlers and solicitors in Gowanda?

Small businesses all over the county, take note: ALWAYS include an "open" sign. If we don't know, we won't stop. Good sign here. (top right)

Is there a better place to ride bikes in New York State than in this area of Cattaraugus County? Good to see this here. (bottom right) Too bad it's so far "out of town." Harley shops are destinations in themselves. Motorcycle riders actually spend more money than do travelers in standard autos.
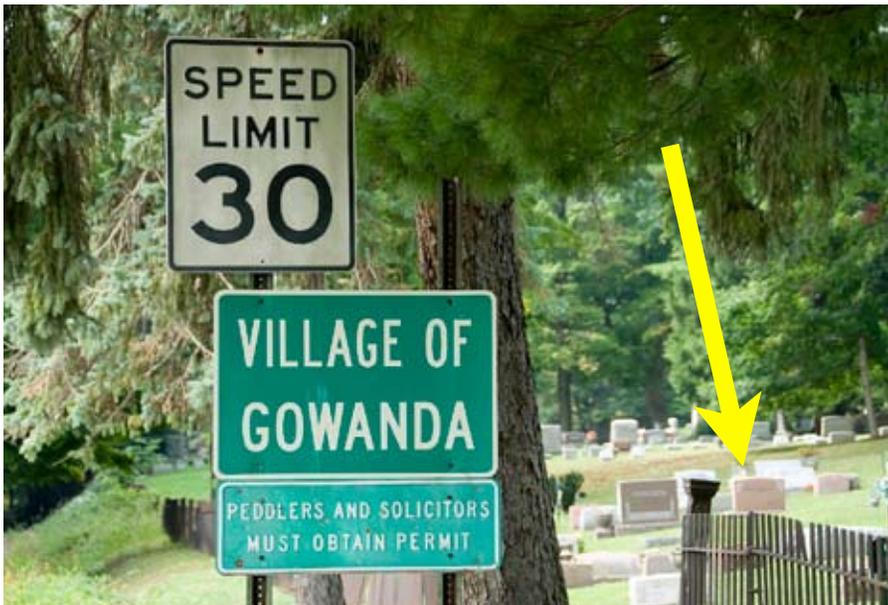
Suggestion

This must be a first: Motel, Lounge, and Karate School. They don't quite sound right together. Suggestion: Consider a name change? The "Palm Gardens" in Western New York just doesn't seem like a fit. I didn't see many palm trees or beaches in this area of the state. Can the Karate School be on a different sign? (top right)

First impressions are not overly favorable. (bottom) Add some more pots with shrubs and flowers, make the entrance to the office inviting. Paint the building.

Visitors will judge the quality of the rooms by the overall appearance and curb appeal of the motel or B&B. If the building looks uncared-for on the outside, visitors assume the rooms are also uncared-for.

Curb appeal can account for as much as 70% of sales for lodging facilities.

Critical mass is more than a religious experience

Suggestion

Critical mass is achieved when a destination retail center is created that will attract both visitors and local residents. The general rule of thumb for a successful downtown is the 10+10+10 rule, which includes a MINIMUM in three lineal blocks:

1. TEN places that sell food: Soda fountain, coffee shop, bistro, cafe, sit-down restaurant, wine store, deli, confectionery.
2. TEN destination retail shops: Galleries, antiques (not second hand stores), collectibles, books, clothing, home accents, outfitters, brand-specific businesses, garden specialties, kitchen stores, cigars, etc.
3. TEN places open after 6:00: Entertainment, theater (movies, performing arts), bars & bistros, specialty shops, dining, open air markets, etc.

Sometimes it's necessary to "rearrange the furniture" in a downtown to help achieve the critical mass - encouraging "neighborhood retail and services" to relocate outside of the "destination retail area," and encouraging the destination retail shops to relocate within the downtown core area.

Thought for Gowanda: Antiques.

Town: Jefferson, Texas (right)
Population: 2,500
Antique dealers: 120
Result: A major destination with visitors from 150 miles away. Overnight visitors. Now the B&B capital of Texas.
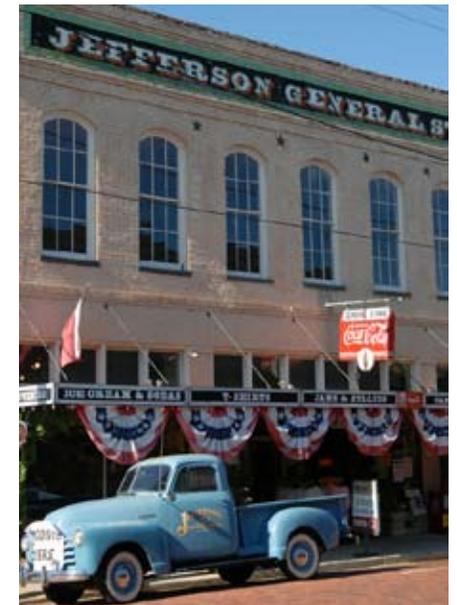
Suggestion

Visitors don't just travel during business hours. Visitor information should be working around the clock, 365 days a year. Add wall-mounted visitor information outside the chamber of commerce building, as they've done in Jackson, Wyoming (bottom right).

If you place your visitor information in a place where travelers can also spend money, then when they stop for information, they'll be much more likely to go into that shop or restaurant next door.

Be sure to promote other areas of the county with your visitor information. Cross-sell other attractions. The more you have to offer, the longer people will stay.

Gowanda in a nutshell:
1. Create a retail focus for downtown then recruit the supporting businesses.
2. Get some crosswalks.
3. Add more beautification: Merchants, it's YOUR turn.
4. Work on creating the "critical mass."
5. Change out your auxiliary signs to something decorative.
6. Establish a blade-sign program for merchants, buying co-op.
7. Businesses: promote your primary lure first, then the name.
8. Develop 24 hour visitor information with brochure distribution.

DAYTON

Suggestion

Take advantage of the bulletin board to add visitor information. Post a sign above it "Visitor Info." (top right) Is there anything to do or see while we're passing through this beautiful area? The commercial area of Dayton seems to be dying. (bottom left)

Sometimes grant funds are available to raze possibly unsafe buildings. (bottom right) or to convert them to other uses. Consider removing commercial buildings and, instead, develop park areas and open spaces where they now stand so the community can thrive as a bedroom community.

This is a great structure (center left); it's too bad it's vacant.

The "up and coming" Masters Plan Cafe looks as though it already came and went. (bottom left) If it's still an up and coming business, consider saying WHEN it might be open.

Assess the town's assets, liabilities, and goals. Determine if there might be a "niche" the town could focus on, such as pottery, quilting, jewelry, gardening, being a bedroom community, or whatever. Look at what the town already has that is a strength, and see if that can be developed into a niche for the town's economic growth. Then, determine what needs to be done to enhance that niche and make it successful.

To get travelers to stop in town, all you need are one or two attractions, such as an outstanding bakery or an excellent handmade furniture store. People will drive much further for something that is truly the best.

OUT IN THE COUNTRY

Suggestion

Lake Flavia is one of many diversionary activities in the area, but unlikely a primary lure for visitors from across the state or in neighboring states.

Racers Restaurant had good signs along the freeway, but could use a spruced up entranceway. (bottom right)

Consider a permanent readerboard at Racers. (bottom left) Take out the phone number; very rarely will someone driving by stop to write down the phone number of a restaurant. Instead, add hours or meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner. The fewer words, the better. General rule: less than 12 words - total.

Curb appeal is not too bad (center left), but not overly inviting. Keep up on the weeding, add more shrubs and flowers.

Example: The Nic•L•Inn near the Onoville Marina has great curb appeal - and it pays off. They do a booming business. (bottom right)

Suggestion

An example of the "power of curb appeal." Would you go in Aunt Millie's Family Restaurant (top right and bottom left), or would you go across the street … to Sunset Grill, (bottom right) both in Silver Creek.

Once again, curb appeal can account for up to 70% of sales at restaurants, golf courses, wineries, retail shops and lodging facilities. The colorful awnings and beautiful landscaping invite people in. Beautification is an investment with a tremendous return.

SOUTH DAYTON

Suggestion

Interesting "gateway" (top right) to South Dayton.

Consider redeveloping the gateway signage (bottom left and center). Add one at each end of town. Your gateway "welcome" signs are visitors' first introduction to the community. First impressions are lasting impressions, and an attractive, well-kept welcome sign increases the perceived value of the community. Consider signage along the lines of Westfield's (bottom right).

Put the auxiliary organizations on a pole in the central park next to the gazebo. Take note of the examples we used in the Gowanda section of this assessment.

Make sure your gateway signs are on the right side of the street and not hidden behind a guardrail. (bottom center) I passed this one, twice, before noticing it.

Suggestion

First impression of South Dayton: Looks a little rough around the edges but worth checking out. (top right)

Very attractive clock and readerboard. (bottom left) Consider using it for posting upcoming events or activities that might bring visitors back. A blank readerboard says there is nothing to see or do in the community. If you have it, put it to use.

The park has a lot of assets: the gazebo would be great for providing entertainment, such as concerts in the park, plenty of benches and picnic tables, decorative trash receptacles, shade trees. Make it a showcase - a gathering area. Consider adding more paver-brick areas for staging art shows and activities, instead of just lawn area.

Suggestion

There's some outstanding architecture downtown with real potential. It reminded me of Tombstone, Arizona. (These buildings are much nicer - top right). This could be a great little shopping district.

Suggestion: None of the businesses in this block (bottom left) were inviting. Add hanging baskets, planters, outdoor seating. Redevelop the signage to make it attractive. Replace the siding that's falling down. Add fresh paint.

It's hard to tell whether or not the pizzeria (bottom right) is in business. This whole block looks stark and empty. Add beautification: that's a sign you're in business. Work on a weed-abatement program.

While South Dayton has some tremendous potential, it seems as though the town is slowly dying. This is just a first-impression and hopefully, not the case. South Dayton could be a major "hub" for New York's Amish Trail, with its central location to some terrific activities in the area.

Suggestion

Perhaps it is open, after all since there are people now sitting outside the restaurant (top right). The restaurant next door is easily missed with no blade signs or beautification.

Avoid temporary signs if possible (bottom left), particularly in an historic setting. This sign has no appeal whatsoever. Add some tables and chairs outside. Pull me in!

