

Tools by Business Processes

Product Development

Product development is about creating something that your customers and potential customers want, whether it is a new experience or a retrofit of an existing one. And these days, travellers want their experience "green." According to a 2007 study by TNS Canadian Facts, about a third of survey respondents would switch from a "non-green" holiday offering to that of a competitor who demonstrated a stronger commitment to sustainable tourism. Don't let your next big opportunity slip through your fingers!

Quick Start



Grab your copy of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism*. Whenever you begin developing a new product, make sure you review the code again as a refresher. If you set out to incorporate sustainable practices the moment you begin to develop new products, you can save the potential costs of having to change the product in the future. Keeping costs low contributes to your economic well-being and ensures your prosperity.

Do Your Homework

- ◆ It may sound obvious, but it needs to be said: before you invest in a new product, make sure you'll be able to sell it. Undertake some market research and speak to your existing customers about their interests and values.
- ◆ Perform a competitive analysis: which of your competitors offer similar products that include a greater element of sustainability?

Try This!

When evaluating the competitive landscape, remember to consider local, regional, national and global organizations/competitors. Examine what they do, and make decisions based on industry best practices and how they could fit into your situation.

Design and Package Your Product

- ◆ Incorporate sustainable practices as well as product design and development into the planning process. Find the "hook," and build on that. Appeal to your customers' wants and deliver the product to them in ways they understand. Aim to meet and/or exceed their expectations.
- ◆ Promote viewing, understanding and preserving threatened habitats and endangered species.
- ◆ Thinking sustainably is about thinking locally. Play to your region's strengths, and build your product in ways that preserve and promote your area's ethnic diversity, traditional knowledge and cultural activities. Use authentic local experts, stories and resources to support your offer whenever possible.
- ◆ Ensure the highest standards of environmental stewardship are met both en route and at destinations.
- ◆ The old adage, "Give a person a fish, he will eat for a day. Teach a person to fish, he will eat for a lifetime," rings true for sustainable tourism. Create opportunities for your customers that are infused with sustainable practices and they will hopefully return home with a feeling of personal good that will carry on to other activities in their lives.

Buddy Up

- ◆ Seek out strategic partners that are equally committed to sustainable practices, or consider starting an informal information exchange. You can share and borrow ideas, and potentially consider co-marketing arrangements.

Case Study: A Perfect Mountain Marriage

[Trail of the Great Bear of Alberta](#), a cross-border co-marketing group focusing on Rocky Mountain destinations, has forged an innovative partnership with Parks Canada. The two organizations collaborate to support park goals and promote responsible travel through a variety of initiatives. [Parks Canada](#) coordinates and distributes visitation to minimize negative impacts, while Great Bear is a part of park planning, strategy development and delivery. The group also:

- ◆ Uses park interpretive planners and guides
- ◆ Builds park messages into its publications and programs
- ◆ Creates tour packages based on ecosystem-oriented experiences
- ◆ Makes financial contributions to park interpretation
- ◆ Participates in and initiates relevant research.

Case Study: No Ordinary Outfitter

[Uncommon Journeys](#) offers low- to no-impact hiking, canoeing and dogsledding expeditions into the Yukon backcountry. What makes the company so uncommon? Owners Rod and Martha Taylor build environmental considerations into each of their company's offerings. The couple's wilderness base camp can be moved without leaving behind any evidence of its passing. All guides are trained in "leave no trace" practices and teach environmental ethics for Outward Bound and the National Outdoor Leadership Schools. Finally, each tour has a greater purpose beyond simple adventure; guides collect important data on the region's flora and fauna, which the company forwards to the Yukon Territory's Department of Renewable Resources. From there, the data ultimately helps protect the territory's landscapes and wildlife.

Promote Responsibly

- ◆ Your promotional materials typically represent your customers' first interaction with you. Reinforce your organization's values by specifying 100% recycled, post-consumer paper or FSC-certified paper, and print with vegetable-based inks or choose waterless printer companies. Make sure you communicate your green choices with appropriate use of logos and explanatory text.

Print Your Vegetables: The Scoop on Nontoxic Inks

Vegetable-based inks replace petroleum solvents with vegetable oil—such as soybean or linseed oil. These inks, available in bright colours, help to significantly improve local air quality by reducing the quantity of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released during drying. Vegetable-based inks offer a number of other advantages:

- ◆ Improved worker health
- ◆ Make recycling easier
- ◆ Reduce toxic waste
- ◆ Biodegradable
- ◆ Extend lifespan of printing equipment
- ◆ Economical in the long run
- ◆ Derived from a renewable resource
- ◆ Enhance printability characteristics

For more information, check out cleangreenprint.com.

Scenario: A New Chapter for Aventures des Laurentides

Business is good at Aventures des Laurentides, a medium-size adventure-tour company operating out of Québec City. Ryan, the company's owner, is looking to expand his company's repertoire. Ryan is already working to minimize his company's environmental impact, so he wants to make certain that any new offering meets or exceeds the best practices for sustainable tourism.

Aventures des Laurentides is a lean operation, and Ryan doesn't have a big market research budget. He decides that any new product will have to interest his current customers, so he creates a survey himself, includes a modest incentive, and e-mails it to all his current and past clients.

Meanwhile, Ryan goes to scout a few new bike-tour routes—part of a new line of active, low-carbon tours he is developing. He plans ahead, calling up some local bike businesses for ideas. Then, instead of driving the proposed route, he rides it himself, saving fuel and reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

Across two successful decades, Ryan has partnered with a long list of service providers and other businesses. Ryan wants to ensure that every part of his new line of sustainable tours is as responsible as possible, so he seeks out hotel, restaurant and attraction allies that share his principles.

While riding on his potential new tour, Ryan comes across a local farm and greenhouse that grows produce used in the adjacent restaurant. A little further up the road, he finds a small bed and breakfast that is located in a restored heritage building. The B&B's owners educate their customers about the historic significance of the building, along with other sites in the area. Ryan adds both businesses to his itinerary.

As Aventures des Laurentides prepares to launch its new series of discovery holidays for travellers seeking nature- and culture-oriented adventures, Ryan's team develops a line of Earth-friendly marketing materials. They print brochures on FSC-certified paper using vegetable-based inks, and develop a website with a flexible content management system that allows the consumer to customize his or her holiday. The whole process reduces paper, streamlines administration and sets a new bar for Ryan and his peers.