

Tourism Development Strategies for Strong Economies and Vibrant Sustainable Communities

In the early 1980's the community leaders of Van Buren County, Iowa saw that the agricultural economy was taking a serious downturn, and chose tourism as a way to boost their economy and sustain the region. They began the transformation process by identifying what they had to offer and then employed a tourism professional to develop strategies for tourism. Through careful planning and the hard work and dedication of community leaders and residents, tourism in Van Buren County is still going strong today.

Many communities are turning to tourism as a strategy for economic development. Experiential tourism in particular, including natural, historical, cultural and recreational activities, can help diversify a community's economy while enhancing the region's vitality and quality of life. Van Buren County, Iowa is just one tourism success story, exemplifying tourism's potential for bolstering economies even through turbulent economic times. Communities don't just decide to focus on tourism as a development strategy overnight. Achieving and sustaining your full tourism potential requires innovative and effective tourism development strategies, committed leadership and diligence on the part of the entire development team.

Successful Tourism Development : : What it Takes

Resource Assessment

- Identify leadership and define community organization
- Profile current and potential visitors
- Survey resident attitudes
- Develop vision and set goals
- Inventory resources, natural amenities, historical events, architectural structures, local culture, etc.

Market Research

- Gain insights into tourists' behaviors and preferences
- Learn the factors that affect tourists' behavior
- Understand tourists' decision making processes, particularly those effecting destination choices
- Identify customer expectations of products and services

Product Development

- Interpretation: telling the story of a place to translate your community's resources into valued tourism products.
- Based on sound market research, create high quality experiences that tourists will pay to enjoy.
- Facilitate collaboration and partnerships between businesses
- Sustain and promote the community's identity
- Fulfill its citizen's visions

Marketing and Promotion

- Assess the community's overall objectives (i.e., raise the number of tourists, increase visitors' length of stay, grow local expenditures, develop/change the community's image)
- Analyze today's experiential tourism market and trends
- Segment and evaluate tourism markets and establish marketing plans for each
- Create an implementation plan and methods to evaluate its effectiveness

Tourism Development : : Succeed with AdventGX

Addressing the complex issues listed above can be a significant challenge for a community or destination manager. AdventGX, through many years working in the tourism industry, has created a seven-step process supported by our technology-enhanced "tourism toolbox." Together, these resources empower communities and organizations with a systematic approach to planning, deploying and maintaining a successful tourism strategy.

Seven Steps to Tourism Success

1. Conduct initial workshop to articulate tourism objectives, and identify stakeholders, leaders and opposition
2. Conduct a resource assessment, including human, institutional, recreational, natural and physical resources
3. Identify potential pitfalls, including concerns of businesses and interest groups, and develop management strategies.
4. Create and execute a detailed action plan, including outcome-oriented tasks with measurable objectives.
5. Provide ongoing support via web resources, access to technical assistance and performance support tools.
6. Develop methods to monitor success, and evaluate and minimize negative impacts through contingency planning.

The Villages of Van Buren, Iowa

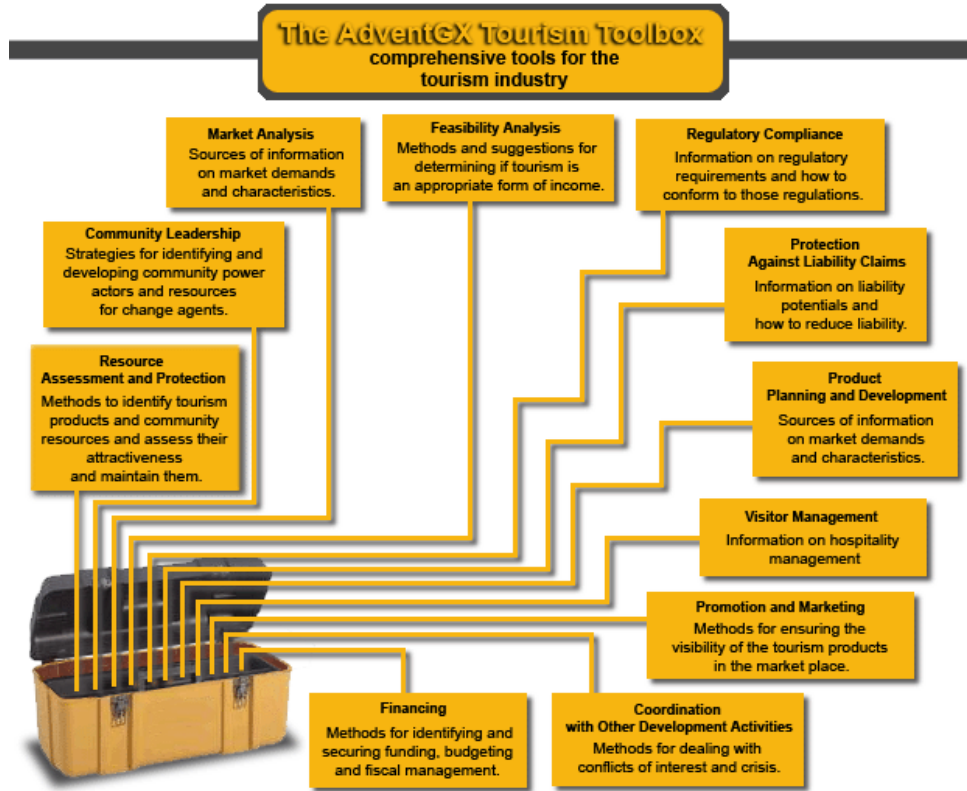
"In this historic cluster of a half-dozen villages along the Des Moines River, in southeast Iowa, you get a taste of life as it was over 100 years ago. Once the river ran faster and deeper, and people came here from all over the region to make stagecoach, steamboat, and railroad connections. Now the visitors get a "far from the madding crowd" feeling as they stroll an English garden on the river banks, explore a historic church with its needle-like spire rising from a stand of pines, or visit artists and craft persons in out of the way studios. Here, one can experience exuberant small-town festivals or drift slowly down the river in a canoe."

Rural Tourism Development, 1991.
Tourism Center, University of
Minnesota.

7. Continually evaluate the process and outcomes; modify plan as needed to ensure success.

The AdventGX Toolbox

The Toolbox consists of a set of functional drawers that provide information and resources about the specific topics and issues critical to tourism development. AdventGX has established a collection of tools to help address each issue, including educational resources, training programs and information technologies.



Getting Started with AdventGX

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, AdventGX will set priorities and establish preliminary strategic methods (Video tapes of our workshops are prepared for documentary purposes). Following the initial workshop, an AdventGX Implementation Matrix, including estimates of effort required to develop each project component, is submitted to our customer for on-going reference and use throughout development, deployment and maintenance of your initiative.

With your guidance, AdventGX will evaluate and revise the implementation matrix to ensure your key target dates are met and objectives fulfilled on time and within budget. As part of our process, AdventGX requests that clients establish a Project Board. The Board guides the project, establishing budgets, approving proposed schedule changes, verifying business rules and reviewing workflow models. Traditional project board members include:

- the project sponsor
- a designated subject matter expert from your organization
- an end-user representative (representing your initial target client population)
- the AdventGX, Inc. project manager

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