YOU WANT TO INCREASE TOURISM IN YOUR COMMUNITY
BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START

A Presentation By
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It was just thirty-six years ago that I participated in my first
tourism educational workshop in Canada, in Winnipeg. Since then,
it has been my privilege to have worked often in Canada, learning
more about the abundant resources and great progress in tourism
development here.

Flying up here yesterday, relaxing comfortably in DC9s and 757s,
I couldn't help but reflect on the many changes in tourism in my
lifetime. My first trip, in 1921, was camping from lower to
upper Michigan in an open air Model T Ford. But our most
memorable trip, by tent and Model A Ford, was from Michigan to
the West Coast and return in 1929--7,000 miles, six weeks, and
wore out three sets of tires and one set of brakes!

Little did I realize then that I would have a challenging, four-
decade career of tourism research and education, starting with
the first extension educational program in North America in 1945.
In those early years our main task was educating cabin camps to
convert from a "room-and-a-path" to a "room-and-a-bath." Yes,
over these years there have been dramatic changes in
transportation, accommodations, food services, and opportunities
for enrichment and enjoyment through travel.

My topic today is a tough assignment because our greatest lesson
from these many years of study is realizing how complicated
tourism really is. I find that in most communities, much is
known about the specific parts of tourism--hotels, travel agents,
advertising--but very little is understood about how these parts
fit together. Generally, building a new motel is not the first
thing to do to increase tourism.

We treat tourism today like a manufacturer of an automobile who
concentrated only on making wheels, engines, and bodies, having
no idea whether they would fit together. So, for the next few
minutes, I want to make just two main points and then discuss
what they mean for you as you seek bigger and better tourism in
your community.

UNDERSTANDING TOURISM FUNDAMENTALS

First, we are nowadays making our definition of tourism more
comprehensive--all travel, rather than only vacation travel.
Defining tourism as total travel makes quite a difference in our
planning and managing of tourism because it takes in personal and
business as well as pleasure purposes. This changes the seasons of travel and the needs for travel services. Certainly, using this broader definition changes the market targets for promotion.

Second, many communities have attached tourism to economic development programs. This makes sense in that tourism does have significant economic impact. However, there are some major differences between tourism and manufacturing—differences that should change our approaches to tourism development.

* Markets travel to products. Contrary to manufactured goods where products are distributed to markets, tourism distributes the markets to the products—destinations. Therefore,

* Destinations become significant. The tourism product—experience at a destination—may include your community. If your community and its surrounding area are worthwhile places to visit, you may have potential for tourism expansion.

* Places are different. The best way to compete for new tourism dollars is to make best use of your special assets, not duplicate what everyone else has. Develop your unique natural and cultural resources.

* Tourism products are perishable. Contrary to manufactured goods, it is difficult to move the product—high capital investment in a destination. This means we must be sensitive to market changes and quickly modify the product to meet new needs.

* Tourism involves many decisionmakers. To get a new manufacturing plant usually requires contact with only one corporate manager. Not so with tourism—it involves almost every private and public sector actor in and around a community.

The development of tourism requires these new understandings of what tourism is like and how it requires special action programs.

**TOURISM IS A SYSTEM**

My second point is that tourism is a functioning system, made up of two major parts: demand and supply. Our main purpose of community tourism development is to match travel market demand with our supply.

We need to understand all we can about the characteristics of our markets. This includes knowing their principal location. In most cases, the primary markets are within a 200-mile radius. It is necessary to know what the people in these areas are interested in, what they now do when they travel, and what they would like if it were provided. Today, we realize that we must target our development and promotion to specific market segments rather than using a "shotgun" approach.
On the supply side, there are four major components: attractions, transportation, services, and promotion/information. And, the decisions on what is done and how it is done are made by three groups: commercial enterprise, non-profit organizations, and governments (as developers, not as regulators). I emphasize this to encourage cooperation and coordination among the many stakeholders of tourism.

Probably the dominant component includes attractions—all the things to see and do in your community and surrounding area. These provide the pulling power to your community. Don’t attempt to "catch" tourists as they travel down the highway without creating worthwhile attractions in your area. Although some attractions are man-made, most depend on natural and cultural resources. Therefore, conservation and resource protection are part of the action program of tourism development.

Transportation and access are essential. A community must analyze its transportation network to determine improvements needed. If access is poor, future expansion of tourism may not be feasible. Remote and isolated locations may succeed for some specialty resort and adventure tourism but generally sites with good highway and air access are essential.

It is only when there is a demand for visiting the attractions of an area that there is need for tourism services. Most communities have been supported by other than a tourism economy. Therefore, most businesses are not oriented to tourists. The quantity and quality of services—lodging, food, travel goods and services—should be examined with particular reference to meeting specific market needs.

A final component is promotion/information. Promotion—advertising, publicity, public relations, incentives—must be targeted to the specific market segments that can be supported by the attractions and services in your community and area. Most communities suffer from poor information—guide books, maps, tourist information centers, hospitality.

The point to be emphasized here is that all these components are interdependent. You cannot operate any part of any component without being influenced by (and influencing) the others. Again, this demands greater cooperation and collaboration than we normally see in most communities.

And, there are important external influences upon the tourism system. Here are just a few:

--The abundance and quality of natural resources.
--The abundance and quality of cultural resources, such as historic sites, archeological sites, ethnicity, crafts.
--The availability of entrepreneurship.
--The availability of finance.
--Sources of appropriate labor.
--Influences of outside competition.
---How well tourism is accepted by the entire community.
---Extent to which governmental policies foster tourism.
---Effectiveness of tourism organization at the local level.
---How well tourism is managed.

Another part of understanding tourism is the relationship between small cities and larger ones. We must overcome the rivalries that so often keep them apart. Small cities, when they cooperate with larger ones in the region, can benefit greatly through joint development and promotion.

WHERE DO WE START?

Really, there are only two ways to improve tourism in your community: (1) more and better promotion of what you now have and (2) increased quantity and quality of your attractions. When these are accomplished, and supplemented by improvements in all components, one can expect increases in tourism.

I would like to conclude with three challenges:

* Are you willing to invest the time, money and talent to do what is necessary to develop tourism?

* Are you and your organizations willing to cooperate, and even collaborate, with other actors, public and private, to develop tourism?

* Are you willing to exercise the muscle necessary to protect the natural and cultural resources that are so essential to your tourism?

I have every confidence that those of you in the private sector have the experience and ability to increase your tourism greatly. But I must remind you that the development of tourism does have social, environmental, and even economic costs. You must be willing to accept these and deal with them if you are really serious about tourism development in your community.

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(The following is an outline of the workshop presentation on steps to take in the development of tourism in a community)

PROCESS

1. Establish Leadership

2. Evaluate Assets/Liabilities
   a. Markets
   b. Attractions
   c. Transportation
   d. Businesses
   e. Information
   f. Promotion
   g. Infrastructure
   h. Regulations/Policy

3. Identify Opportunities

4. Establish Action Program

5. Post-Development Evaluation

NOTE: More details of the information presented here can be found in two books by Dr. Gunn:
