

Online Marketing Priorities

for Now and the Future for Businesses in the Northwest

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Where Are You Now?

This report aims to provide hospitality businesses with a quick guide to current and emerging technology and online marketing trends.

First, where are you now? After 15 years of the internet...

- You're getting better at your customer database. You collect data about new and repeat customers as you go. You may have profiles of your best customer types, and target new customers using the profiles.
- You have a website, but getting or keeping good natural rankings in Google may be a problem.
- Your customers can book or buy online, though many still prefer to use e-mail or the phone.
- You send out e-mail newsletters.
- You may be dipping a toe into social media. Or worrying about how.

But perhaps you'd like a clearer idea of what may happen next and the best way to plan for it. So the next few pages contain useful checklists to use now, and give pointers for future action.

A Snapshot of The Future

"There is still a ton of growth to come in the online travel space."

[Ted Souder, Head of Regional Industry, Google¹]

The last major fundamental innovation on the internet was social networking. It was not technology-led, and it has been suggested that there may be no more elemental technical changes to come². But certainly, there will be a huge range of new and more joined-up services. These will be driven by capacity improvements – speed and quantity of data transfer and processing. If capacity keeps on improving at the present rate, only our imagination and energy will limit us.

Here are the changes we can see at the moment:

Speed: Online communication will go on growing as it gets faster and more reliable. Don't underestimate the future effect – remember the difference when broadband replaced dial-up. Imagine a further 10-fold improvement – not just yet; but of all the possible new developments, that's the one that will make the most difference to your business.

Cleverer devices (phones, PCs, TVs): The intelligent fridge was promised 10 years ago. Now at last real convergence of devices is beginning to happen. PC and phone are beginning to share their capabilities, and TV is not far away now. There will still be a spectrum of experiences, from big-screen imagery and surround-sound to go-anywhere mobile convenience.

Joined-up services: Convergence of tourism services will have even more impact than convergence of devices. The impact of devices and services on tourism may be bigger than anything the internet has given us so far. More on this below.

Communication on the move: Smartphones will be the point of first contact for most communications, including tourism searches, enquiries and bookings. Smartphones are rapidly becoming smarter than PCs in some respects. Smartphone users usually see their messages (on social sites, in texts and e-mail) on their phone before their PC.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹ EyeforTravel, 31 March 2010, [www.eyefortravel.com/news/marketing/"there-still-ton-growth-come-online-travel-space"](http://www.eyefortravel.com/news/marketing/).

² "Is social networking the last innovation of the internet? Maybe there is no innovation left any more". Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal (who also made early investments in Facebook and LinkedIn, at the Said Business School, Oxford, April 2010.

A Snapshot of the Future *(continued)*

Open sharing: It will be essential for local businesses to share and re-distribute each others' information, to enhance their offers and gain more market reach.

Your presence on other web pages will be more important than your own website: Your site will remain important, but not as important as being talked about and listed on other web pages.

Big multi-national companies are an opportunity, not a threat: Firms like Google, Apple and Expedia will control the channels and the content, as they do in most walks of life - but small businesses will still be able to improve their visibility even further.

Video, imagery and sound: The written word will continue to decline in relative importance³. You Tube (owned by Google) is the second largest search engine after Google itself.

Social networking: Online networks will be a vital channel for businesses for distribution, awareness creation and recommendations.

Customer engagement: Small businesses will be using technology and the personal touch to get the edge on their larger competitors.

Destination brand-building: To maintain good visibility, businesses and their tourist boards will need to work together even more.

And in a world of superfast connections, businesses will need to be at ease with the unstructured here-and-now of the online world, in place of the narrow constrictions of a search engine that finds a website⁴.

How can these interwoven trends be translated into practical action that might future-proof your business?

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

³ An example of the power of images online is Google Goggles, which allows users to point their phone's camera at an object and receive surprisingly full information about it (Google Goggles is unavailable on their rival Apple's iPhone).