One of the most inviting places in town happens to be a residence! (bottom right) Local businesses should emulate this place in terms of attractiveness and curb appeal.

Suggestion

A nice building (top right). It looks as if it must be an apartment complex or condos. Suggestion: Add signage stating what this is. Add some trees to soften the stark appearance. There is nothing, whatsoever, visible coming into town that says what this nice and newer looking building is.

I still don't know what this building is (bottom left). Suggestion: Add some curb appeal if this is a public entrance, perhaps a sign above the door.

Even once at the door there is still no information at all. (bottom center) Must be out of business or is an apartment complex that is not open to the public. That would explain the lack of signage.

Not until you're across the street (bottom right) can you see that this is a restaurant. It must be a HUGE restaurant, three stories tall! Is it operating? Where is the entrance to the restaurant? Is the door (bottom left photos) go to a bar or to the restaurant? Is the restaurant in the upper two floors? The door (top right) to the rear of the building looks to be an employee or kitchen entrance. Add some signage. Close the sale. We hear its great.

Suggestion

This easily looks like the best restaurant in town. Nice sign, perpendicular to the street, good curb appeal, meals are noted on the sign.

Umbrellas are always a great drawing card. (bottom left) They add a welcoming ambiance.

The entrance is inviting as well. Curb appeal is a powerful draw! Unfortunately, we heard after the assessment that the Mustardseed is out of business. This may be due, in part, to the lack of critical mass in South Dayton. One or two places, by themselves, is not enough to make you a primary visitor draw.

Some ideas are upcoming, that could make South Dayton worth a stop while visiting New York's Amish Trail.

Suggestion

Nice little readerboard. (top left) It helps make customers feel welcome.

Readerboards, like this one (top right), and displays like these menus can really pull customers in. People like to have some idea of what to expect when they go to a restaurant, and these decorative displays give the customer information as well. Other restaurants take note.

Nice sign. (bottom left) Looks like a nice place to visit. Could be an "anchor tenant" for the town. So, I went to find Cherry Creek, thinking they might have a showroom or retail outlet.

Perhaps not. (bottom right) I never found any type of customer entrance, so I assumed it was NOT open to the public. In that case, why the decorative sign? Remove it unless it serves some sort of purpose.

Suggestion

Add an "open" sign that can be attached to the highway signage (top right). Add operating hours instead of the phone number.

A nice place, but it's difficult to tell whether it's open or closed. An open door means the business is open but signs are even better. (bottom)

South Dayton in a nutshell:
1. Create a focus for downtown then recruit the supporting businesses.
2. Work on beautification efforts: merchants need to take the lead.
3. Develop new gateways into the commercial area.
4. Work on gradually creating the "critical mass."
5. Market and promote your "anchor tenants." Others will benefit.
6. Establish a blade-sign program for merchants, buying co-op.
7. Develop 24 hour visitor information with brochure distribution.

Consider a simple brochure that might include:
Did you know...

...that in Dayton's hardware store there is a "Liar's Bench?" You can sit there and tell any story you like and it will be gospel - until you leave.

...that Zollinger's Restaurant serves the best prime rib in Western New York? Locals will drive 40 miles for dinner here. But reserve yours early. The prime rib sells out.

...that scenes from "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" were shot in South Dayton? See the sites.

...that scenes from "The Natural," starring Robert Redford were shot in South Dayton? See the sites.

...that the Mustard Seed cafe serves renowned [a dessert or main dish] every day. Great with breakfast, lunch or dinner.

ALWAYS PROMOTE YOUR "ANCHOR TENANTS." The businesses that make you worth a special trip. Everyone else will benefit, just as in any mall where the anchor tenants are the primary draw, but everyone benefits by them being there.

RANDOLPH

Suggestion

Consider more of an historic looking welcome (bottom left) sign for Randolph. Your gateway signs should reflect the ambiance of the community, giving visitors a "first glimpse." Add to the sign the distance to the downtown core area. "Historic Randolph - 1 mile."

Add a "Visitor Information" sign in front of the building, perpendicular to traffic. You don't see the information sign until you've passed the center and then it's past the "decision point." (bottom right)

Keep the lawn mowed. This is the first impression. The carriage is a nice touch. Add open hours to the sign or center building.

Is the visitor information center ever open? If not, tell visitors WHERE they can get information. Consider moving the building to downtown - where visitors can spend money.

Suggestion

We had no idea when, or if, the center is ever open. (top right)

Add exterior visitor information. When visitors stop for information, it's natural for them to want to stretch their legs. If there's shopping or a restaurant nearby, they'll be very likely to pay a visit.

Visitor information should be working 24/7, 365 days a year.

These kiosk examples (bottom photos) are never closed. The gazebo on the bottom left, in Beatty, NV, was built from a kit, and a local craftsman built the center displays and brochure holders. The display on the bottom right is in Ashland, OR, and provides lodging, dining, and event information when the chamber of commerce is closed.

Suggestion

This page shows more examples of visitor information kiosks designed to provide information any time of day or night. The Teton Pass Trail kiosk, below, is designed to reflect the mountain theme of the area. It is one of 14 being developed in the area.

The Stevenson, WA, kiosk, top photos, was built by local high school students, and has displays cross-selling the entire area.

The Information Station (bottom center and right) in Moses Lake, WA, provides information on "must see" attractions throughout the region.
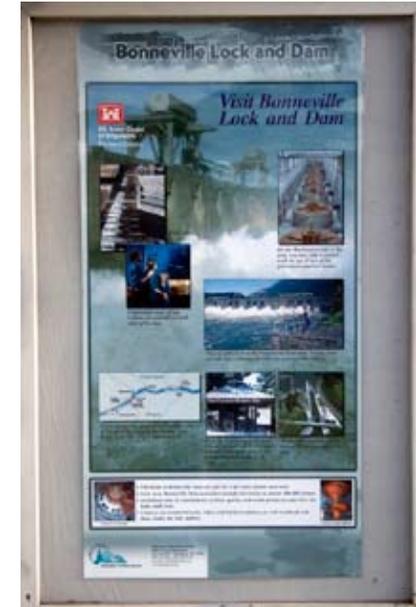
Suggestion

This is a great opportunity and is one of the first businesses seen off of I-86. (top right) Good sign - it promotes an appealing lure to attract customers. But once at the restaurant it has little curb appeal. Just a building sitting on a field of asphalt. Why are the benches on the side of the building next to the kitchen fans and gas lines?

Consider turning it up a notch during the peak season. Add more tables, some planters, umbrellas. Put them out front, not on the side of the building.

See the example below right - the umbrellas, potted shrubs and flowers, and numerous tables make a very attractive setting. This type of setting would do well for the R&M Restaurant.

Suggestion

This street scene gives a great first impression (top left). Nice homes, tree-lined streets, attractive street lamps. Very, very nice. Serene.

Not too sure what these banners are about (top right, bottom left two photos). Chastising the locals or a warning for new residents?

This is very good perpendicular signage on these shops (bottom center right) This is a great example for other merchants in the town to follow.

Suggestion: Add curb appeal to the base of the buildings to soften the transition between facade and sidewalk. Planters spaced six to ten feet apart with greenery or flowers would do wonders to getting visitors to stop.

Add perpendicular signage, remove the plastic banner - a negative in an historic district (bottom right).

Is this business still operating? If so, make it obvious, with signage, displays in the window, and beautification.

Suggestion

Incredible architecture. Tremendous potential (top)

Heading northbound on 394, this block is easy to miss (bottom right). Looks like another nice district in terms of architectural appeal.

Suggestion: There are 17 signs here and 10 posts (bottom left). Can they be reduced to three or four signs to reduce the sign clutter?

Tremendous potential for downtown Randolph but, currently, there is not the critical mass that will make Randolph a stand-alone destination.

Suggestion

Add some crosswalks! (top right) Also, work on weed abatement.

Perhaps the best store in town in terms of curb appeal and signage. (bottom left) Add a couple of planters and even a hanging basket or two. Make it easy to tell if you are open or closed.

Add a brochure holder next to the door. I would have called to do the tour. Always be sure to provide information for visitors who may stop by after hours. Good job on telling visitors WHEN the store is open.

Suggestion

Could this be an Amish "outlet center" of sorts? (top right) Arts incubator? This is such a stunning building. It could be an anchor for downtown.

This is a great sign (bottom left). Excellent curb appeal. Add the operating hours for the market?

Perhaps this could be a spot for visitor information? (bottom right) When possible, put your information in the core spending district.

Randolph in a nutshell:
1. Consider an arts incubator or "Amish Outlet Center" as an anchor tenant downtown.
2. Add some crosswalks.
3. Add more beautification: Merchants, take the lead.
4. Move visitor information into the spending district.
5. Consider changing the pole banners to a marketing tool.
6. Promote specifics, not generalities.

"NEW YORK'S AMISH TRAIL"

I started seeing signs like this throughout the area. Their rustic, hand-painted appeal is perfect - very much in keeping with the country and Amish atmosphere.

The directional arrows and distances, as well as including the days open, are excellent ways to help visitors.

Note how the signs promote what the merchants are selling, rather than a business name. They also let visitors know where and how far to go. Perfect!

Note:

Driving through here, I really felt drawn in to the community, like I'd stepped back in time. Seeing the sign (bottom right) "Mystic Hill Olde Barn" I decided to find this shop. At the next intersection (middle center), I couldn't tell which way to go, so I went straight until I came to a T in the road (bottom center). Eventually I found the shop (bottom right), which is a terrific shop featuring both Amish and non-Amish goods. The shop has terrific ambiance.

Suggestion

Mystic Hill is one of the gems that needs to be promoted specifically. Visitors want to know what you have that they can't get closer to home - not generalities, like "unique shops." Market your specific shops, like this one, to let visitors see what is truly unique about the area.

A couple of cabins available for rent (bottom left). They look charming.

Seeing all the Amish shops, make this a great area to simply explore - all in an absolutely stunning setting.

Note:
Very well done. A great experience. Everywhere I went I was surprised at the number of shops, farm fresh produce, cheese and dairy, and home accents and furnishings.

Everywhere I turned was something new, fun, different, and totally authentic. This is a great experience.

Suggestion

What a stunning setting. This area has much greater appeal than Lancaster County, PA. What a gem! There is no hint of commercial development in the entire area so that visitors really feel as though they are in a different era, and a place totally unique to the Enchanted Mountains of Western New York, and New York's Amish Trail.

