

How Successful Are We?

by

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My travel or leisure business experience began as a magician illusionist. This stood me in good stead for the travel industry as I found both were closely related.

Leisure is anything where people can relax.

Leisure and entertainment are thus inter-related.

It is the same for a visitor to any country. He wants to see, learn, visit, without placing too much effort in making things happen.

This is where the inbound tour operator, the hotel, or the airline provides the service to look after the visitor.

Inbound tour operators have a definite place in the travel industry. They may consist of a small dedicated group of individuals or may be part of a large group of companies. They attempt to learn as much as possible about their subject and spend time familiarising themselves with the country.

This gives them the satisfaction of being able to show their own country with enthusiasm and pride. They are only too aware that the country is enormous and yet unseen by many of its own inhabitants.

This is probably normal for any country.

The inbound tour operator must be conversant with the arts, politics, the way of life and many specialised subjects in which visitors are interested. They are the liaison between the service provider and the client, agent and/or the wholesaler.

Lower priced airfares will encourage more tourists to this country, but by how much nobody knows. The client/tourist/visitor cannot expect to see everything in one visit because of the vast size of Australia. It is most important that we do everything to encourage them to talk about the many comparisons, differences, attractions and unique ways of life that Australia has to offer, with the object that they will talk to others when they get home. Those who have come to Australia will want to return for another sample of our

hospitality and those who have not been here will be encouraged to travel the long journey to a geographically isolated area of the world to experience Australia for the first time. The finest form of advertising after all is 'word of mouth'.

How, therefore, do we achieve this when we have so much competition - so many cheaper destinations from which the tourist can choose?

The U.S.A. offers packages such as 12-day Acapulco holidays for around \$370.00. Hawaiian charters are available for as little as \$300.00.

How do we in Australia, encourage the American, European or Asian to visit us instead of the less expensive product?

Surely we must get our own house in order before we rely totally on the marketing organisations, and airlines, to supply us with tourists.

It is easy for the European wholesaler/agent to put together a very attractive package to the Costa del Sol because he can go and look for himself fairly inexpensively and sort out fact from fiction. Similarly the U.S.A. wholesaler/agent can put an Acapulco package together, but when it comes to Australia, we must become more dependant on the specialist inbound tour operator. It is our job to ensure that what the brochures say is actually what is given. The onus of responsibility is on us.

For example in Queensland ... how many times does an unsuspecting tourist arrive on a Barrier Reef island after travelling 12,000 miles or more to be told that it is "not actually a Barrier Reef island at all". They have to travel further to see the Reef itself. Again 'word of mouth' promotion, what are they going to say when they get back home?

Does the service provider say in his brochure:

- (a) What he is offering;
- (b) What he thinks he is offering; or
- (c) What he would like it to offer.

Taking a good look around me it worries me that so much is done by so many to discourage the tourist to ever come back to our country again.

What can we do to ensure that tourists praise our services and recommend that others come to Australia. Surely, if we earn our living by giving service then it is most important that we learn to serve.

The expertise of a good host is enjoyed by all: the client who enjoys the congeniality, service and food; the restaurant owner who has satisfied clients who will return and talk about their experiences with others; the waiter who has given pleasure by his expertise as a professional 'servant' and who is proud of his ability to serve his fellow man with a professional attitude; and so on.

In no way should the customer feel 'put down'. We all expect a service from those we employ. This is the most important lesson we can learn.

How many times do we take a good look at our own situation in order to improve our service? The simplest things are usually the most difficult to see. Perhaps our own staff have problems too - an understanding employer is always respected and engenders a greater appreciation of our own business.

As a tour guide, I used to think about this many times. My job was to impart my knowledge, my education, my assistance and always a sympathetic ear. After all the tour members were paying my salary so I owed it to them to ensure they had a carefree holiday.

We all have a choice of what job we do. If one does not like a complaint from a client then perhaps we had better see who is right, the client or ourselves. If the client is right, apologise, it does not hurt and the client will respect you for it. Then, correct the fault so it does not happen again.

The hotel manager that disciplines himself to look through the hotel regularly to see for himself whether the carpets are frayed in the corner; looks at a room after it has been serviced; checks for cracked crockery; checks the upholstery in the lounge; he is the manager who is aware of the problems and can perhaps do something about it. Owners, managers, supervisors, must teach their staff and educate them to understand the importance of the client relative to their own position. The best form of teaching is to show by example. Time must be taken to explain that the client is their business.

There is always room for improvement, it is a never ending task.

We are now competing with the world and what it can offer. If we succeed tourists will recognise the fact that it is definitely worth putting up with 15 hours air travel to come here.

Let us show the world that we have the most beautiful country which is worth visiting again and again and again.

I would like to leave you with ...

'It is a funny thing about life, if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it!'
(Somerset Maugham 1874-1965).