

Step 4: Market for Success

EXERCISE: Creating a Results-Driven Marketing Plan

Marketing evokes many different images and strategies, from successful advertising campaigns to a public relations strategy to sway attitudes and opinions. Destinations market to create a compelling image that will lure visitors and money to hotels, attractions, restaurants and shops. Museums and non-profit organizations use marketing techniques to entice members and garner support from elected officials. Yet no marketing program is effective without measuring the impact, whether the benchmark is increased visitation or change in attitudes and opinions.

Best Practices: The Tennessee Overhill Area faced a major challenge when it was named one of the 16 pilot areas of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's heritage tourism initiative in 1990. In six years, the three-county area in Southeast Tennessee would host the world – literally – as the site of the whitewater rafting events for the Centennial Olympic Games held in Atlanta, Georgia.

To get the region on track, the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association convened local constituents to create a five-year marketing plan. The purpose: identify measurable goals and objectives to keep marketing activities focused, prepare for international visitors, and increase local economy through tourism. The five-year plan articulated the following elements:

- Destination Profile
- Description of Existing Marketing Efforts
- Identified Marketing Opportunities:
 - ◆ Timely Events and Activities
 - ◆ Trends and Key Destinations
 - ◆ Regional Programs/Partners
- Marketing Goals
- Marketing Strategies
 - ◆ Market Research
 - ◆ Promotions
 - ◆ Public Relations
 - ◆ Advertising
 - ◆ Image/Information Systems
- Detailed Tactics for Defined Goals
- Budget



- Resources to tap

The 35-page document was bound and circulated to all Tennessee Overhill partners, players and key attractions for reference.

“A marketing plan provides a strategy for spending limited dollars. It also helps identify what works and what doesn’t, and forces you to consider more than just advertising – public relations, for instance, is now a major component of our plan. We now create an annual plan to allow us flexibility and to measure year-over-year. However, we are very conscious that what we do today may not pay off for three years. It takes time to get a name and image known, brand identification doesn’t happen overnight so invest for the long-haul to get measurable results.”

Linda Caldwell, Director
Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association
Etowah, Tennessee

Top 10 Do’s and Don’ts

1. Don’t limit the creativity.
2. Do think strategically: plan for good times and bad
3. Don’t think money is always the answer; a strong message is often more important.
4. Do know what your customer wants, values.
5. Do think of how you will measure each and every marketing strategy.
6. Don’t determine creative elements by committee.
7. Do be comprehensive: outline public relations, advertising, distribution,
8. Don’t market before the product is ready for the audience.
9. Do focus – one “message” does not fit all audiences.
10. Don’t promise what you can’t deliver or lie to your customers. Make sure your brochures, advertising, graphics fairly represent the experience.

Exercise A: Creating a Consumer Brand

This exercise looks at how consumers choose products and services based on various kinds of marketing. It also addresses two other vital marketing principles: 1) how one product uses marketing to position themselves above or differently from the competition; and 2) how one product may use various messages or approaches to reach different audiences. Both principles are fundamental to teaching cultural heritage tourism destinations about niche marketing, and stressing that “one size does NOT fit all.”

Step 1. One month prior to marketing meeting, ask participants to identify which car or beverage most resembles (or want to resemble) their cultural heritage site/destination/corridor. Then, collect impressions of how this product reaches various audiences. Read magazines, watch TV, read financial newspapers, search the internet, and seek out other mediums to uncover various promotions, articles, ads and other ways that the product is presented to consumers.

Step 2. Convene the group and ask them to show and tell about their “product.” First, describe why they chose the product. Second, what they discovered in researching the consumer product. (The facilitator should also have a stable of marketing impressions/samples for the various cars and beverages.)

Step 3. Identify how they position themselves among the competition when all they are really offering is something to quench thirst or provide reliable transportation.

Step 4. Discuss the various audiences that these products have to reach:

- People who have a vested interest in the success of the product: investors, shareholders
- People who make the product
- People who sell the product
- People who currently buy the product: loyal owners/purchasers,
- Potential buyers: younger audiences that companies want to have purchase product in future, people who prefer the competition

Step 5. Identify the key messages for each audience: what convincing argument must be made. Recognize the specific tactics chosen to communicate the messages. Prioritize the audiences and messages with limited resources.

Step 6. How do you know if you are successful? Create appropriate measurement techniques for tracking results and assessing efforts.

Step 7. Relate this process to cultural heritage tourism to create a marketing plan that:

- a) Creates a brand/positioning statement to establish your destination from the competition
- b) Identifies and prioritizes key audiences to reach

- c) Articulates specific messages for each audience
- d) Defines tactics to reach each audience:
 - ◆ promotions
 - ◆ public relations
 - ◆ advertising
 - ◆ image/information systems
- e) Measure results.

Step 8: Once the outline of brand, target audiences and messages has been developed, ask small groups to list specific – and measurable – goals and objectives. Develop detailed tactics and timeline to accomplish goals and objectives.

Step 9: Create budget required to accomplish goals and objectives. Subtract amount of existing funds allocated for marketing over the next five years. Identify potential sources for funds to cover the remaining balance.