Consider these the "Enchanted Hills of Western New York," (top right) which probably reflects more accurately this stunning area of the state.

This is idyllic. I'll have to bring my wife here.

You know you've got a great tourist destination when visitors know they want to come back. This is an area worthy of a special trip from anywhere in the Northeast - even beyond.

Suggestion

YOU MUST PROMOTE YOUR ANCHOR TENANTS.

1. Get the "Mall Mentality" - work together to succeed. Common hours, marketing.

2. Get an outsider to develop some criteria and to pick who the "anchor tenants" are. They should be your truly unique, must-see attractions, shops, restaurants.

3. Develop half-day, all-day, and two-day itineraries. With specifics!

4. Educate visitors about the Amish - particularly the "traditional" Amish ways of life.

Suggestion

Pretend that I'm your best friend and you are going to help me have a great time in the county while you're out of town.

1. Where can I get the best dessert? (name the dish & the place)
2. Where will my partner and I have the best dining experience? (Casual, formal, ambiance, food...)
3. Where can I get items for a gourmet picnic?
4. Where can I see a breathtaking sunrise or sunset?
5. Where is the best place to take a memorable photo that says I was really there?
6. Where can I check my e-mails?
7. Where can I get the perfect gift? Something locally made.

Congratulations, you just created the type of itinerary visitors are looking for.

Work with your county legislators so they will invest more into tourism. Your neighbors to the west, north, east, and south are very stiff competition, and without the dollars, it's hard to compete. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in all 50 states, and it is New York's second largest industry.

Suggestion

Develop an "Activities Guide" that promotes very specific attractions in the area. This one, produced by Ottawa, Illinois, highlights specific activities, shops, restaurants, and attractions. The participants were chosen because they are truly unique - something visitors can't get closer to home. Ottawa is seeing tremendous success with this publication.

Suggestion

Most of the Cattaraugus County marketing materials seem a little dated. Look at the photography and layout used in the Alleghany and Finger Lakes areas, as well as nearby Chautauqua County.

Hire professional graphic design and pay for professional photography to help lay out your marketing and website materials. You only have one chance to close the sale and you have a lot of outstanding competition surrounding the county. Competition is stiff and you MUST invest enough to out-compete your neighbors in both design, photography, text and experiences.

Fisher's Amish Country Store was perhaps the best brochure we found in this area of the county in terms of information, photography, and overall appeal.

Suggestion

The Randolph brochure is beautifully designed, but is overly generic providing little specific information and only a list of local businesses. You must sell activities, and you must promote your anchor businesses. Politics is the killer of the tourism industry and successful marketing efforts.

Suggestion

We found the map in the current Activities Guide difficult to use (right).

This is a good map (bottom left) - a little small, but it had been photo-copied so many times it was difficult to read. The county is working on a new map that will have categories, including type of shop, and will be larger and easier to use stretching from Randolph to Gowanda.

They are also working on a "Ride Guide" for motorcycle enthusiasts, with various rides throughout the county - all great enhancements to increasing tourism spending locally.

Suggestion

The primary lure into this area of the county is the Amish goods and crafts. Randolph and Gowanda are the "bookends" to "The Amish Trail." Each can be a "Hub to the Amish Trail." South Dayton is in a terrific location in the heart of the Amish Trail - the place to stop while exploring the Trail.

1. Give the "attraction" a name - maybe "New York's Amish Trail."
2. Put together a "Shoppers Guide" to the Trail. Promote private businesses! Not just the Amish, but all "artisans" in the area.
3. Put together a signage program.
4. Include site signs at each "artisan."
5. Create business opportunities:
   • GPS rentals
   • Amish "outlet center"
6. Promote book-end businesses: Places to stay, places to eat, tours. Specific businesses, not generalities.

Develop a signage system to identify the Trail, along the lines of the sample shown above. This would help showcase the trail and help visitors find their way into the heart of Amish country. Where the Gowanda sign is (left) add a sign like this at these key intersections.

Suggestion

Develop a decorative wayfinding system to include:
• Gateways and entries - your welcoming signage
• Wayfinding for attractions and amenities

Be sure to "connect the dots" - making sure your wayfinding leads visitors all the way to the central area of the Amish attraction.

Perhaps the Amish community would even make the signs and posts identifying the Trail.

Suggestion

At one point we even drafted up signs, like the one shown right, but on second thought we thought part of the charm of the area were the handmade signs, like that shown on the previous page.

Suggestion: Put together working programs - opportunities to work with the Amish. Viewing of saw mills, looms, artisans in action. People are drawn to activities, and want to learn. The more a visitor gets involved, to more connected they become, and the more often they want to come back and to encourage friends to visit.

Suggestion

Create the "Hidden Gems of Western New York" - with your neighbors to the west.
1. Professional photo library
2. Visitor information kiosks around the county.
3. Amish Trail Guide (non-advertising driven).
4. New website with e-marketing capabilities
5. Signage along the trail, at key intersections, at "artisan" locations.
6. Distribution of Guide at Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Erie other market areas - including Chautauqua County spots.
7. Have a Cattaraugus County Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan created.

Door County, WI's, "101 Things to Do in Door County" is a great example. With photography and short "itineraries," the book gives readers very specific things to do, right down to what to buy at the local shop for a great picnic, and which trail to take to see the best sunset views.

~101 Things To Do In Door County~

Peninsula State Park

~101 Things To Do In Door County~

• 18 •
Take a Sunday stroll down Cottage Row.

Our favorite Sunday morning starts with breakfast at the White Gull Inn on Main St. in Fish Creek. Splurge on a slice of their famous Door County-berry sour cream coffee cake; then take a much needed stroll down Cottage Row. From The White Gull Inn follow Main St. to Cottage Row and turn right. The walk will take you north along the row of shoreline "cottages" about 1 mile before it turns up the steep bluff. At the base of the bluff is a sliver of a park known as Champagne Rock, named for the little rock that hangs over the water. Down and back is a perfect way to walk off breakfast and start the day.

Cattaraugus County, NY Distance Marketing Assessment

As I searched for visitor destinations in western New York, I didn't find much on the internet for Cattaraugus County. Using a Google search for Western New York, Cattaraugus County didn't make an appearance, unless I linked to the Western New York Travel Guide, Genesee Country Magazine. That site provides some basic travel information for different regions in western New York, and Cattaraugus County shows up under their "Things to do" page, with the Salamanca Rail Museum and Seneca Iroquois Museum.

I also searched for "ski Western New York," and found the allwny.com website, with its list of ski resorts. Among the ski resorts, there were a couple located in Cattaraugus County. When I searched for "Amish New York," I didn't find anything that brought me to Cattaraugus County.

I was only able to find Cattaraugus through a direct search of the County's name. With that, I found travel information easily; using a Google search, I was able to get to their website, www.enchantedmountains.info.

Winter looks like a great time to visit Cattaraugus County. With two large ski resorts, cross country ski trails, snowmobiling and other activities like snowtubing, there are plenty of winter opportunities. If I lived within 2-2.5 hours I can see planning a ski trip to Holiday Valley ski resort and perhaps visiting other areas as daytrips while I was there.

During other times of the year I didn't find anything that would entice me to come much of a distance to visit. If I lived close, less than an hour away, I might come to explore the area.

I did like the section of the website that outlined day tours; it gave good examples of places to visit along a theme. They weren't enticing enough to prompt a 2-2.5 hour drive to get there, however.

The website describes the area as having "thirteen villages, thirty-two townships, and two cities." This made me wonder – are the villages and townships nice places to visit? Are they quaint and picturesque? What is there to do there? What about a driving tour through some of the villages? If the towns and villages are worth visiting, I think there should be more travel information geared at getting people to visit them.

Comparing it to some of the nearby competition, such as the Finger Lakes region, Lake Chautauqua, and the Catskills, it looks like the area offers a lot of similar attractions; Amish country, water activities, natural beauty, historical attractions and museums. You can find those types of activities and attractions in many areas, and after doing my research, I don't think that Cattaraugus County is differentiating itself enough.

Cattaraugus, NY

When you "Google" Cattaraugus, New York the results return about 10 pages of various listings. The top listing is for the City of Cattaraugus. This Web site is "public services" heavy and at first glance, I didn't see a "visit us" link.

As I proceeded down the results list, the first mention of anything related to tourism or area destinations was on the second page. It was an "e-podunk" listing for Cattaraugus – not a good thing. E-podunk is a Web site that small-town folks can list their business on, for a fee.

The second mention of something to do in Cattaraugus was on page five of the results. This was a full-blown Web site for the Cattaraugus County Fair in Little Valley, New York. This looked like a lot of fun, and it was your typical American-style county fair.

The third mention on page nine of the results is for snowmobiling. When you clicked on this link, it led you to a "pay for a list" site. That wasn't too welcoming.

Finally, I found a listing on page 11 for "Welcome to Cattaraugus County." It belonged to the "Explore New York" Web site – a greater western New York travelers guide. This page was detailed in its information on Cattaraugus County. It listed and described: Western Gateway to Allegany State Park, Rock City Park, Griffis Sculpture Park, Pfiefer Nature Center, and the Gooseneck Hill Waterfowl Sanctuary. None of these had a link to their perspective Web sites, but at the bottom you could access: Enchantedmountains.com.

This link (Enchantedmountains.com) was actually a back door to the first listing for the City of Cattaraugus. I had "stumbled" upon what I was looking for!

The City of Cattaraugus page has a very small link at the top labeled "travel," which leads you to Enchantedmountains.com. I never would have found it.

Okay, getting back to their Enchantedmountains. com Web pages…there's a lot of information packed into one page, here. It looks like there are plenty of very wholesome and outdoor activities (see above) found in Cattaraugus and surrounding locales, but it's all anchored at the bottom of the page by an advertisement for a tribal casino. And then there's a slogan, " The Enchanted Mountains – What's in a Name??" This was not appealing.

The Enchantedmountians.com site also lists a contact phone number of: 1-800-331-0543. When you dial it, you get a recorded message. It's a welcoming message with four categories: talk with someone, leave your name for a brochure, get snowmobiling information, or connect with someone about snowmobiling information. So, obviously, they're big into snowmobiling there.

