

Creating Engaging Experiences—The “Keys to Success”

Experience as Your Product: Traditional tourism businesses practice activity based management wherein the provision of activity opportunities is viewed as the end product. Recent research has found, however, that the end product of tourism and recreation management is the experiences themselves. AdventGX has developed its own benefits-based management approach, placing the focus on creating experiences that the participants perceive as beneficial. The approach involves the linking of activities, settings, experiences and ultimately benefits. Perceived benefits translate into satisfied customers. Satisfied customers then become advocates or ambassadors for you and provide the word of mouth advertising that is crucial to the success of experiential tourism attractions and destinations.

In simple terms, the experience that you create and provide *is* the product you are selling. It is not just an accommodation, a tour, or a hike, it is a combination of activities, settings, and services that all produce an experience that can affect your customer in profound ways. In broader terms, experiential products for recreation and tourism are a combination of two complimentary components:

- 1) primary activities, settings, and their support facilities: things that are directly related to the experience (e.g. activities, programming, content/materials, events), and
- 2) hospitality support services: these serve an important supporting role, or as a potential detractor from a quality product. Support services are most often tied to ensuring the comfort of your customers.

Identify your core product(s): The tourism industry is plagued with confusion about what the products are. There are too many names for a broad array of activities and experiences, resulting in misnomers, improper labeling, and general confusion throughout the industry for both tourists and providers. Travelers have difficulty understanding what term is being used for a particular product or experience. Providers are similarly confused about where they should position themselves. Using proven tools, AdventGX aims to minimize this confusion and help customers refine their offerings and create experiences that will attract the customers they want to serve. For travelers, we intend to help them find the “experiences” that fit their interests through our travel portal “TrueJourney.com”.

The Art of Creating Experiences: AdventGX creates experiences through a complimentary process that blends physical facilities, natural amenities, culture, hospitality, services, staff personalities, marketing, programming and printed and spoken information. More art than science, AdventGX gives consideration to the whole of your product, creating experiences that reflect the character of your business. The AdventGX Travel Experience Model depicts the travelers’ experience as a series of impressions that occur throughout the travel experience. From planning and anticipation, through the experience itself and even in recollection, the key to success is to make a profound impact on the traveler through the entire cycle. The experience begins with your customer’s first visit to your Web site, and doesn’t end until the follow-up customer satisfaction survey is complete.



Creating Engaging Experiences—A quick summary of the keys to creating quality experiences

1) Know your customers

Never forget to look at your business through your customers’ eyes. Remember that your customers bring with them to each experience their own unique characteristics. Each customer has his or her own

- a. Needs
- b. Background
- c. Expectations
- d. Capabilities
- e. Desires
- f. Likes and Dislikes
- g. Limitations
- h. and much more. . .

2) Provide Quality Services

- a. Take care of your customers' needs. Conduct quality assurance evaluations regularly.
- b. Hospitality. Keep a staff that is friendly and knowledgeable.
- c. Risk Management. Assess risks before you start and be prepared for the unexpected.
- d. Facilities. Maintain good repair and cleanliness.
- e. Food safety and quality. Conduct satisfaction and quality evaluations regularly.

3) Capitalizing on Your Resources

Most types of experiential tourism (nature, physical, heritage, agritourism, etc.) are in some way based on the natural environment, or the history of people living on the land. Creating enjoyable experiences that are derived from these resources entails two primary steps:

- a. A thorough assessment, identifying and evaluating all available physical, human, cultural, and natural resources, and
- b. Creating the story, blending your resources to create a complete experiential product. Capitalize on your opportunities! Be creative and imaginative.

4) Quality Programming: This includes activities that people will participate in whether it is guided, or self-guided, individual or group activities. This could be any combination of recreational activities, shows, events, or educational activities.

5) Informational/Educational content: This refers to interpretive content. In more common terms it is the "story of the place". These stories can be derived from many different things whether it is the natural environment (plants, animals, geology), or the historical/cultural aspects of the place. Creating these stories is a systematic process but it also requires a very creative touch to produce *ENGAGING EXPERIENCES*.

6) Authenticity: People are becoming more selective and demanding for what they do and where they go for their leisure pursuits. They are seeking meaningful and learning oriented experiences when they travel. Tourism destinations, attractions and businesses need to be attuned to the fact that they need to provide *authentic experiences* for their customers in order to stay competitive.

AdventGX Tourism Development Methodology

As the first step of any project we conduct a one or two day design workshop to identify your needs and strategic objectives. Working with your project team, our team will also set priorities and establish preliminary strategic methods (Video tapes of our workshops are prepared for documentary purposes). Following the workshop, an AdventGX implementation matrix, including estimates of effort required to develop each project component, will be submitted for your on-going reference and use for development, deployment and maintenance of your new initiative.

With your guidance we will evaluate and revise the implementation Matrix in order to assure that your key target dates are met and objectives fulfilled. We will make the necessary adjustments to our approach in order to help you achieve your goals on time and within budget.

As part of our process, AdventGX requests that you help us establish a Project Board. The Board supports your project by providing guidance in the form of approval of proposed schedule changes, establishing budgets, verification of business rules and workflow models. Traditionally Project Board members for your initiative minimally might include:

- Project Sponsor
- A designated Subject Matter Expert from your organization
- End-User Representative (representing your initial target client population)
- AdventGX's Project Manager

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS by AdventGX

Based on a 'best-practices' model for building and managing small to large-scale experiential tourism initiatives, AdventGX enables organizations to enhance community based products, customized experiences and natural assets -- dramatically reducing the time-to-market required for building a valuable brand and a sustainable financially-healthy initiative.

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