

# Why Develop a Strategic Marketing Plan for your Tourism Operation?

If you think that in tourism developing a [strategic marketing plan](#) is something only the big, fancy hotel chains do, then think again. You CERTAINLY need one, too! It'll help you better understand your business, your customers

and your strategy for success.

In fact it even more important that you use your smaller and tighter budget in the correct way and in the correct direction. A scattergun approach needs a LOT of money to be effective. With your smaller budget you are going to be looking for needle point accuracy in each of your campaign to guarantee ROI. As little trial and error as possible is definitely the aim. A-B testing with large focus groups is just totally beyond most of our budgets!



## Strategic Marketing Plans for SME Tourism Operators

Most tourism operators and hoteliers have a habit of thinking that “marketing” means advertising, PR, promotion or even Sales! In fact the oft used term “Sales and marketing” is mostly a total misnomer in tourism. Marketing professionals seldom complete actual Sales, and Sales don’t get down and gritty with the Marketing Analysis!

Your marketing and your marketing plan is so much more than just a jumble of ad campaigns, and includes everything including understanding

your market (or indeed markets!) to which you'll sell your products and services, to choosing the specific tactics you'll use to reach that market (which is where things like the advertising come in – they're simple one of your MANY tactics!).

Put in simple terms the Strategic Marketing Plan includes the following parts :

Executive Summary – NEVER longer than one page, the summary should briefly describe the business and the major points of the plan (always write it last)

Situation analysis – Where you are... a detailed

assessment of your niche markets (one by one), your competitors in each niche, and the opportunities and challenges for your business, including client demographics and source markets (geography)

Marketing strategy – How your planning on getting to where you want to be... This is your specific business revenue goals, as well as a strategy for tackling the market opportunities identified in the situation analysis. Comes from your Business Plan (you do have one right! lol)

Marketing tactics – the actual action plans for executing on the strategy outlined in the previous section. These get drilled down into individual Tactical Plans

Marketing budget and timeline – a final detailed costing for each campaign and ROI/payback expected, and the overall cost including a Cashflow analysis for planning the year

# Situation analysis

Very simply, your situation analysis is the base foundation of your marketing plan, and gives a clear “lay of the land” for your market and business. Remember all of that market research and competitive analysis you did for your [business plan](#)? (eek, please tell me that is up to date, or we go no further!) The great news? This is exactly what you did all that work for,

you get to use it here! In your situation analysis, clearly define for each of your markets:

All your potential customers and clients, including current market size and projected growth

Your competitors, including current and projected market share, and product or market segment focus

Your realistic assessment of your own business, including both strengths and weaknesses, with a summary of your plan to overcome the weaknesses

# Marketing strategy

When your tourism business was started, it undoubtedly found an unmet or underserved need in a target market somewhere, and your company felt that it could address that need. The marketing strategy section is where this is actually spelled out. How your tourism business is going to meet that need, by setting specific goals and high level strategies.

Start by setting the specific goals for your business, typically for SME Tourism Businesses these are for the year ahead. Normally done around the time of your rates

review and publishing...

Make all goals realistic, achievable and measurable. There is absolutely no sense in ever setting yourself up for failure right from the start. Write them in as simple and straightforward terms as you can- for example, "Wedding Bookings will achieve \$150,000 in sales of on site Weddings by the end of 2012."

Wrap up the strategy section of your marketing plan by outlining the particulars of each of your business offering(s) – in marketing jargon, you'll be defining what are known as the "four Ps":

- Product – description of the product or service, including features and benefits
- Price – initial pricing strategy
- Place – distribution channel for your product or service, i.e. where you'll sell
- Promotion – the methods and channels used to reach customers and let them know about your product or service (this is where advertising fits by the way)

Now I may (I am by all accounts!) a bit old fashioned in still using only the 4 P's. Current Marketing Professionals are all the way up to 7 P's (and some ven throw in 4 C'S!), but I think for us tourism operators without Marketing Degrees 4 is fine!

# Marketing tactics

To take your marketing plan to the next level of detail, you'll need to dream up some actual tactics to meet the goals you set in the previous section. Common marketing tactics include advertising (print, online, radio, TV etc.), trade show or event attendance/participation, public relations, grassroots and viral marketing campaigns and email marketing.

As you choose your tactics, summarize what it is, why you should use it, what you expect to get out of it, and how much it's going to cost.

This will drill down to specific Tactical Campaigns. Yes one for each campaign, gonna be quite a few!

Finally, set a specific, limited timeline for each tactical campaign and pick someone to lead and champion getting it done.

# Marketing budget and

# timeline

This is the part where many SME Hotels and Tourist businesses fall down.... You now need to complete your entire marketing plan by summarising your costs and timelines from the previous section.