Back to the Enchantedmountains.com pages, here are some complete dead ends for Cattaraugus:

- There are no hotels or motels listed in Cattaraugus
- There is one B & B
- "Where to dine" lists one restaurant for Cattaraugus – Pascarella's
- "Rainy Day" brochure is a cute idea, but it's poorly executed (who wants to go shopping at the K-Mart Plaza?)

And no matter how many times I tried to link to other activities, there was (almost) always a mention of casinos and gambling. Is that a big draw there, or are they a sponsor?

The last bit I tried on Enchantedmountains.com

was their "interactive map." After waiting ten minutes, I gave up on it trying to load to my computer. Too bad; I was looking forward to using it.

So, after trying to utilize the one Web site devoted to Cattaraugus, I came up pretty empty handed. I could (potentially) snowmobile there, but have one option to sleep and dine. Otherwise, there was a casino!

Curious as to Cattaraugus's "enchanted mountains" theme, I took the liberty of looking Cattaraugus up on the Wikipedia Web site. (All other maps had indicated that this area was fairly level – topographically.)

Wikipedia first mentioned that the area has been plagued with real-estate problems, stemming from the area's natives owning the majority of the land (which they lease). There has been plenty of strife with area residents and businesses forced to vacate leased property…you get the picture. Wikipedia's first mention of the natural surroundings spoofs the slogan "Enchanted Mountains" - pointing out they are only hills. They go on to state that the area's previous slogan, "Naturally Yours to Enjoy," was a better fit. It's interesting that an online encyclopedia would mention this.

So, with no real "mountains," places to stay or dine, what was my draw to Cattaraugus? I suppose I would look further into hiking and camping as a possibility. With a town promoting snowmobiling, you would think that their tail system would permit great Summer and Fall hiking, when the snow melted?

Cattaraugus County Distance Assessment

Having done no previous research on New York, I started with a Google search of the Catskills and was directed to regional website (http://www.visitthecatskills.com). The website is very organic and seems dedicated to the outdoors, but when I clicked on Attractions, the first listings are for the Zume Flume Waterpark and Supersonic Speedway, and all the other attractions have generic pictures. After exploring for a while it became clear that it's necessary to go to each county's website. I tried calling 1-800-NYS-CATS for information and was given the opportunity to be transferred to each county. I had no luck in reaching a live person, either they closed their offices early, you could leave a message, and Sullivan County offered numerous options but no tourism information.

Delware County (http://www.delawarecountytoday.com/) has a very pleasantly designed website with lots of white space. I liked the First Strokes artist package where you could work with artists and writers. I did find it unusual in that they did not have an Accommodations or Dining option; only packages are offered, and links to lodgings can be found there.

Sullivan County (http://www.scva.net) has an overly busy website, but I easily found lodgings and historical sites to visit. Ulster County (http://www.ulstertourism.info) had the best looking website of the four counties. I'm a sucker for reenactments, and the picture of the Redcoats marching along certainly caught my attention. Greene County (http://www.greenetourism.com) had a passable website. This county seems very oriented towards golf.

Then I looked into the Finger Lakes (http://www.fingerlakes.org); it is a huge region! With 14 counties and 9,000 square miles, it is a bit hard to get a real image from a couple of websites. The .org website is filled with ads and does not make the region look very charming. The Lakes listing is helpful, and there are so many! The waterfront dining listing is a great idea. The Visit Finger Lakes (http://www.visitfingerlakes.com) website is much more charming and inviting and has a smart graphic look. I liked that History and Art were separated and the map of the area showing all the attractions was very helpful. The Lodging was excellent in that you could sort your request by lakeside, non-smoking and pets. Finally, the idea that I could also visit the Erie Canal made me want to visit this area. The government website (http://www.nyscanals.gov/maps) is very helpful and has good photography for a government site.

Lake Chautauqua (http://www.tourchautauqua.com) looks very charming. I love their homepage with its revolving pictures. I would visit this area especially with its lovely cottages on the lake. This is, by far, one of the best lodging listings I have ever come across as it includes pictures, descriptions, maps, and links. I am also drawn to this area as it would be fun to visit the Amish villages. There is something charming and elegant about this website and how they portray the area that makes it look like an ideal summer or fall getaway. Finally, I Googled Cattaraugus County and discovered the government website (www.cattco.org) is listed first, and the Enchanted Mountains of Cattaraugus County is listed fifth after the Sheriff's Office, and, this is a first, the Cattaraugus Sheriff's Most Wanted list. Having the Most Wanted right before the tourism listing is not a good thing.

The homepage of the Enchanted Mountains (http://www.enchantedmountains.info), which is a lovely name, is somewhere between a tourism and a government website. I think adding a background color would be a good idea. I found it very easy to navigate, and the whitewater picture made me want to go rafting on the Allegany River. I liked the idea of the county map that is listed on the home page, but after waiting five minutes for it to load I gave up.

The lodging guide is not too bad, but the description should be included with the listing so that you don't have to click again. I like that you can find lodgings by the type: condo, cabin, hotel or motel. When selecting lodging I think it is important to know which town to stay in, and the map would have been really helpful. I was confused when I hit the "What to Do" on the left of the screen, and then it showed pictures of skiers, etc. with only a couple of links. Then I realized on the right side of the page were more specific categories. I'm certain there is a better was to do this. However I did click on the Rainy Day map, and that was very helpful to see where the majority of activities are clustered. The Tours & Packages had some interesting suggestions of tours, but I was surprised there were not more lodging partners listed. It is good to have Arts & Culture listed at the top, but I thought there would be more art galleries especially since the Griffis Sculpture Park is located here. The park is definitely a wonderful asset, and a place that would be on my "must see" list. I also liked the look of the Allegany State Park and the thought of staying in the Fancher Cottages. I think the park in the fall would be outstanding.

Shopping is always an important part of any trip and the antiques and Amish maps are both appre-

ciated. When I spoke with the representative at the Visitor Center (1-800-331-0543) it was suggested that my teenage boys may even like touring the Amish country and watching how they farm. The representative was very positive and had great ideas about mountain biking, skiing at Holiday Valley, riding horses at nearby ranches and boating at Allegany State Park. She said Ellicottville was a very charming little town and that there are wonderful restaurants and shops. I challenged her by saying we would be there in late April, and she admitted that was a hard time of year, but that she would put her thinking cap on and send me lots of information. She mentioned that skiing in the "Aspen of the East" or visiting in the fall were her two favorite times of year, but that summer was great too, and I should make reservations soon if I wanted to stay in the cabins at the park. I look forward to receiving her package of information.

I also visited the government site (www.cattco.org), which has too much text! Clicking on Tourism lead me right back to the Enchanted Mountains website.

I like Cattaraugus County, and I would go there from Buffalo or Pennsylvania. It is a bit more manageable than the Catskills, which really didn't do it for me. I think a weekend with my husband in the fall or with girlfriends would be fun, or perhaps a four-night stay with my family, or even extended family in either summer or winter. I really like the look of Holiday Valley (http://www.holidayvalley.com) for skiing. I would not fly across the country to visit this area, however.

Forward

This section of the plan is for all those charged with promoting the new brand to increase tourism spending, revitalize downtowns, or for economic development reasons.

When local earnings are spent outside the community, this is leakage. But when outside dollars come back into the community, that's economic development. A successful community imports more cash than it exports. As communities are forced to operate like businesses, they are finding that sales and promotion are critical aspects of a community's life.

Whether you are a Chamber of Commerce, an economic development office or destination marketing organization, downtown revitalization (Main Street) manager, or city/county staff charged with marketing your community, you already know how important a role the internet plays in marketing and branding your community.

While there are dozens, if not hundreds, of books on the subject, this book cuts to the chase and outlines what you can do to develop a Website that's good enough to close the sale. You'll see dozens of examples, and key things to keep in mind as you develop a stronger, more effective Website.

Introduction

"The new phone book's here! The new phone book's here!" yelled Navin Johnson, as he danced around the gas station grounds.

"Well, I wish I could get so excited about nothing," replied his boss Harry, the gas station owner.

Nothing? Are you kidding?!" Navin shouted back. "Page 73, Johnson, Navin R! I'm somebody now! Millions of people look at this book every day! This is the kind of spontaneous publicity, your name in print, that makes people! I'm impressed! Things are going to start happening to me now!"

Navin, played by Steve Martin in the comedy The Jerk (1979), was finally somebody. His name was in print. He was listed in the phone book with hundreds of thousands of other somebodies. What are the chances that his name was spotted by the millions of people who use the phone book? Well, slim, but at least he was somebody.

- How would this scene apply to the Internet? Consider the following:
- A new Website goes on line an average of every three seconds. In fact, more than 64 million domain names have been registered in the U.S. alone – so far. Can you imagine a phone book with 64 million names listed in the white pages?
- The Internet is fourth to only electricity, the automobile, and television in   its influence among daily American life. Not bad for a technology few even knew existed less than 20 years ago.
- Eighty-eight percent of all Americans say that the Internet plays a major
role in their lives, surpassing television for the first time.
- Seventy-five percent of all Americans use the Internet regularly, and sixty-eight percent have immediate access to the web either at home or work.
- New Internet users are growing at the alarming rate of nearly ten percent –
per month!

- Ninety-five percent of U.S. car buyers do research on-line.
- Ninety-four percent of all Internet users plan their travel using the web.

Website use for travel planning has grown quickly and varies little by age and income or gender. Surprisingly, older Americans are using the Web for travel planning as often as younger Americans. This means that the highest potential travelers (those older, retired consumers with the greatest disposable income) can be effectively reached via the Internet. According to one study by Stanford University, Internet users spend 5% of their online time researching travel sites.

So, how excited were you when your Website went live? And now that you have a Website, have you ever considered why you have it? What is your Website's purpose?

Many communities will state that the Website is simply an information source for local residents, businesses, and community leaders. But the real power of the Internet lies in its power to promote.

It's rare to find a community that isn't looking for some form of economic growth: residential, business, industry, or tourism. The Internet is the most powerful and cost effective way to market your community.

There are two major challenges with a Website: Is it good enough to close the sale? And can your customer even find it?

Consider this. If Navin Johnson had a book listing the 64 million registered domain names instead of phone numbers, his name would be listed on page number 12,066 of the 313,725 page book. With 28,000 new Websites coming on line every day, the phone book would grow by 4,235 pages per month!