⁴ After Gerd Leonhard, Futurist, June 2010, on <http://econsultancy.com/events/future-of-digital-marketing#gerd-leonhard-futurist-ceo-of-media-futures-group-author-blogger>

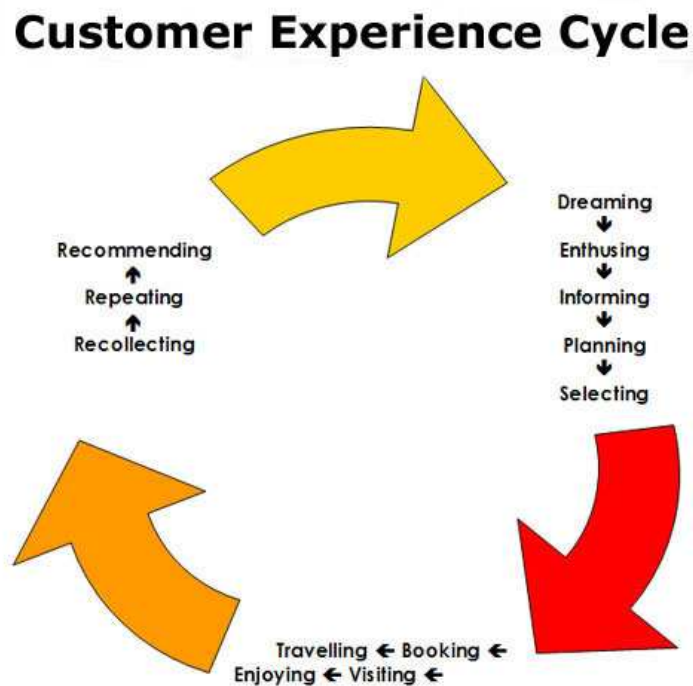
A Checklist and Some Pointers

1 – Dealing With Convergence of Devices and Services

What it is...

Convergence of devices and services should result in users being able to tap into any number of joined-up services, using whichever device suits them at the time – Smartphone, tablet (like Apple’s iPad, which is about half way between a Smartphone and a laptop), PC or television⁵.

Convergence will have a huge impact on travel services. Travellers will be able to use a joined-up online service at home using a PC, and continue with the same service on a mobile when they are away. The service will provide continuous support for their entire ‘experience cycle’:



SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

⁵ The much-heralded TV + internet may be approaching: the lean-forward lean-back conundrum of PC usage compared to watching TV remains, but Google is entering the field and the first set-top box is due for launch in the UK next year by Logitech to deliver Google TV. Expert Reviews, 24 May 2010, www.expertreviews.co.uk/graphics-cards/278683/logitech-to-launch-first-google-tv-box

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

1 – Dealing With Convergence of Devices and Services *(continued)*

Already new travel planning services are emerging such as [Glider](#), [Tripbase](#), [Jetsetter](#), [Traxo](#) and [TripIt](#)⁶. They aim to support the customer through from Dreaming to Booking to Repeating or Recommending. They can cater for people who do not necessarily have a destination or experience in mind yet (unlike current Holiday Planners that sit on tourist office websites).

A potential visitor uses an online travel planner to gather ideas, compile an itinerary, check for updates in the bookings they have made, map them out, link their holiday video and photos to it, then share their experiences with friends while they are away as well as when they return.

They work by pulling in information from specific content suppliers and the wider internet. They assemble details of about bookings the traveller has made, but are not themselves booking agencies. (Online travel agencies like Expedia are also edging towards providing a full information and itinerary planning service).