Check your marketing budget after each distinct Tactical campaign, and for sure at least monthly, and determine whether you're

getting the ROI (return on investment) you expected from each tactical campaign. It's never too late to make some changes to your marketing plan.

Your marketing timeline can really help you understand if your tactics are driving any sales or are just spinning wheels. Compare sales during times when you've done some marketing activities and check for any growth to see if there was an impact.

# At least

# Annually!

Writing a Strategic Marketing Plan should be at least an annual ritual for your tourism business.

Not to mention that it's a good idea to revisit your Strategic Marketing Plan when you are releasing new or significantly changed products or services such as new menus or new hotel rooms opening up.

Remember that writing a marketing plan is time very well spent for any sized business, because

it's the process for thinking honestly and thoroughly through how you're going to connect with your customers.

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How to stop  
the screw  
ups when  
giving a  
PowerPoint

# presentation

Since, for whatever reason, PowerPoint presentations seem apt to go wrong, it's a great idea to cut out at least a couple of extra steps; not only will your presentation look more professional, but there's also less of a chance that something will go wrong between saving and presenting.

The answer:

# Save your PowerPoint presentation as a show!

If you want to really impress people with your PowerPoint, simply save the file as a .pps. This is a PowerPoint Show as opposed to the default .ppt which is called a PowerPoint Presentation.

Most people save their presentations as this default PowerPoint Presentation (PPT). A PPT shows all the slides and all the background work that can be done on the presentation.

By saving as a PPS (PowerPoint Show), when you double-click it, it will auto launch into the show mode. It makes it look so much more professional. I've always seen presentations where people open the PPT, then go to Slide Show > View Show. This cuts off all that step.

These self-running presentations are a great way to make a presentation without having to have someone available to run a slide show presentation. For example, you might want to set up a presentation to run unattended in a booth or kiosk at a trade show (such as the FHTA Dive

Fiji EXPO!), or send a CD or USB stick with a self-running slide show to a customer.

You can make most of the controls unavailable so that no one can make any changes to the presentation. A self-running presentation also restarts itself when it's finished and also when it has been idle on a manually advanced slide for longer than five minutes.

Saving your PowerPoint presentation as a slide show ensures that when the file is opened, it automatically opens as a slide show (in full screen mode).

# Some of the Options for a Self-running Presentation

When you build a self-running presentation, you'll want to keep the style of where it'll be shown in mind – for example, whether it is for an unmanned booth at a trade show or whether there will be any supervision present. This'll help you determine what parts you add to your presentation, how much control you give users (if any!), and what steps you need to take to prevent hiccups and people screwing with it.

Things you might want to consider when designing a self-running presentation include:

- Automatic or manual?

You can set it up to run by itself with auto-timings, or you can set it so that users can move through it at their own pace by using the mouse to click action buttons for navigation. If you set up a slide show to be browsed at a kiosk, mouse clicks are ignored unless they're on objects with hyperlinks or action buttons.

- Hyperlinks & other buttons

You can use hyperlinks to move through the presentation or to jump to other slides and programs. Action buttons (PowerPoint's predefined navigation buttons) can give your presentation the look and familiarity of a Web page, with buttons for Home, Help, Back, Next, and so on.

- Voice over

You can add recorded narration that plays with your presentation.

- Capture input

You can use the ActiveX controls that come with PowerPoint to create a response slide in your presentation. For example, you can add a text box in which people can enter their names and addresses to receive further information.

Here's a great wee video to show how to do this step by step:

[youtube=[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kl28sFq\\_7A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kl28sFq_7A)]

I don't have  
any form  
of PowerPoint  
on the  
destination  
computer,  
what to do?

Sometimes you need to supply a presentation to the organisers of an event or conference and you have NO idea what platform they are running. So

what to do and what to save as...

2 answers to this one, and it does depend on a couple of things as well.

# Solution

1: Obtain a free  
download of  
PowerPoint

# Viewer 2007

To run a presentation on a computer on which Microsoft Office PowerPoint is not installed, or to distribute a self-contained presentation to an audience that might not have PowerPoint installed, use the [Microsoft Office PowerPoint Viewer](#).

Also, to run a .pps file, you must have PowerPoint Viewer 2007 installed. The PowerPoint Viewer is a free download!

- If PowerPoint 2007 is not installed on

the computer, [click here to download the free PowerPoint Viewer 2007 directly from Microsoft Office Online](#). Download instructions appear at the bottom of the download page.

# Solution 2: Package a Presentation for CD

If PowerPoint 2007 is already installed on the computer, PowerPoint Viewer is installed each time you use the [Package a Presentation for](#)

CD feature in PowerPoint.