Part I. Make your town shine – effective web-site design for destinations

1 TOURISM IS YOUR FRONT DOOR
Tourism is the fastest growing industry in all fifty states, and nothing promotes a community like tourism. Because visitors see the quality of life – culture, history, activities, attractions, ameni-

ties, etc. – tourism is a primary attractor for non-tourism economic development efforts. Business people who decide to relocate have always visited the new community first – as tourists.
Your Website should promote the community's quality of life, and the best way to show that is by using great photography. Show off what your community has to offer visitors, residents, and businesses. Showing your community's assets doesn't just attract tourists. It also builds community pride, fosters a sense of cooperative spirit, and promotes economic development.

2 PULL YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO THE SITE
Your home page should be like your front door: attractive, clean, and inviting. To sell your community, use knock-out pictures and introductory text. Just like a novel or magazine article, the first line or paragraph must be powerful enough to grab the reader's attention. And too much clutter distracts your visitor. Too many links and topics are confusing. Make it clean, easy to understand, and a pleasure to view.

Think of the splash page or home page as the front door to your community. Santa Barbara, California's Conference and Visitors Bureau's home/splash page, www.santabarbaraca.com, is a beautiful example.

The stunning slide show illustrates the beauty and activities in the area. Site visitors are mesmerized and watch the entire introduction, which only takes a few seconds.

Sonoma County, California, has also done a good job with a splash page slide show at www.sonomacounty.com. The photos not only show the beauty of the county's vineyards, ocean, and rivers, they show people actively enjoying themselves. Your home page needs to portray your town in the best possible light, making visitors want to continue looking through the Website, and making people want to visit.
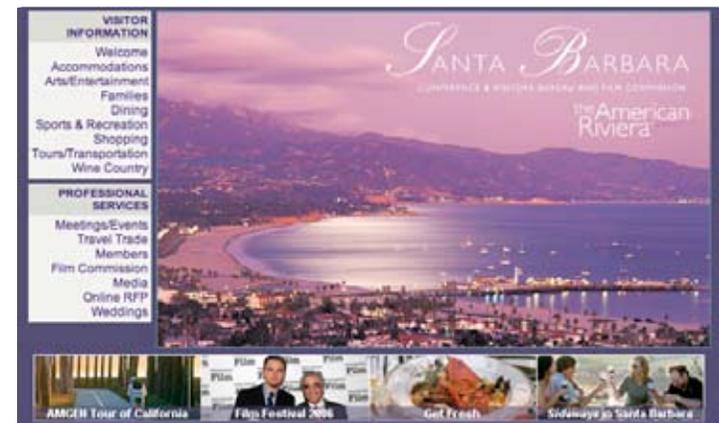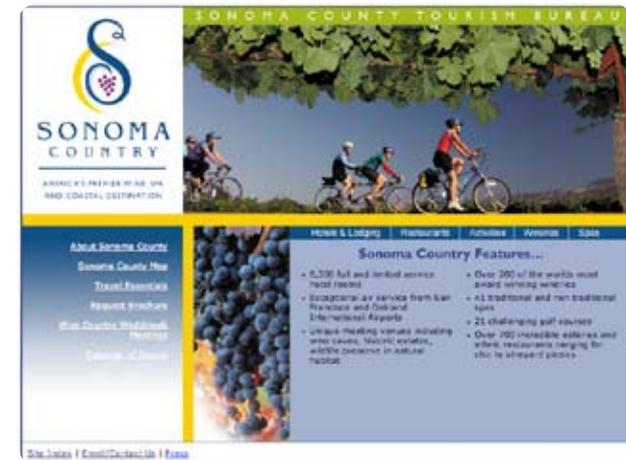
3 CREATE A SINGLE FRONT DOOR

Many destination marketing Websites have twenty, thirty, or forty (or more) links on the home page with no central focus, making the experience confusing right from the start. Seventy percent of web searches are met with frustration when the visitor has trouble finding the information they are looking for. Statistics show that visitors who can't easily find what they're looking for will move on after only twenty seconds.

Think about your Website as if it were your home. You walk up to the front door, finding beautiful curb appeal (your splash page). That sets the tone for a good experience and shows visitors who you are. Once through the front door, you can choose which direction you'd like to go. This can be as simple as two choices: the city section, or the chamber (or visitor) section.

The small Washington State town of LaConner did a great job bringing the city and chamber together, with their home page offering a choice between entering the Town site, and entering the Chamber site. More effective than multiple Websites – and less expensive. Even through keywords they've created a partnership: LaConner, Washington: the town and visitor information.
What a concept!

Options could include a series of links:
- The community
- Doing business here
- Visitor information
- Links and resources
- City hall or Chamber info
- Website contents

If a visitor to the site is looking for visitor information, they will click on that link which will give them more options. If they're looking for the minutes to the last City Commission meeting, they'll click on the city hall info link. Make it easy, logical, and progressive.

4 KEEP IT SIMPLE AND IT WILL SELL

Navigating your Website should be simple, answering the following questions: Where do I find the information I want? Where am I? Where can I go next? Where is the home page? Your links should be the same on each page, offering visitors the opportunity to go back to the home page, or select a different option at any time. Including a back button is also a good idea. Don't force visitors to go through too many links to find the information they want – each additional link is an opportunity to lose the visitor.

Look at the Truckee, California Website (www.truckee.com). Notice how easy it is to navigate? The links remain consistent no matter what page you're visiting. Besides having sub-links for each category, there's also an introductory text. It's engaging, informative, and easy to use. Truckee, a town of 16,000, was our clear winner when picking a community in this region to visit. That's the power of a Website that's good enough to close the sale.

Another excellent Website can be found at www.pebblebeach.com. It's easy to navigate, well written (using little text), uses world-class photography, endorsements and accolades to sell the experience, and makes it easy to plan an escape to Pebble Beach. The 17-Mile Drive page is an interactive map that gives specific information in an easy to follow format. Simplicity sells.

5 PHOTOGRAPHY IS KING

Most communities wouldn't dream of producing a brochure with no photos to promote their town. They know very few visitors would even give that brochure a second look. So, why do so many communities skimp on photography on their Websites?

Nothing sells like a good picture. Outstanding photography – photography that sells the experience – can do more to market your community than anything else.

Show people having a great time in your community: shopping, dining, riding bikes, picnicking, any activity a visitor would want to do in your town. People are looking for things to do, and you want your photos to get the potential visitor excited – to have them say, "Wow. I want to go there – that looks like fun!" Potential visitors want to know what your community looks like. If you have a great historic downtown shopping area, show them photos of people shopping there. If you have beautiful parks, show photos of people playing in those parks. If you have outstanding restaurants, post photos of those restaurants on your site. Give viewers a good image of your community. If you want people to spend the night with you, let them see what you look like first.

A good example of the use of outstanding photography can be found on Tourism Victoria's Website, www.tourismvictoria.com. The home page has changing photos, showing, in turn, kayakers, people walking on the beach with the mountains in the background, sailboats in their harbor, the fabulous Victoria skyline, the Empress hotel lit at night, and a bicycle rider. The photos are so stun-ning and show such a wide array of the beauty and activities a visitor can find in Victoria, that they make the sale.
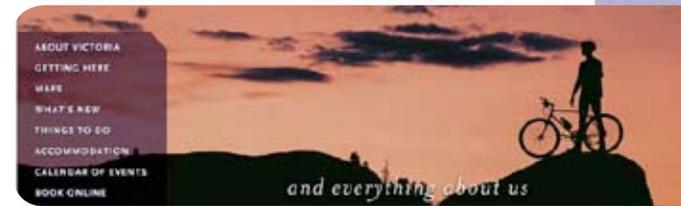
The Portland, Oregon Visitor Association's Website, www.pova.org, shows changing photos of downtown Portland on its home page, giving viewers a good feel for the city. When a viewer clicks on the Visitor link, he can see several photos of people enjoying different parts of the city: shopping downtown, strolling in a park, and enjoying the rose garden (Portland is known as the City of Roses.)

Let Website viewers see what a great town you have; make them want to visit and have fun there too. Nothing can make the sale better than outstanding photography.
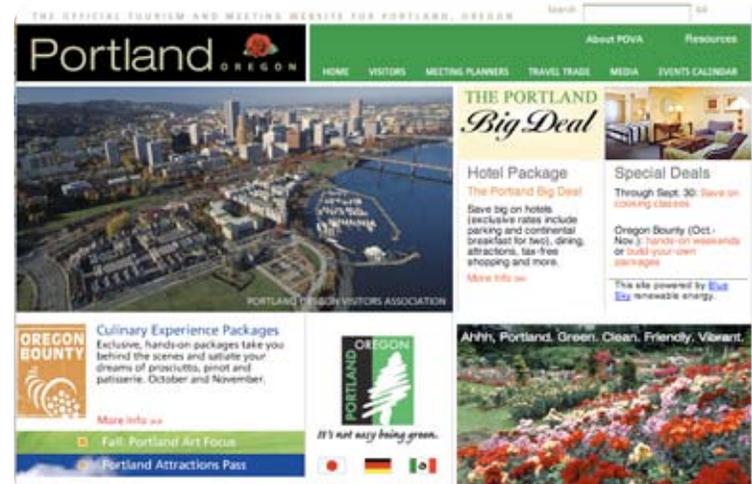
6 DYNAMIC TEXT IS QUEEN

Journalists know the all-important rule that states if you can't engage readers by the end of the first paragraph, chances are you've already lost them.

You want to turn web-site visitors into customers. That means you have to get them engaged almost immediately. If outstanding photography is king in making the sale, dynamic text is queen. Know what you're trying to say and communicate it with friendly, informal, and jargon-free language.

Research shows that most Website viewers don't read thoroughly – they scan the page. That means you need to use a special approach in writing for your Website. Use clear, meaningful titles that give a good idea of the content of the page. Make your first sentence a summary of the content, and use headings to make major points. Bulleted items are a clean way to present information, particularly if they are hot links to other pages. And remember, big words are not necessarily better; long sentences are more difficult to understand; and passive voices are boring. That doesn't mean you should include jokes and puns, though. One man's humor is another man's insult, so be careful.

Your content should inform the reader, letting them know what benefits they'll enjoy by visiting your town. What's in it for them? Use the benefits to entice the reader to want to read more. Then, give your visitor detailed information about what you have to offer.

Don't break up one article into several pages. People scanning the article will usually stop at the end of the page, and you'll lose readers.