They can provide social networking too: [Foursquare](#) fellow-users can share ideas when planning trips, then exchange information when they arrive⁷. And Google has just started an image-based service, linking user-generated travel information with Google and Flickr pictures; it integrates with Twitter and Facebook, allowing users to tell friends where they are going and ask for input⁸.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

⁶ Tim Hughes, Four Types of Non-Destination Based Search, 30 April 2010, www.tnooz.com/2010/04/30/news/four-types-of-non-destination-based-search-and-what-it-means-for-online-travel/

⁷ Foursquare is a location-based social networking platform with nearly 2m US urban users, making recommendations for eateries, shops and local attractions. London was added in October 2009. It raised \$20m in fresh funding in 2010. Brand Republic, 30 June 2010. www.brandrepublic.com/bulletin/digitalpmbulletin/article/1013507/foursquare-raises-20m-approaches-2m-users/

⁸ New Media TrendWatch, June 2010, www.newmediatrendwatch.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=517&Itemid=2/

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

1 – Dealing With Convergence of Devices and Services *(continued)*

The revenue-earning potential – with publishers beginning to charge for access to some of their content⁹, and ‘walled gardens’ of controlled content¹⁰ - will drive more commercial firms, inside and outside the travel sector, to enter the fray. Google’s Place Pages, for example, though it is not a complete itinerary planning service, assembles information from many sources, including user review sites. ‘Places’ includes businesses, villages, towns, cities, points of interest, neighbourhoods, and landmarks¹¹.

How it affects my business...

Such commercially-operated global, themed or niche travel planning sites may become a main supplier of information and itinerary planning services previously supplied in part by tourist boards and individual businesses.

The quantity and quality of information about your business that they can display depends on what their search engine can find at that moment from the partner sites that it searches (in the case of Google, all sites). The process is likely to be a key element in the success of individual businesses and destinations at the various points in the experience cycle.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

⁹ Including the Financial Times, the Times and Sunday Times. The FT has 140,000 subscribers and 2m registered users. BBC, 26 March 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8588432.stm> and MediaWeek, 11 June 2010 reported by www.brandrepublic.com/DigitalPMBulletin/news/1009634/MEDIA-360-FT-leader-tells-publishers-embrace-paid-content/?DCMP=EMC-Media-PM-Bulletin

¹⁰ Examples are Apple’s app store for the iPhone and iPad; and Nokia’s deal to pre-load Yahoo services and apps. Cnet News, 23 May 2010, http://news.cnet.com/8301-1035_3-20005700-94.html

¹¹ <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2009/09/place-pages-for-google-maps-there-are.html>, 19 June 2010.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

1 – Dealing With Convergence of Devices and Services *(continued)*

What I should do...

Get your business included in as many major websites as possible:

- 1.1 Ensure you are listed on your tourist board's DMS and related websites.
- 1.2 Get free listings on as many large commercially-operated sites as possible that may supply data to travel planner services. Find the most important sites by using your search keywords in Google; and check again regularly¹².
- 1.3 Join at least one large commercial booking site¹³ if you have not done so already. Try to find sites that work on a no sale, no fee basis. Balance the advantages of being more visible against the cost of the commission or selling to them at a lower net rate than your published rate. Remember that the higher the commission you are paying, the more likely that your business will get onward distribution to further sites.
- 1.4 On the ones you have prioritised, keep your data up to date, daily or weekly. Add new pictures – and video if you can – frequently.
- 1.5 To help potential visitors at the Informing and Planning stages, make sure your own web pages include complementary 'things to do' and local practical information. You can automate this by using your tourist board's DMS and website content. The iVisitorGuide initiative is a good example of this.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹² An example is the free listings offered by TripAdvisor on their site, if you are not already on it, and sites to which they distribute, 15 June 2010, www.tripadvisor.co.uk/pages/getlisted.html

¹³ Examples are Lastminute.com, Eviivo, Active Hotels, Booking.com, Laterooms.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

2 – Can I Improve My Own Website?

Get better rankings in search engines...

Click-throughs from search engine natural results (i.e. not the paid-for Google Adwords or similar) can account for around a quarter of most sites' traffic¹⁴. But it's often difficult to get a high ranking for a small business's own relatively small website unless the search term used is very specific. And many sites do not make themselves very search-engine friendly for the search terms that matter most to their business. Getting it right is called search engine optimisation (SEO).

What I should do...

