

# TOURISM & MORE'S "TOURISM TIDBITS"

February 2013

## Ways to Make Your Making an "Ordinary" Tourism Industry "Extraordinary" without Spending Additional Money

---

Although the tourism industry prides itself on helping people to get away and find a bit of rest and change of life, in reality most people take their lives with them. Bad habits go to new places and all too often computers have become a mixed bag, great when they work and total frustration when they do not work. Successful tourism then has that extra "je ne sais quoi" that special sense of giving people more than they paid for, the extra something special that turns a trip into an experience.

The tourism industry professional must often deal with angry customers, who sometimes have valid complaints and at other times are simply angry. No matter what the reason for this anger, the visitor's problem becomes our problem and how we handle these people can make all the difference between a very dissatisfied customer and one who becomes a loyal supporter.

Tourism then is more than mere travel, it is a journey into the extraordinary, a collection of memories of which each tourism professional is part of the experience. When we offer the ordinary, our customers are on a trip, and when we go beyond the expected to offer the extraordinary, then we transform the humdrum trials and tribulations into a journey where memories touch the soul. In order to help each of us become a bit more extraordinary even in times of crisis or frustration, Tourism Tidbits offers the following suggestions:

**-Avoid indifference at all costs.** There is perhaps nothing more destructive to a tourism industry than employees who are indifferent to their guests. People on a journey are paying to be special; they are not merely another number that needs to be processed. When we fail to express our interest in the well being of our customers, they soon see us as simply run of the mill employees rather than hosts and hostess. Go beyond the mere "how was your meal, room etc" and take the time to smile, make eye contact or put a little bit of sparkle into your voice. Ask people to really tell you what they think and be honest with them about what you can and cannot do regarding a problem. The rule of thumb is simple: indifference makes the extraordinary ordinary, while enthusiasm turns the ordinary into something special.

**-Do not be banal when speaking with a guest.** Often our guests in tourism are rude,

and they can be real challenges. Although most tourism professionals understand that travel is not always easy or seamless, travel professionals are still people and have emotions like everyone else. When faced with an angry or rude guest try and change the mood by finding something to compliment. Although the compliment may have nothing to do with the complaint, it will soften the negative situation and help your customer to realize that the tourism professional is also a human being.

**When asked a question, go the extra mile.** There are two ways to answer a question, merely give the information requested (what are your hours of operation, how do I get from here to there) or provide unique insights and serendipitous information that becomes part of the experience. Make the answer to your question fun and never forget that travel is not about simply going from one place to another place, but is also about the experiences along the way.

**Be enthusiastic!!** People can tell right away if a tourism professional enjoys his/her job or is merely there to get a paycheck. If we deal with people in a routine and bland manner then in most cases the customer is better off with a machine! Instead try to remember two simple rules (1) no one has to take a vacation (2) if there are no travelers, then there are no jobs! Machines do ordinary transactions; people perform unique and memorable transactions. Always be real and let your customers know that serving others is not merely something that you do, it is something that you choose to do!

**Humor can go a long way to solving a problem or a crisis.** Make sure that your humor is always appropriate. Never laugh at your customer but rather at yourself. Do not be afraid to be a bit absurd, provocative or unconventional. Just make sure that the humor is good natured, never directed in a way that can hurt and always delivered with a smile.

**Develop the art of doing the unexpected.** Service jobs can become routine unless we take the time and are creative enough to turn the routine into pleasant surprises. Try to do something unexpected every day. The best way to put your customers in a good mood is for you to be in a good mood. Offer your customers something that they might never expect. Create your own special set of unexpected surprises and then engage in creative conversation with your customers. The feedback that you get will be honest and you will have conducted your own marketing campaign while having fun and winning a new loyal customer.

**Go beyond the expected and try never to think about your job description. The last thing a visitor wants to hear is "that's not my job".** In the world of tourism our visitors expect us to be not mere employees but hosts and hostesses. Being a good

host/hostess means taking the initiative in problem solving, going beyond the expected and making sure that our guests are so wowed that they speak about us to all of their friends. Remember the best advertising is word of mouth and letting people know that you care