Finally, always spell check your writing. And go one step further – proofread. Spell check doesn't find every error. Have someone else proofread your work as well; it's easy to miss your own mistakes. Writing good content takes time and effort. Proofread, tighten, edit, and correct. You want your Website to convey exactly what you want to say, and you can do that with dynamic, brief, descriptive content that convinces your reader that, of all the places they can visit, they need to choose your town.

7 DON'T PROVIDE LISTS, PROVIDE DETAILS

Far too many Websites promote lists of things to see and do, places to shop, eat or spend the night. A list does nothing to entice a visit to the community or business. Nothing can close the sale like professional photography and text that gives the details.

Listing the Compass Rose, a gift shop in Olympia, Washington does not do much for you does it? There are literally thousands of gift shops out there, and just about every community has many of them. But if I told you that the owners of this truly unique shop travel the world picking up one-of-a-kind pieces of art and furnishings from African and Asian countries, you might have an interest. The Compass Rose, in fact, features some fascinating pieces of art hand carved out of ebony, and even stone. You'll find wooden giraffes nearly seven feet tall, a four-poster bed from India, and

a selection of African masks that will enhance any home. Whether you're interested in this type of art or not, it certainly sounds more interesting than just a listing for The Compass Rose. Now imagine a whole collection of interesting stores and dining experiences complete with photography and descriptions. It doesn't take long before you've got a new customer on the way.

One note: Always promote the unusual and truly unique things you have to offer. If your customer can do the same thing closer to home, then pick something else as a key lure, and include photos and text that will make your customer want to go there.

The Rexburg, Idaho Chamber of Commerce has done an excellent job promoting specific activities. If you go to www.rexcc.com and click on things to see and do, then click on local attractions (we

recommend just using the word attractions,) it will list the various attractions, providing a teaser for each. These teasers could be better written to pull the visitor in, but provide the right idea. If an attraction grabs your attention, like Yellowstone Bear World, you can click on a link that takes provides you with more details, links, videos, etc.

Do NOT just link to the attractions' Website unless you know it's good enough to close the sale, but offer it as an additional link, AFTER you've done what you can to close the sale for them. Details, details, details. If visitors can't get specific details, chances are you'll lose the sale.

For instance, if you promote the fact that you have the best bass fishing in the U.S. (that sets you apart from everyone else), then tell me about the details: Where is the best fishing spot? Is a license required? Are there fishing guides or boat rentals? Docks and fish cleaning facilities? Are there seasonal considerations? Bass tournaments? What about the weather? Provide maps, directions, distances (miles and kilometers), resources, contact information, best time of day for the biggest catches, etc.

8 SELL EXPERIENCES, NOT GEOGRAPHY

Visitors are far more interested in things to see and do than in places: cities, counties, regions, or even states. Travelers are looking for activities, experiences, things to see and do. You must always provide a potential customer with reasons WHY they should visit. They are far more interested in Disneyland than in Anaheim. Going a step further, while we all know that Disneyland is "the happiest place on earth" (a good reason in itself to go there), the park still promotes the activities in all of its advertising: The Matterhorn, Splash Moun-

tain, Pirates of the Caribbean, the Indiana Jones Adventure, or even meeting Mickey or Minnie. If you visit the Disneyland Website (www.disneyland.com) you'll note that they let the visitor "choose and experience." A lot can be learned by looking at the best.
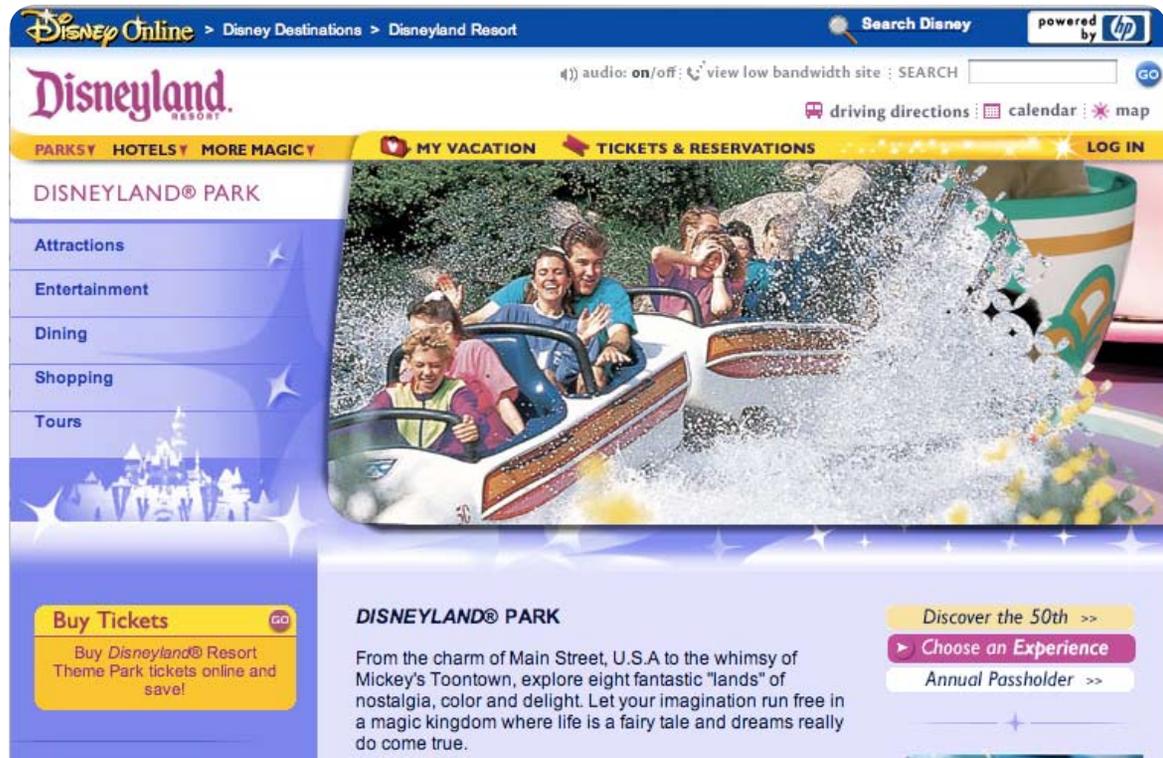
If you browse through the Disney site, or any site that does a great job of promoting experiences, you'll notice that the photography is professional, and shows people having a great time (the purpose of any experience). The photos make you want to go there. Does your site do the same

thing? Every time you add an item to your site, regardless of whether it's an attraction, activity, lodging, dining, shopping, etc., ask yourself: do the photos and text I used make me want to go there? Will it make my customer want to go there? We as human beings tend to be territorial. We are charged with marketing our community or area, so that's what we focus on: marketing the geography within our boundaries. But as visitors, we're not looking for geography. That's secondary to looking for activities. We are looking for things to see and do that cater to our specific interests. This is perhaps the biggest mistake destination

marketing organizations make. Instead of focusing on cities, counties, regions, and geographic areas, consider building your site using the words "Pick Your Season" followed by "Pick Your Passion."

This way you start with WHEN the guest would like to visit, followed by the activities available that time of year. If you pick the winter season in Door County, Wisconsin, the activities might include snowmobiling, snowshoeing, the areas dozen or so Christmas shops, and spa facilities and lodges. During each season, the experiences change.

Always sell the reason WHY someone should visit before you dig in with lodging, dining and diversions. All too often communities miss this step. Sell experiences, not geography, not your boundaries. People want to travel for the experience, so build the anticipation for a fun time, then tell your visitor why you are the best place to experience it. Welcome to the "experience economy."

9 BUILD THE BRAND

Branding is the art of differentiation – the community's unique image in the minds of its visitors. More than just logos and slogans, a community's brand is pervasive. It is a promise to visitors of what the community has to offer. The more distinctive the brand, the more attraction it holds.

Branding requires continuity in all that you do: your product offerings, claim to fame, marketing, logo, slogan, and the look and feel of your marketing materials – particularly your Website.
A first glance at your Website should tell visitors who you are and what sets you apart from everyone else.
The Napa Valley town of Calistoga has branded

itself as a wellness center, and portrays that theme effectively on the chamber's Website.

The branding focus doesn't mean that is all you have to offer, but it promotes the town's image, which should reflect its primary lure - what you have that the visitor acan't get closer to home. To win the customer you must ALWAYS first promote what sets you apart.

The key is to promote who you are: why you are different and worth a special trip, and THEN the "other things" your visitors can do while in the area. Your brand should revolve around your primary lure. Don't try to be all things to all people.

10 SPREAD THE BRAND AROUND

Building a strong brand requires a consistent message, a consistent look for the entire community. Can you imagine how Coca Cola would be perceived if every Coca Cola bottling plant produced its own Coke logo, own colors, and their own Coke commercials? The brand (and Coke) wouldn't be in existence today. It's the same with every community or region. The trick is to get everyone pulling in the same direction with a consistent look, feel, key messages, and identities.

Once you develop an outstanding splash page with the right logo and the layout and design promoting the ambiance and essence of the community, spread it around.

The city, chamber, convention and visitors bureau, and other local organizations should all use the same style or "look" on their front doors as well. This continuity helps build the brand, imprinting the brand image in the minds of visitors and residents. Round Rock, Texas is working hard to become "The Sports Capital of Texas," based on the community's 500-acre sports park. If the city and other local organizations all introduced Round Rock as the sports capital on their Websites, the brand could become even more powerful.
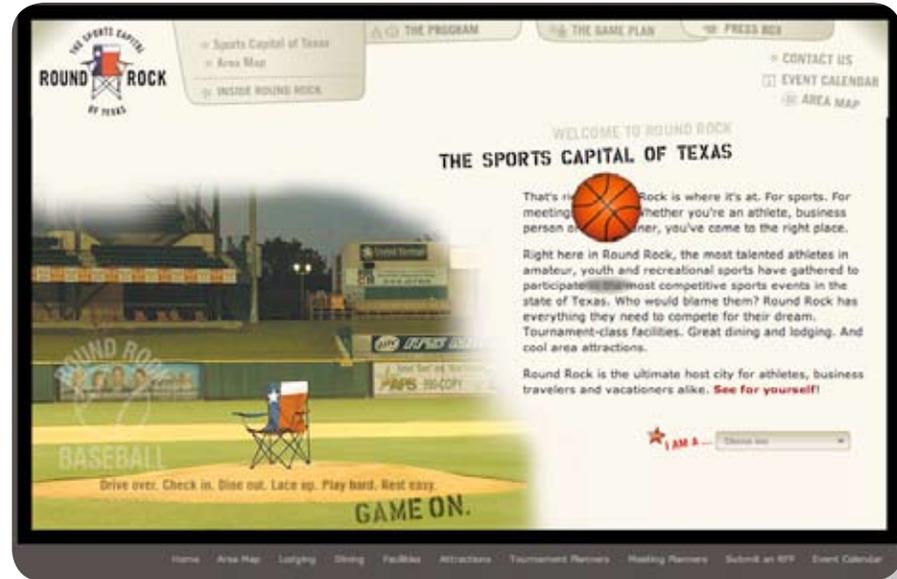
"Welcome to the Sports Capital of Texas, and thanks for visiting the Website of the Round Rock Garden Club."

