

Synergy Required For Destination Development - Integrating Your Community Partners - By John R. Hendrie

Synergism is an abused word, much like networking, but it captures the essence of what must prevail to have dynamic business success in your destination, whether free standing business, locale or distinct area.

By its very definition, synergism represents the combined, simultaneous, correlated actions of diverse entities to work together, where the total effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects. Read on!

In the world of tourism we must overcome enormous barriers - political, economic, social - to provide an environment which inspires the Guest/Visitor Experience, where delight is the memory. Every business/service which 'touches' a visitor has a role and obligation to further that memorable experience. A simple end result, but the means always get in the way.

Any analysis should start with a typical Visitor's 'touch points', starting with arrival. *First impressions set the tone.* In your airports, often Immigration and Customs Officials are the initial 'Ambassadors' our Visitors encounter. A smile and 'enjoy your stay' can set the proper mood. Then, drifting through the airport, prompted by signage, directionals, kiosks to our transit: busses, taxis, courtesy vans or rentals - the next contact points. This is a wonderful opportunity to represent our Destination benefits, resources and unique character. Also, you have a captured audience! If we arrive by our own automobile, what greets our senses? The city landscape, street signs, posters and billboards. Perhaps we have asked a policeman for assistance or even John Q. Public. We may park in a lot, walk, take a cab or subway - our senses are on alert. Impressions are being indelibly implanted. And, finally, we reach our Destination within the Destination - hotel, restaurant, business setting, and entertainment venue. Now, we see how well our hosts perform. We interact with the Desk Clerk, the Restaurant Hostess and server, the ticket taker, the peanut vendor. We are either assaulted or assuaged by their performance, and that is only the service aspect. What about the sensations imbued by the products and the facilities? What level of cleanliness, condition, and attractiveness have we absorbed, hopefully enjoyed or avoided. It is just not specific Hospitality business related. We may need sunglasses, a bottle of water, a quick haircut, even medical attention, or send a fax and cash a check.

The Guest/Visitor Experience is impacted by *all the above and of course a great deal more.* The public and private sectors mingle and intertwine; they are part of this mosaic we create, which can be a piece of junk or a delight. There simply is no room for agendas or arrogance - we are all in this together. A spectacular stay at Hotel Z is diminished by poor service at Guiseppe's Bistro. An elegant dinner is negated by a surly cab driver. The maze of traffic, fumes, and pace at your airport diffuses the elegance and peace of your museums. A Remarkable Experience is a fragile commodity, yet it does require synergy, and we are all players.

Communication is a good start. Information is power; it must be collected, collated, analyzed and dispatched to the community on an ongoing basis. All parties must have directed forums and meetings to dissect this information as it pertains to their particular roles. If the Mayor's Office or that of the Tourism Official does not appreciate the impact of Tourism, as demonstrated by their participation and leadership, the private sector organizations - CVB's, Tourist Boards, Hospitality

Associations or Chambers - need to clamor → and raise Hell. Too much is at stake for politics to override the common Destination good.

Education is the next ingredient, for the entire community must have the awareness, perspective, and skills for their role as an Ambassador within the Destination. Whether you manage a local salon, are a bank teller, Concierge or housekeeper, you have contact. These players must understand what is at stake and represent the very best aspect of their businesses and positions. The smile, the response, the attention are critical elements to perfect these engagements and further build the Destination relationship. Appropriate skill and ability levels must also be created, which go beyond just the discipline. Superior Customer Service, knowing the power of WOW, the influence of marketing, and the embodiment of the Destination Brand - they are the Front Line, after all.

If you are continually gathering information, you are creating/updating the Visitor profile, understanding the Visitor/Guest expectations, and receiving a 'report card' on our performance. Through Education and Training you are responding to needs and continually elevating skills and knowledge. And, if all parties are interacting and integrating their significant resources, a Destination celebration is in order.

We spend an enormous amount of money promoting our Destinations, crafting expectations, yet many times we have not communicated Destination internal needs and requirements particularly well. With Tourism dollars tight, we establish turf and camps, which reflect our own selfish interests, even though those interests are common amongst us and spell for success. Plus, we have not armed those who now must deliver on the promises we have made.

The only standard of excellence is established by our Guest and Visitor. No matter what we say we are or do, they are the ultimate beneficiary and adjudicator. We devalue our product and services when our efforts are diffused. *Our success is a community effort, where every interaction with that Guest is supported and enthusiastic.* Synergy rhymes with energy and profitability! You get the drift.

Some communities around the world are known for their Hospitality. *It is not a birthright; it is a process and hard work,* acknowledging that the Brand Sum is greater than the individual Destination constituencies. The marketplace is simply too complex and competitive for a Destination to be complacent. Rally your players, establish your communication vehicles, embrace cooperative and collegial strategies and educate your Ambassadors. Your Guests and Visitors demand no less and your Brand shall be lustrous!

The author believes that Remarkable Hospitality is the portal to the Guest Experience and offers some solutions through www.hospitalityperformance.com.