When you copy your Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 presentation to a CD or a local USB Drive/stick on your computer, Microsoft Office PowerPoint Viewer 2007 and any linked files (such as movies or sounds) are copied as well

To package a presentation for CD, do the following:

1. In PowerPoint, open the presentation that you want to package.
2. Click the Microsoft Office Button, point to the arrow next to Publish, and then

click Package for CD.

3. In the Package for CD dialog box, click Options, and then select the options that you want.
4. Click Copy to Folder or Copy to CD.

PowerPoint packages your presentation to the folder or CD so that you can distribute it.

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# Prepare for Facebook's

# Timeline for Business Pages

Excellent article by [Ken Mueller](#) on Business to Community. Thanks Ken!

I've been asked quite a few times at speaking engagements, and by clients, "Will Facebook be adding the Timeline for Business Pages"? Well, if you haven't heard, the rumors started leaking last week, and apparently [the Timeline will be coming to business pages](#) as early as the end of this month. It sounds as if they will begin rolling it out in beta with some larger brands. If you remember, it's been nearly a year since [the last major overhaul to the business pages](#).

When the Timeline was rolled out for personal profiles, there was an early opt-in process where you could choose whether or not you wanted, and some still haven't chosen it, waiting for Facebook to force them. That will probably happen very soon. Now, with the impending roll-out of the business Timeline, there is no word as to whether or not we'll be able to opt-in early.

And while many say they dislike the personal Timeline (I happen to love it!), I think that's just the typical, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" mentality that many of us have, just because we don't like change. When things change, we have to adjust and learn something new.

Well, get ready for change. And [while we don't know what features the Timeline for Business Pages will have](#), here are a few things we can do to prepare ourselves for the inevitable

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE...](#)

# Business 2 Community

[Business 2 Community](#) is an independent online community focused on sharing the latest news surrounding Social Media, Marketing, Branding, Public Relations & much more. Every day we feature the thought leadership of our open community of bloggers and aim to provide a balanced view of the business landscape based on industry news, trends and real-life experiences.

Ken Mueller is the proprietor of [Inkling Media](#), with 30 years of experience in the media industry. *Ken is an Inbound Marketing Certified Professional, after graduating from [Inbound Marketing University](#) with honors. He is also a certified Inbound Marketing Educator. He has...*[View full profile](#)

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Can you  
afford not

# to have a Channel Manager?

If you run an accommodation business then it is highly likely you are using a channel management tool of some description or are at least planning to in the near future. If it is not on your immediate radar then you should consider putting it front and centre of your [online distribution strategy](#).

Simply put, a channel manager is Internet-based software that allows accommodation providers to manage availability and rates across a multitude of online channels from a single easy-to-use web page. The real benefits to the accommodation business are many and significantly outweigh the investment requirements to get up and running on this vital piece of software.

As an accommodation provider, the major business benefits accruing to you include:



- More accurate availability and price parity on online booking channels – by making a single change, your staff can update multitudes of websites immediately. This means availability and pricing across sites will be current, accurate and require minimal staff training to maintain.
- The capability to list on many more online booking channels with little or no additional effort for each channel you add. The result is increased distribution without increased cost and you are able to put your rooms in front of millions of consumers around the globe.
- Free and easy marketing for your property – the major booking site players have the

money and the will to market your property effectively online, so let them!

- Increased accuracy with your availability and rates, coupled with increased exposure to local and international online booking channels means increased bookings revenue and more dollars on your bottom line.
- Elimination of double bookings. Any channel manager worth its salt will automatically adjust inventory across all sites when a booking occurs on any site. This means you can have all your availability on all sites all the time and feel secure. This is known as the Pooled Inventory Model and it means you can maximise your chance of being booked without being overbooked.

So, we've established that a channel manager will increase your online bookings but what should an accommodation provider look for when selecting among the multitude of offerings on the market? Look for:

- A product that is based on the pooled inventory model, where the tool automatically adjusts inventory across all sites as soon as a booking occurs on any site – this will maximise your inventory and reduce double bookings.
- A product with no transaction fees. Channel managers that work on a flat monthly fee are the best value for money
- A product that allows you to manage inventory on your own website's booking engine as well as on the third party booking sites.
- A product without lock-in contracts. A channel manager with no lock-in contracts has confidence in their ability to service your business and backs their own product – this is a good sign. Rapid changes in technology you could be left behind if you are locked in to a sub par product.
- A product that does all their own product development in-house – they are more likely to be able to respond to the changes your business needs and adapt their product to a changing online

distribution landscape.