Charleston, South Carolina, promotes its outstanding history, and you can see that brand image of "history" carried through to various organizations' Websites in Charleston.

When a consistent message, look, brand image, is used throughout the community, the brand becomes more powerful. A good, powerful brand attracts visitors, businesses, and investment to the community.

11 CREATE A CALL TO ACTION

If you've ever purchased a new car you know that the sales person will do everything he or she can to get you to buy right then and there. They know that if you leave, even if you say you'll be back, the chances of you really coming back are less than 3 percent. It's that way in every sales effort whether in a car lot, a retail store, or a Website.

Create a Call to Action - something that will entice the Website visitor to take action. Having a potential customer think, "Gee, I'll have to go there sometime" is nice, but only 3 percent of the time will that translate to a real sale. Sweeten the pot by including a Special Deals section on your site - and promote prices, not percentages. Customers want bottom-line costs, not the usual hyperbole of "30 percent off." Thirty percent off what? Give it to them straight.

Other calls to action can be a "Request for Information" form on the site that they fill out. While the brochure is available as a download, some customers would rather have the real thing. There's certainly nothing wrong with that. After all, in a few days they will be reminded about you when it arrives in the mail. In this case, your brochure needs to be good enough to close the sale. And it should have the same look and feel (overall design) as your Website so that it creates a connection in the mind of the prospect.

Special events are another good call to action. If they only happen once a year, you create a "don't miss it" reminder in the mind of the customer.

12 MAKE IT EASY TO GET MORE INFO

Many organizations are so concerned about receiving spam that they refuse to include contact information on their Websites which, in essence, punishes the customer who is looking to spend time and money in the community.

Some viewers will want to write or call on the phone. It's amazing how many destination Websites do not provide an address, phone number, or even an e-mail address. Be sure to include all three, with your toll-free number if you have one. A "Contact Us" page makes it easy for viewers to find that information if you don't want to include it on your home page.

Not only must you include contact information, you should also provide:

• An online request for information page with a list of publications and/or resources that can be sent them.
• Links to more detailed information and other resources.

The Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau has created a well-designed and easy to navigate site, starting with a focused home page that includes a single link to the visitor section of the site, and then a "send me info" link. It includes options for different materials and doesn't ask too many questions. Too many questions to answer makes many visitors decide to not fill out the form at all. The site also includes phone numbers, e-mail addresses is this form isn't sufficient, and even names of contact people.

Ninety four percent of people with internet access use it for travel planning. Even so, visitors often have specific questions or want materials sent to them. Providing an easy way for visitors to contact you will ensure that visitors get all their questions answered, helping to make the sale.

13 DOWNLOADS AND ONLINE VIEWING SAVE MONEY, INCREASE SALES

Convenience is one of the most important factors of any marketing program. Your customers want - and expect - instant gratification. Since most people do their travel planning during the evening hours in the comfort of home, they need the information readily available. Less than 5 per-

cent of Website visitors will write down a phone number (if they can find that) and then wait till the next day to call to get more information. ALL of your marketing materials should be available on-line in PDF format and formatted so that when downloaded, they can easily be printed on standard 8.5" x 11" paper.

If you've developed a tri-fold rack brochure, unfolded it would measure 12" wide by 9" tall. While this can be reduced to print on a standard sheet of paper, the text will likely be too small to read. Instead, break the brochure up into a series of 4" x 9" panels and the customer can print the panels, or the whole brochure as needed.

Don't forget to make available maps of your destination - its attractions, amenities, and its relationship to highways, airports and Amtrak. Travelers love maps, whether it's a link to a Mapquest.com

version of your destination, or an elaborate sche-matic of your downtown, resort, trails, or wine country. These should be downloadable as well.

Meeting planners, event planners, editors, writers, and others are purging their file cabinets of press and conference planning kits and are now expect-ing that everything they will need will be online.

By creating an easy-to-find Downloads section of your site, you will give your customers what they want: instant information, and you will save a substantial amount of money in printing, postage, and envelopes, and time. Make it easy. Make it convenient. As an extra courtesy, you may want to identify the "byte" count of each download, or the download time on a standard 56k modem. Many Internet users are reluctant to begin downloading files unless they know what they are getting.

14 START WITH THE SITE MAP (CONTENTS)

The last couple of pages of this book contain a sample "site map," or contents, for an effective tourism Website. Whether you are a community or busi- ness, you must make it easy to plan a visit. The easier you make it, the more likely you are to close the sale. Include your site map as a link for visitors to use – it helps to have this as a table of contents.

Every community and business is different, and so your site map may vary from the one provided be-low. But this can provide you with a starting point. Just remember, you must make your site friendly enough that Grandma can easily navigate through it. Do so through a few steps. Don't include more than seven choices on the home page - with all

seven links in one location. Sites with links all over the page have no clear focus and are confusing.

15 DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS

The more you have to offer col-lectively, the further people will travel and the longer they will stay. It's the Four Times Rule. People will travel to a destination if you have attractions, that appeal to them specifically, that will keep them occupied four times longer that it took them to get there. So, if a visitor travels two hours to reach you, do you have eight hours worth of activities that cater to them?
(2 hours x 4 = 8).

You will be far more effective as one loud voice as opposed to a number of individual small voices. You still need to have a primary lure that sets you apart, but you must also have plenty of diversions or secondary activities - all of which translate to increased tourism spending.

Be sure to include information and links to nearby attractions, towns, amenities, that might appeal to visitors. Have reciprocal links. But don't just link to the other sites, or to partners. You need to make the sale on your site, then link the customer over for additional information. Some search en-gines use the number of links on a Website as one of their criteria in determining the popularity of that site, and the more links, the higher the rank-ing of that site.

16 SIZE MATTERS

Laptop computer sales are quickly gaining on desktop systems, as are notepad computers and other small-screen internet devices.

Make sure you develop your site to be approxi-mately 600 pixels wide (8.5") by approximately 400 pixels tall (5.5"). Each "home page" of a new section of the site should adhere to this size. Fol-low-up pages should still remain the same width, but can be longer, only requiring the customer to scroll down. You NEVER want your customers to have to scroll side to side.

Developing a site that takes up a whole screen can leave lots of empty space, takes longer to load, and is often awkwardly configured. Also make sure you have your site automatically cen-tered on the screen. The goal is to make the site attractive, easy to view, navigate, and use..

17 PUTTING TOGETHER THE TEAM

Website designers are a dime a dozen. Having the technical ability to write HTML does not equate to the talent to build an effective Website. Just about everyone over the age of 12 with a computer can design-build a Website. But having a Website does absolutely nothing for you if it can't close the sale.

Consider building your Website like you were building a home. It's highly unlikely that you'd have the architect actually design the house, build it, furnish it, and decorate it. When it comes to a tourism Website, you will need the "architect" - the tourism professional that will develop the site map and how the site flows. Then you'll need the "finish carpenter" - the graphic designer that makes the site beautiful, easy to read, and sets the ambiance and character of the site. In a home the finish carpenter adds the nice touches - wainscoting, wood accents, tile and other elements that bring together the overall feel and ambiance of the home. Then you need the interior designer - the person who writes your headers and body copy. This part of the site also includes professional photography. The other player is the "engineer" - the professional that creates the "backbone" of the site: the infrastructure. This includes optimization of the site, compatibility, scripts and forms, databases for visitor registrations and opt-in marketing, downloadable files, JavaScript and Flash components (motion elements), etc.

While most Website design firms say they have all these disciplines in-house, check other industry-related sites they've developed. Are they good enough to make you want to go there or buy the product?

Always hire the best, then negotiate the price – consider phasing the project, if you have to. If you can't come to terms you move onto the second best - still very qualified and good. Your Website is like making a movie: You have to have a good story (the experience), a good script (the dialogue that captivates you), a good cinematographer, good actors, and a strong supporting cast. Look at the development of your site in the same way. You're the executive producer.

18 COMPARE YOURSELF TO COMPETITION

Make sure you stack up well against your competition. A potential visitor, undecided about where to stay, might check into all nearby towns. Or a family wanting to go on a kayaking adventure might look into any location that offers that activity. The point is that travelers these days, with access to so much information on the internet, can compare your town to any other town in the world online. You want to be sure you're still in the running.

After you identify your competitors, take the time to analyze their Websites. Look at their layouts, their use of photography and text, and the features they present. How friendly are their Websites? Are they attractive and compelling? Do they provide enough information? Do they offer special deals? And do they invite the viewer to subscribe to an email newsletter? Compare your features with theirs, and make sure you haven't forgotten something your competition is promoting.

If you are looking to relocate or vacation in one of the towns in California's Gold Country, chances are you'll start by doing some web research. You'll find the towns of Truckee, Angel's Camp, Nevada City, San Andreas, Copperopolis. Where would you go? Looking at their Websites, comparing them, most people are attracted to Truckee, because their Website is so compelling. The outstanding photography, ease of navigation, and text that sets the tone for a great experience makes Truckee the first choice. Comparing the different town's Websites is a great exercise in seeing what makes a good site work.

Keep up to date with your competition – what they're offering, and how they present themselves. You'll be able to maintain your competitive edge by knowing how you stack up against the competition.

Part II. Make your town stand out in the crowd – Marketing your Website

19 MAKE YOUR URL MEMORABLE

Your URL is your internet address, and it should be both relevant and easy to remember. A shorter URL is usually better than a very long one; on the other hand, if it is too abbreviated, it won't make sense and might be difficult to remember. Keep it as simple as you can, while still making sense.

