

WORKSHOP SESSION TWO

SELLING THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

(Chairman : Peter Wakeling  
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Market Strategies

by

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What is a market strategy and what are selling tactics?

The answer to developing a strategy is:

(a) Know your product. Product knowledge is selling power, but only if it is used. The Great Barrier Reef comprises many products and many separate product decisions.

(b) Know your customer. There are two types of customer to be considered here. Firstly decision makers and secondly those who go along as part of the family group. Each however has his/her own life-style and the product answer must be found to satisfy individual customer wants. You must make the tourist 'want the Barrier Reef'. If they want it enough they will move heaven and earth to travel there.

(c) Know your own organisation. The Reef must be sold individually and collectively. This calls for individuals and associations to get together in a common cause. Do you honestly believe you are united enough to develop common objectives, common tourist themes, common tourist brochures so that you all echo the theme 'We are the greatest'?

(d) Know yourself. Regrettably the tourist industry is all too often composed of rugged individuals. To sell the Barrier Reef you must subjugate your own particular view point and link in a common task. Recognise that although you may live in idyllic surroundings, the tourist industry demands 24 hours a day dedication if you are to prove to the prosperous tourist that what you offer has the extra little something the others haven't got. You must provide that answer.

(e) Know your competition. First and foremost you are in the leisure industry. This means you are in competition with birds, booze and bookies, poker machines, caravans, launches, TV sets, hi-fi, sports, crafts and one hundred or more other interests which comprise the leisure industry.

At that point you will realise your slice of the cake, for the whole of the Australian tourist industry probably does not comprise more than five percent of the leisure industry. Obviously your competition has better answers than does tourism in Australia.

(f) Know how to develop a marketing strategy. Tackle this as an exercise in problem solving. Give yourself more research, then develop your existing sales practice in order to achieve break-through thinking. From that point develop a campaign that can be costed, time-tabled and tackled on a step by step basis.

As part of knowing your customer better (see Item (b) above) you must develop common answers to the following questions:

(a) Who makes the buying decision on travel ... and does it vary from State to State?

(b) What is it that they buy? Is there a different image for each of the coastal islands and a separate image again for the Reef and the Queensland hinterland.

(c) When is the tourists' greatest need for travel ... and when is yours? Maybe you must fill your hotels and motels at times which are not generally acceptable to the Australian or the overseas tourist.

(d) Why do they choose the Barrier Reef? Do you really know the answer to this one and have you planned to constantly check and recheck the changing consumer reaction. For tourism, the only constant is change.

(e) Where do tourists really want to go in Queensland? Is it enough to settle for one island, one section of the Reef, or one coastal or inland city? Most tourists crave many travel experiences in the one holiday.

(f) Upon which group do you finally decide to concentrate? There is one thing for sure ... you cannot win them all. Too broad a marketing strategy will only create customer confusion. You must decide on one grouping of prospective tourists, Australian or overseas, rather than all.

You must concentrate on having successfully developed that marketing plan. Not until then can you consider tackling the next tourist grouping.

Finally what is your attitude to this whole conference. Do you regard it as the end ... or is it to be the beginning?

DISCUSSION: (Chairman - Peter Wakeling)

DR JOHN PIGRAM, University of New England: Doug, whom do you consider the most likely person or persons to make buying decisions to come to the Great Barrier Reef? I read recently that it's the kids who make the decisions as to where the family group will go. If that's the case, could we make the Barrier Reef region more attractive to kids?

DOUG NETTLESHIP: Right. Who makes the decision? Research has proved that where there is a family unit, it's a family decision. Surprisingly enough, Melbourne people make more family decisions than Sydney people. Interestingly when a group decision is made, it is made in both Melbourne and Sydney by the more affluent groups. Therefore you will attract the families if you aim for the higher price in the market rather than the lower end. The other question you asked 'Is it the life for the kids?' The answer is yes, however the facilities available now on the Barrier Reef are not good enough.

DAVID COLEMAN, Tropical Queensland Tourist Association: Would you know how high tourism is in the list of discretionary spending in Australia?

DOUG NETTLESHIP: Roughly it would be about \$3,000 million. This includes commercial travellers who stop at motels. Eight out of every ten people that stop in Mackay are commercial travellers, very different to eight out of ten at Shute Harbour or somewhere else who are tourists. But let's give some figures. Do you know how much Queensland spends on racing alone? \$600 million a year. New South Wales spends \$2,000 million on poker machines. The whole of Australia spends \$6,000 million on beer, wine and spirits. Which is selling best? Tourism? Beer, wine and spirits, or cigarettes?

LEONE BENFIELD, Grace Bros. Travel: The travel agent when selling a client a Queensland package, normally sells a flight as the means of transport. Would it be feasible to introduce a package, which the caravanning vacationer could purchase or use at each destination. The package could include a flight to the Barrier Reef, or a lunch and cruise to one of the islands. In other words, create some packages more for the family man who wants to travel cheaply by caravan.

DOUG NETTLESHIP: Yes, it happens already in Tasmania with the sale of tear-off coupons. Each coupon allows the traveller one type of activity as he can only do about one-fifth of all the ideas proposed. And it's got to include a plane flight to the Barrier Reef. If you say that people get sea-sick, then one way to see the Barrier Reef is by light aircraft. You've got to find others. But give your customer a choice.