- Ensure that you select a channel manager that is backed by a significant support team that can ensure all your needs are taken care of under one roof.
- Ensure your channel manager updates all the major international bookings sites. The local sites are not enough and the international majors are spending up big on marketing your property to the world. Remember, you have to be in it to win it!
- Last but not least, it is advisable to pay your channel manager a visit and view their operation first hand. Many accommodation businesses are doing more than 40% of their business online. You cannot afford to put this business with a fly-by-night company. Remember, you are choosing a long term business partner, not just a product.

So what does the future hold for channel management?

Channel managers are rapidly evolving as the

one-stop shop for all your online distribution needs, dis-intermediating some of the more traditional electronic distribution channels.

Channel managers are already connecting to online booking sites, wholesalers, traditional travel agents, GDS and inbound tour operators. Many additional channel options will be connected in the future and booking channels not connected to a reputable channel manager risk being left out in the cold.

The future will see the leading channel managers increasingly connected to more property and central reservation systems, providing seamless connectivity between the property management system and the online bookings channels. Facilitation of automatic delivery of all reservations from online channels directly into the property management systems, is an important capability of the future channel manager. Such a solution completely eliminates the need for the property to recapture online booking channel reservation emails into the property system. With the proliferation of channel managers and

similar distribution switch networks of the future, distribution and acquisition costs to accommodation providers will be dramatically reduced. Channel managers are a far more cost effective option than older distribution systems and these systems are already finding their market challenged with the new kids on the block.

The accommodation providers that embrace the right channel management technology today will have reap the benefits of increased online bookings, lower acquisition costs, increased business efficiency and ultimately, higher profit margins.

Can you afford not to?

[Original post on Tourism Industry Blog.](#)

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# Foursquare and Tourism: Another New Social Media Tool

Foursquare, the latest new and free location-based social media tool based on mobile device use that is taking off.



What is it?

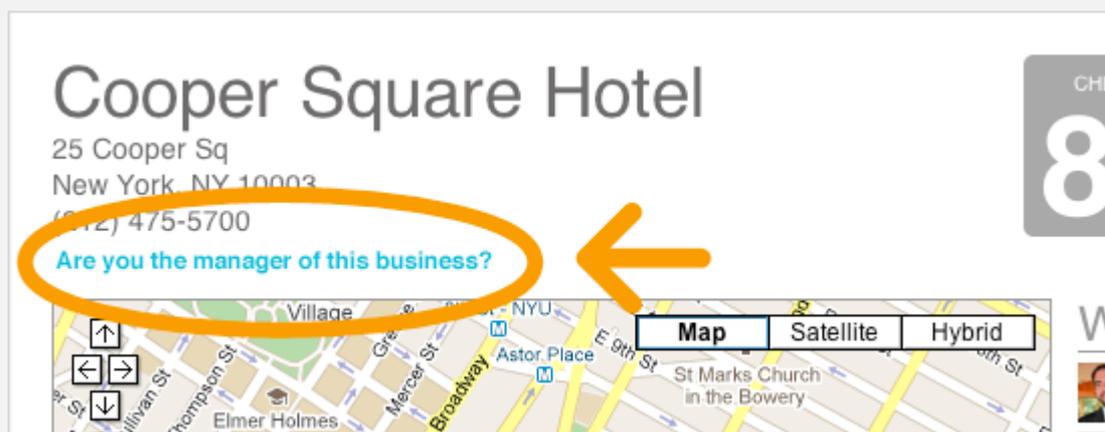
Using a mobile device with GPS, it's a way to explore a city and find people, places and things to do. The users "check-in" to their current locations and can earn rewards in doing so.

It's got much more of a "game" approach to it than other social media tools where users can "unlock badges and discover new things" for rewards, but the interesting bit is that these things are in the real world so businesses can use it to influence behaviour and actions, turning Foursquare users into paying customers.

### Is It Useful for Tourism Businesses and Destination Marketing?

You bet ya it is, well eventually anyway – once more people start to understand it, and provided it's content continues to grow throughout New Zealand then it could become quite a powerful tool for travellers to decide what to do and where to go while visiting, plus you can incentivise your regular customers.

Here is a link to find out [how businesses can use Foursquare](#) to reward their customers with special offers and incentives. You can either “claim your venue” as the business owner if someone has already added your business on Foursquare, or you can add your venue yourself. Once you have claimed it you can monitor the stats, add special offers and award prizes etc.



This article “VisitPA uses Foursquare to it’s Full Potential” on the Project Wander blog is perhaps the first example of a Destination Marketing Organisation getting onboard with Foursquare to market it.

The limiting factor right now in New Zealand is the quality and lack of mobile internet access nationwide so it’s use is mainly in the

cities...that may take some time to fix, but if your coverage is good then give it a go for your tourism business or organisation. Would be great to hear about any businesses using it already.

[Original post:](#)

[Foursquare and Tourism: Another New Social Media Tool](#)