You can create additional URLs as part of specific marketing efforts, and have them link directly to your Website. For example, to encourage visitors to Yosemite National Park during the winter, they began an ad campaign: "Yosemite This Winter," highlighting the winter sports and beauty to be experienced in the park. As part of the campaign,

they purchased the URL www.yosemitethiswinter. com, which linked directly to the winter in Yosemite landing page on the Website.

Use memorable URLs as one more tool in your marketing efforts, and you'll see results with more hits to your Website, and more visitors to your town.

20 PURCHASE YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

If bass fishing is the number one draw to your community, searching those words on Google (the most popular search engine), will yield 1,490,000 results. Since 70 percent of all web users don't look past the first page of search results, and percent don't look beyond the first two pages, your site isn't going to be an effective marketing tool if it's listed on page 994.

Now you know why Google and Yahoo!, both with free search services, sell keyword listings. You bid for the keywords, with the highest bidder taking top honors on the first page of results, under "sponsor matches." Keyword bidding is referred to as "pay per click" – a powerful and cost-effective way to market whatever you're selling.

Google's keyword program can be found at www. adwords.com. Yahoo!'s program, which also covers Alta Vista, AOL, and other search engines, can be found at www.overture.com.

A company will pay a one-time charge for each click, costing as little as 10¢, and on up to more than $1, depending on how much other companies or communities bid for the keyword. That's a lot cheaper than the cost of a brochure, a stamp, and an envelope, plus the potential customer gets immediate information – something we expect in

the Internet age. You can easily monitor which keywords are most effective or not used at all. You can make changes anytime, and you control the cost by setting limits. You even get to write the "teaser text" under your listing, whereas in normal search engines, text from the first page is simply displayed – not always the text that will pull customers to your site.

After the customer gets to your site, you want to be sure the site is good enough to close the sale.

21 TAP INTO Website TOOLS

While purchasing key words is important, over time you hope to have your site listed at no charge AND on the first page of results. One of the best tools around for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is NetMechanic's Search Engine Power Pack. For $99 a year, this is a major bargain. It can assist you in optimizing your site by analyzing each page for problems, compatibility, and will let you know how to properly emphasize keywords using Power Pack resources such as the Keyword Popularity Tool. (www.netmechanic.com)

22 LEVERAGE VALUABLE META-TAGS
When consumers search the internet using key words or phrases, some search engines use a special section of computer HTML language in Websites called meta-tags to find the appropriate sites. Some search engines give the meta-tags more importance than the actual content of the page when searching. Many engines use a combination of techniques including meta-tags to find the Websites they are looking for.

There are two main types of meta-tags recognized by search engines: "description" and "keywords." These tags need to be placed in the "head" section of your HTML document. Several engines look for agreement between the "description", "keyword," "title" and "body text." Using the same keywords in each field will help the search engine locate your site.

If you open up a Website in Internet Explorer, for instance, you can go to a page, then from the menu go to View>Source. You'll see the HTML that was used to build the page, including the meta-tags.

Wisconsin Dells, the Waterpark Capital of the World, has done a good job with the use of meta-tags, using waterparks, resorts, attractions, hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, festivals, dells, family, and more, to help search engines locate their site when potential visitors are searching for any of those keywords.

When you develop, or redevelop your site, it can take up to six months for search engines to find and list your keywords, or meta-tags. Smart communities will use both meta-tags and pay-per-click

programs. Once your site appears on the first page of search results as a result of your good use of meta-tags and content, you can drop the pay-per-click listing of those particular search words.

23 CREATE LINK EXCHANGES
Link exchanges can boost your listing positions on major search engines, and create marketing partnerships. Throughout your site you should provide links to other sites - but don't rely on those sites to close the sale. That's for you to do. The other sites will just provide additional information about the experiences you're selling. Make sure you "exchange" links: "If you link to me, I'll link to you." Reciprocal links are a terrific way to increase the visibility of your site at little, if any, cost. Some search engines will boost your standing in the search pages based on the number of other Website that link to your Website.

NOTE: Make sure you check the links on your site once a month. There's nothing more aggravating than clicking on old and/or broken links. Visitors don't have much patience for this inattention to detail.

24 PERMISSION MARKETING – CREATING TOMA
There is no better way to create "Top of Mind Awareness" or TOMA than through "permission marketing" through periodic newsletters or notes fitting a specific category, such as "special deals" or "special events."

Include a page on your Website for visitors to "sign up." Offer specific categories or topics that might be of interest to visitors to your area,

Wisconsin Dells is the "Waterpark Capital of the World," yet their Website (below) didn't reflect that in its overall appeal. It was very corporate looking, in fact. A redesigned Website (left) sells the experience, is family-friendly, and outright fun. Always sell the experience - and make it obvious what you're about.

such as "special weekend getaways," or "family activities."

Once a month or so, write and send out the newsletter. Keep it brief. Never use more than two paragraphs, then add links so a viewer can get more information. Be sure the information you send is newsworthy – not just advertising. You want the reader to feel that your newsletter has value.

By getting the quick and easy update every month or so, the reader is always reminded you exist. So when it comes time for a getaway, what's the first destination to come to mind? Hopefully yours.

Make it easy for subscribers to opt out at any time. Providing this option makes it easier for visitors to decide to sign up. And don't ask them too many questions about themselves on the sign-up page. That discourages readers. It's more important to get the newsletter out to as many readers as possible than to get detailed demographic information on only a few.

The island of Bonaire, in the Caribbean, does a great job of this. Every two weeks, the Bonaire Tourism Board sends out its "Quick 'n Easy Tourism Updates." Quick and easy are the operative words. E-marketing programs are one of the most effective sales tools in the U.S. They create "top of mind awareness," bringing visitors back to your Website – and your community – time and again.

Part III. INVEST WISELY – The Importance of Your Town, Online

Too many communities think nothing of spending $20,000 or more on a brochure, while they spend $5,000 on a Website. 94% of all potential visitors (especially those with money to spend) will use the internet, while less than 5% will call or stop by a visitor information center. So how should you spend your money? Spending $20,000 for a Website good enough to close the sale is a very good investment. Spending another $10,000 a year to keep it fresh, updated, and changing (to bring customers back), is well worth the cost. Investing in an e-marketing program, keeping the newsletters timely and relevant, can have a profound effect on your visibility and tourism sales.

25 YOUR WEBSITE IS FOR YOUR CUSTOMER

Don't make the mistake of building your Website for you, the City Commission, or anyone else's vanity. The only purpose of your Website is to meet the needs of your potential customers. Don't do anything that gets in the way of the sale, like making visitors sit through an animated presentation when they are trying to get to another page. Make sure your Website works on a variety of operating systems (Windows, Mac OS, Linex.). Make the home page representative of what your unique feature is. The viewer should be able to tell what your Website is about in less than five seconds. And as important as the mechanics are to the web designer, the bottom line is, "Does the Website increase visitor traffic to your destination?" Evaluate this regularly, and consider changing your site if it is not producing.

CONCLUSION

The real-life Navin Johnson, our enthusiastic "somebody" introduced at the start of this section, went on to fame and fortune after inventing Opti-grab eye-glasses. The little handle for spectacles sold ten million units in a few short months. American Time News Magazine published an article about him which stated, "Mr. Johnson, you've become a millionaire overnight. Who are you?" In 1979, the internet hadn't yet been invented, otherwise no one would have needed to ask who Navin Johnson was.

SAMPLE SITE MAP

The following is a sample site-map or "contents" for an effective community-oriented Website. This site map is simply a sample, but may give you a starting point if you're hoping to redevelop your site into a powerful marketing machine. Make it easy to navigate, just like walking into a home, starting at the front door.

INTRO PAGE
    Welcome text
    Flash slide show (four or five photos)
    Skip intro button
    "Pick Your Season"

HOME
    "Pick Your Passion" - (activities by season)
    Link to site search page
    Link to contacts (site map)
    Link to contact info page
    Primary buttons to categories below and next pages

VISITING (intro text)
    Primary Attractions (intro)
        Historical
        Cultural
        Urban
        Entertainment
        Environmental
        Recreational
        Activity vendors
    Day Trips and Other Attractions (intro)
        Within an hour's drive
        Local diversions (secondary activities)
        Quaint escapes
    Events (intro)
        Major events (visitor-oriented events - not local events)
        Events by month
    Quick Facts (intro)
        Legends and claim to fame

        Elevation and geography
        Population, demographics
        Did you know...
Photo Gallery (intro)
    Send a postcard
    Photos by attractions category w/descriptions
    Photographer credits/links
Getting Here - Maps and Directions (intro)
    National
    Region (multi-state)
    State map
    Region/area map
    Distances chart (miles, k/m)
Weather and Seasons (intro)
    Typical weather patterns
    Current weather and forecast (link from weather site)
    Best activities by season
Visitor Services - Lodging, Dining and Shopping (intro)
    Lodging (sort by location, type, price)
    Dining (sort by type, style, location - featured restaurants)
    Shopping (sort by type, location - featured retailers)
    Services (sort by location, type of service)
Transportation (intro)
    Driving conditions
    Travel by RV
    Travel by boat
    Airports and services
    Tours (individual and groups)
    Rentals, other
Group Information (Intro)
    Venues: outdoor
    Venues: indoor
    Reunions and personal gatherings
    Conferences, meetings and trade shows
    Tours, group services
    Sporting events, venues
Trip Planner (Intro)
    Suggested itineraries
    Resources

Travel Links (Intro)
    State tourism info
    Local chamber offices
    AAA, travel clubs
    Services

LIVING (Intro)
    Community info
    Community links, events
    Real estate
    Doing business

HISTORY (Intro)
    Pioneer/Native Americans
    Modern times
    Historical attractions (link to attractions)
    Historical resources

SPECIAL DEALS (Intro)
    Packages
    Seasonal discounts

DOWNLOADS (Intro)
    Activities Guide
    Meeting Planners Guide
    Video clips

RESOURCES (Intro)
    Press room
        Press releases (sort by topic)
        Backgrounder
        Events
        Photo library (thumbnail with contact info)
        Press contacts, resources
        Press downloads
    Articles about the area
    State government offices, links

SITE FOOTER
    Copyright info
    About the site link (browsers, webmaster info)

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