2.1 Look up the search engines' own free advice on natural SEO – they are on your side, their objective is make their searchers happy, so they want to find the very best page for them. Google has extensive advice at www.google.com/support/webmasters. Other sources of free advice include [Business Link Northwest](#). For ongoing tips, subscribe to a newsletter such as the fortnightly service from www.highrankings.com.

2.2 Ask your site developer about what you can do: most SEO is a non-technical editorial task.

2.3 Ask an SEO specialist to do an audit. This should be a short and simple job, and will usually result in a long list of work for you to do. The benefits will come slowly; there are few quick fixes.

2.4 Research the search terms that bring you traffic and business. Then create good links that search engines can understand:

- Create internal links that use your key search terms.
- Agree reciprocal links with nearby businesses using key search terms, and ensure the receiving pages have the same keywords in them.

2.5 Make frequent updates so that search engines and users can see that you're up to date.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹⁴ From a straw poll of tourism sites, www.alexacom, 19 June 2010.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

2 – Can I Improve My Own Website? *(continued)*

Improve your site's usability...

'Usability' means simply a site that's easy to use. Good usability helps with SEO too.

What I should do...

2.6 Testing: At least once a year, ask a few friends or family unconnected with the business to perform a set task on your site. Sit behind them and watch what they say and do.

2.7 Learn how to write for the web – be comprehensive but short, succinct, personal and friendly.

2.8 Lay out information in mini-paragraphs and bullets. Users will scan it, not read it. If you have masses of essential information, create dedicated pages with keyword links to them.

2.9 Set a target loading speed with your developer. Don't overload the site with pictures or features that slow it down.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

3 - Where else can I get my messages seen?

Get your content on to other web pages...

'Distribution' is the name of the game, to other sites large and small. On the 80/20 principle, most people will use only a few big sites to gather their information; travel planner sites will gain importance. But many people will use Google as their starting point and be happy with any web page, on any site, that answers their search term, or with Google Places' own assembly of information.

What I should do...

- 3.1 Ensure you keep your data up to date in the Tourist Board DMS, and gain listings on commercial sites (Section 1.1).
- 3.2 The North West's iVisitorGuide is a facility to create pages for your own website using the data from your local tourist board's DMS. Use it to:
 - Create pages on your site about the local area including other things to see and do, places to stay and eat.
 - Create new sites: think about search terms that will help you build your business, even if you don't 'own' the term – for example 'day out for kids around XXX' and work with partners to create web pages that will score good SEO for this.

Examples are [Harrop Fold Farm](#) and [Tastecheshire](#)¹⁵.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹⁵ Cluster Development - A Network and a Platform, Martyn Collins, July 2009 for North West development Agency, <http://ivisitorguide.blogspot.com/>

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

3 - Where else can I get my messages seen? *(continued)*

Encourage User-Generated Content (UGC)

What it is...

DIY publishing online was the internet's second revolution. Everyone now has the ability to create content (UGC) and to communicate with closed-user groups of their own choosing, or with the world at large.

Social networks like Facebook account for 11.9% of UK internet visits, compared with 11.3% of visits that were to search engines¹⁶. Social media are essentially about personal information and chat, which could well be about travel plans. Much of it is ephemeral, but much is advice and comment intended to help other people. It is like face-to-face advice – it's given here and now, and won't necessarily have a lasting presence.

- UGC sites like [TripAdvisor](#) are essentially about aggregating content that is submitted to the site by people writing their own review of a place. UGC sites can be searched by destination, theme, business, etc.
- Use of mobile phones to visit social networking sites is growing fast, to nearly 2m subscribers, though this is still only under 2% of all mobile subscribers. One survey showed that a travel site, [WAYN](#), (Where Are You Now) had a larger proportion of its users using mobile, rather than a PC, than did other non-travel sites – logical, as travellers are on the move. That's an indicator of the growing importance of mobiles and social sites for tourism¹⁷.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹⁶ Experian Hitwise, reported by Brand republic, 8 June 2010, www.brandrepublic.com/DigitalPMBulletin/news/1008620/Social-network-traffic-overtakes-search-engines-first-time/?DCMP=EMC-Media-PM-Bulletin

¹⁷ Nielsen Mobile, June 2010, reported by www.utalkmarketing.com/Pages/Article.aspx?ArticleID=10336&Title=Mobile_social_networking_on_the_rise

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

3 - Where else can I get my messages seen? *(continued)*

Why is it so important?

UGC is very powerful because:

- People are more likely to take advice from 'someone like me' than from a business. Many commercial travel firms have user reviews on their sites, such as Thomas Cook, which use TripAdvisor reviews¹⁸.
- Social media make it easy for people to tag their content with search terms that search engines can find. This is true for video and pictures just as much as for text.
- There is so much of it, and it is constantly refreshed. Facebook, for example, has 400m active users who each typically add 70 items per month¹⁹.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

¹⁷ Nielsen Mobile, June 2010, reported by

www.utalkmarketing.com/Pages/Article.aspx?ArticleID=10336&Title=Mobile_social_networking_on_the_rise

¹⁸ Tnooz, 22 February 2010, www.tnooz.com/2010/02/22/news/thomas-cook-decides-tripadvisor-reviews-after-good-after-all/

¹⁹ Facebook, 12 June 2010, www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

3 - Where else can I get my messages seen? *(continued)*

What I should do...

- 3.3 Get familiar with social media: do it yourself, get each member of your business team active in at least one channel – tweeting on Twitter²⁰, chatting on Facebook, reviewing on TripAdvisor. Without doing it yourself, it's impossible to get to grips with how it's done, why it's so powerful, and which channels are most important.
- 3.4 Identify the sites your customers use, monitor what's said about your business (see Section 7 below), and respond. TripAdvisor, for instance, makes it easy for businesses to monitor and respond to comment.
- 3.5 Use a light and personal touch: backlash from heavy-handed responses can be exaggerated online. A complaint handled honestly very often brings dividends.
- 3.6 Encourage customer reviews: as your customers leave, hand them a card reminding them to write a review and add pictures of you in their favourite site – and list the sites that you think your customers might use or that are important to you.
- 3.7 Many UGC sites welcome or tolerate business pages, text and pictures which you can upload. These include TripAdvisor, Flickr, Photobucket, Facebook and YouTube.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

²⁰ An example is the Helsby Arms, Cheshire, who use twitter to find people who tweet in proximity to the pub. The pub targets them with tweets, and holds 'tweetups' with free food and drink. A failing pub is now booming: @HelsbyArms has 2,244 followers. Pub number 2 is to open soon. Source: NWDA, 15 June 2010.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

4 - Mobile

What's happening...

- It's the medium that has 100% coverage; there were over 4bn mobile subscriptions worldwide by Q4 2009²¹.
- Smartphones and 'enhanced phones' accounted for over 80% of global sales in 2009²² and in two years Smartphone sales will surpass PC shipments²³.
- Telecoms carriers are planning '4G' to offer greater speed and to handle video; charging for the amount of data downloaded will be introduced²⁴.
- Apps are important: Apple's 'apps' – applications (and similar from the other phone companies) are specially designed for their iPhone and iPad. There are over 200,000 in the Apple store to choose from, free or at fairly nominal charges. Nokia has a deal to pre-load Yahoo services and apps²⁵.
- GPS (global positioning system) was installed in nearly half of all phones sold in 2009²⁶.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

²¹ GSA, June 2010, www.gsacom.com/news/statistics.php4

²² ABI Research, reported by EweekEurope, 23 April 2010, www.eweekeuropa.co.uk/news/smartphones-continue-mobile-domination-6640

²³ Mary Meeker, Morgan Stanley, 8 June 2010, mocoNews.net, <http://moconews.net/article/419-cm-summit-smartphone-shipments-will-surpass-pcs-within-two-years>.

²⁴ Coda Research Consultancy, June 2010, reported by www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2010/mar/31/mobile-video

²⁵ Cnet News, 23 May 2010, http://news.cnet.com/8301-1035_3-20005700-94.html

²⁶ ABI Research, reported by EweekEurope, 23 April 2010, www.eweekeuropa.co.uk/news/smartphones-continue-mobile-domination-6640

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

4 – Mobile *(continued)*

How it affects my business...

- Smartphones improve visitor information massively. The phone finds and displays tourist facilities, either on the phone maps, or in an app with or without a map. Any location can be chosen by the user, by postcode, town name or association with a business already chosen.
- Websites may lose importance as people use mobiles and iPads more and PCs less. Apps are easy to download, sit conveniently as icons on the home screen, and are easier to use than websites, even when the site is in a dedicated mobile format²⁷.
- The way your e-mails look on a phone is important: e-mails designed for PC screens will usually be seen by Smartphone users on their phone first. They may not bother to open many e-mails on their PC.

What I should do...

- 4.1 If it isn't happening already, get everyone who is involved in marketing your business to use a Smartphone as much as possible for work and play. It's very different from using a PC.
- 4.2 Consider a mobile website – standard sites are not at all easy to navigate. More than one version may be needed to suit different phone types. Make sure your developer can set it up so that your server recognises the type of mobile that is requesting the site.
- 4.3 Use the app search to find out what apps may cover your location or business type, and whether you are in them; if not, track down the data provider and ask to be included.
- 4.4 Make sure e-mail marketing fits the small screen.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

²⁷ Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox, 10 February, 2010 www.useit.com/alertbox/mobile-apps-initial-use.html

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

5 – Customer Engagement

Aka Customer Relationship Management (CRM) or, more simply, database marketing.

What it is...

CRM is about looking after the customer throughout the 'customer experience cycle' (Section 1). It's about 'market segmentation', defining the types of people who are your best customers. And it's about using a database of customers that you can access when sending or receiving by mail, e-mail, your website, by phone and face to face.

How it affects my business...

It should enable you to recognise a previous customer and a good prospective customer; and it should enable you to send relevant and timely offers to the right people.

What I should do...

- 5.1 Use an easy segmentation method - make up 'personas': imaginary typical customers with a name and a personality, each persona championed by one of your team.
- 5.2 Collect data about customers. Ensure you collect at least one distinctive characteristic from potential and actual customers to help define whether they fit a persona; include a question or two in web forms and on arrival. But don't overdo it and put people off.
- 5.3 Invest in a professional customer relationship management (CRM) system; it need not be expensive or complicated.
- 5.4 Aim, over time, to tailor your service to meet the needs of each persona.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

5 – Customer Engagement *(continued)*

Start or refine e-mail marketing to your contacts:

- 5.5 Build your lists by enrolling subscribers to your e-newsletter on your website homepage, and on arrival and departure.
- 5.6 Make it legal – invite contacts to opt in.
- 5.7 Sell, don't just promote - make it a sales tool, with specific offers. Don't have a newsletter full of purple prose.
- 5.8 Make sure that landing pages on your site (where users arrive when they click on a link in your e-mail) have a clear call to action designed to clinch a sale.
- 5.9 Use a commercial e-mail service provider's system. There are many that are low-cost and very efficient, and they provide essential facilities such as design templates and authoring systems, avoidance of spamming, versioning the design for different mobiles and PCs, bounce handling, and an easy unsubscribe service²⁸.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

²⁸ Examples of e-mail marketing service providers are ExactTarget, Mailchimp, Dotmailer, Target Messenger, MyEmma, CommuniGator, Constant Contact, Inbox Warriors, Silverpop, and Lyris.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

6 – Destination Brand Building

What it means...

Online travel planner websites (Section 1) that help people choose a destination will look for destination information. Customer perceptions, or the lack of them, will affect sales online just as much as offline. So it's important to look after the creation, enhancement, and sometimes defence, of your destination brand values online.

What I should do...

Don't leave it all to your tourist board:

- 6.1 At each level (very local, wider local etc), identify products and experiences that differentiate you and help to establish destination distinctiveness. Be guided by customer opinions, where you have them or can collect them.
- 6.2 Get together with other local businesses (Google Groups is an excellent free service to help save time with too many meetings). Define your brand and how you can each raise its profile in key media. Upload newsy videos²⁹ and pictures to YouTube, Flickr and social sites such as Facebook, sharing the job among you. Blog about local issues, Tweet about what you as a mini-destination are doing.
- 6.3 Find local people who can shoot lots of inspirational, humorous or quirky video; make sure it's fully tagged with search terms when it's uploaded.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

²⁹ For 'Ten tips to make your existing online video work harder', Steffan Aquarone, 14 June 2010, see <http://community.brandrepublic.com/blogs/commentcentral/archive/2010/06/14/ten-tips-to-make-your-existing-online-video-work-harder.aspx>

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

6 – Destination Brand Building *(continued)*

- 6.4 Measure the amount of exposure you are getting. For example, on Twitter, look at your number of followers and the number of followers for those who retweeted your message. On Facebook, track the total number of fans for your page, and review the number of friends from those who became fans and those who commented on or liked your posts to identify the potential monthly Facebook reach³⁰. Many useful online reputation monitoring and mapping tools are available (at a cost).
- 6.5 Build a good relationship with your tourist board. Brand-building for the wider destination is a core task for them.
- 6.6 Make sure your business is ready to make rapid use of online media in a crisis such as an accident, flood, fire or epidemic. Be ready with instant action to counter 'disinformation' (the 'everything is closed down' headlines). Keep email lists right up to date, be sure you can add text to your website within hours, have ready-made networks with nearby businesses to gather and send out information. And decide how online work can be done remotely if there is a local power cut.

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

³⁰ Nichole Kelly, 15 June, 2010, www.socialmediaexaminer.com/4-ways-measure-social-media-and-its-impact-on-your-brand/. Google Alerts is a wide-ranging free monitoring service.

A Checklist and Some Pointers *(continued)*

7 – Performance Measurement

What it is...

Customer information, the success of your website and e-mails, and mentions of your business on other sites, blogs, and social media, can be easily monitored. It is fairly easy to set up, it is almost continuous, and often provides information as it happens. Many of these services are free or very cheap.

What I should do...

- 7.1 Study your website analytics³¹ at least weekly; not just total visits, but sources of traffic, and design information such as time spent on pages, and entry and exit pages.
- 7.2 Use an online mini-questionnaire once a year or when planning a new service³².
- 7.3 Test and fine-tune e-mails using the facilities of your e-mail marketing service provider (Section 5.9 above).
- 7.4 Monitor where your business or relevant keywords are being mentioned or talked about online³³.
- 7.5 Study your customer database to see which are the best sources of customers, and to understand changes in your priority profiles (your personas).

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFO:

³¹ Google Analytics for websites is free, and very comprehensive for smaller businesses.

³² An example of an online survey service is www.surveymonkey.com which can be used to produce and distribute questionnaires, and analyse results for a month, for under £20.

³³ Tracking can include blogs, message boards, groups, and video and image sites. Google Alerts is the simplest, free service.

Appendix

We hope that you have found the pointers and checklists contained in this report useful.
For further advice and support with your online marketing, contact your local Tourist Board:

North West Region

Businesses: www.nwtourism.net and www.nwda.co.uk

Visitors: www.visitenglandsnorthwest.com

Cumbria Tourism

Businesses: www.cumbriatourism.org

Visitors: www.golakes.co.uk

Lancashire and Blackpool Tourist Board

Businesses: www.lancashireandblackpool.com

Visitors: www.visitlancashire.com

Visit Manchester

Businesses: www.visitmanchester.com/corporate

Visitors: www.visitmanchester.com

The Mersey Partnership

Businesses: www.merseyside.org.uk

Visitors: www.visitliverpool.com

Visit Chester and Cheshire

Businesses: www.visitchesterandcheshire.co.uk

Visitors: www.visitcheshire.com

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