

5 Proven Marketing Tactics Small Adventure Travel Companies Must Use to Skyrocket Revenues

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Adventure travel is one of the fastest growing travel sectors, estimated to bring in 30 billion US dollars annually yet, 40% of new adventure travel business's fail in the first year. With unlimited opportunity to tap in to this growing industry and see a large return on investment, why is it so difficult for smaller companies to succeed?

The answer is that consumers tend to book their travel with the same high-end companies year after year, while smaller companies are overlooked. This trend can be very frustrating for small companies and often force them to go out of business. More often than not, these companies make poor marketing decisions that lead to the downfall of their organization.

However, there are also several common marketing strategies utilized by the most successful adventure travel companies which, when properly examined, can provide a valuable example for small companies. This report thoroughly examines these strategies to provide you with the 5 most successful marketing tactics you need to know to succeed as a small business owner in the adventure travel industry.

Before we take a closer look at these success tactics, I'd like to first discuss a few reasons why some of the smaller companies tend to fail as well examine current trends in the adventure travel marketplace. This understanding will help small companies know which tactics to avoid as well as help them identify their target audience.

One of the biggest challenges that small adventure travel companies face is consumers' actually finding them. There are online directory sites, which commonly list the most competitive adventure travel companies based on annual revenue. This makes it very difficult for consumers to actually find out about small companies.

Often small companies think that by just creating a website, people will find them. However, this is not the case. With so much competition and traffic on the web, businesses need to follow strict guidelines in creating and marketing their website.

In addition, new or small business owners often feel that they need to market their message to *everyone* rather than targeting a niche market. This results in lost dollars spent on an audience who is not interested and never will be interested in adventure travel. Instead, it is important to practice target marketing as will be further defined in this report.

Until recently, adventure travel was aimed at young people and considered a small niche in the travel industry. Consumers regarded adventure travel as an extreme and relatively isolated market. This trend has changed drastically in the past few years, as today adventure travel is considered to provide a “life experience” and is not isolated to just extreme activities. More and more people want to participate in these life experiences, which in return, has helped redefine the industry.

Today adventure travel includes experiencing different cultures, traveling to more remote areas, experiencing unique wildlife as well as becoming involved in social and educational opportunities such as humanitarianism work.

According to a report from the Travel Industry Association of America, a survey of adventure travelers in the US reports that nearly one-half of US adults, or 98 million people, have taken an adventure trip in the past 5 years. While young people continue to make up a large portion of the industry profit, the most rapid growth has come from baby boomers. According to a survey by American Express Financial Advisors, 85% of baby boomers see their retirement as a time for learning and self-discovery. The majority of baby boomers consider themselves as adventurous.

Capturing this new trend, avoiding common marketing mistakes, and making the right marketing decisions will be critical to the success and growth of a new adventure travel business.

Now that we have identified some of the common marketing mistakes to avoid when starting a new adventure travel business, as well as determined who our target market is, let's take a deeper dive in to the 5 proven marketing tactics to succeed in this market. These 5 tactics include:

1. Provide excellent customer service in order to build a sense of trust with your consumers.

2. Target your marketing efforts to specific market segments in order to maximize campaign effectiveness.

3. Build a consistent/cohesive marketing message.

4. Create a referral generating website.

5. Encourage repeat customers!

Now, let's take a more in-depth look in to each of these tactics starting with the first one.

1. Provide excellent customer service in order to build a sense of trust with your consumers.

One of the biggest challenges adventure travel companies face is the fact that this market, in particular, is constantly evolving and following the latest trends. As more and more people become interested in adventure travel, the demand for new trips and superior service is on the rise. Capturing this trend will be essential for agents and suppliers alike as customers travel more, expect more, and have inherited money to spend.

Providing excellent customer service is one of the most basic yet, most significant tactics successful companies practice. As a result, these companies excel at establishing a sense of trust with their consumers. As a company builds a sense of trust with their consumers, the consumer, in turn, becomes loyal to that company. The consumer will then book their travel with the same company year after year making it difficult for smaller companies to break in to the marketplace.

In order to meet the growing demands of baby boomers there is a rapid growth of trips, which combine activities in a variety of ability levels, visit an increase array of locations and combine an element of adventure with top-notch amenities. In order to compete as a small business owner, there are several basic steps you can take to provide excellent customer service and build the required sense of trust. Here are some of the most important steps you can take to ensure quality customer service:

1. *Be sensitive to your customers' capabilities.*

Talk to your customers and continuously assess their comfort level with the activities and the required exertion level. Break different comfort levels in to different groups to ensure that your consumers are getting the most out of their activities.

2. *Under promise and over deliver.*

By doing this you will ensure that you exceed your customers' expectations and make a positive impression. The happier your customers are, the more likely it is that they will go home and recommend you to their friends and family. And after all, word of mouth is one of the most impactful and least expensive forms of marketing.

3. *Practice safety.*

Your consumers want to know that they are safe and that they are not being put in dangerous situations. Minimize risks and let your consumers know that you are the expert and that if they head your advice, they will be safe.

4. *Provide fun & excitement!*

After all, this is the number one reason your customers booked their trip in the first place. They want the opportunity to step out of their day-to-day lives and experience something totally out of the ordinary. They want to experience the adventure they read and dream about.

5. *Your guides must be experts.*

Assume your guests know nothing about their surroundings. Make sure your guides provide them with information about the local culture, environment, animals and history.

While these guidelines may seem like simple steps, if you are able to maximize each recommendation, your customers will go home happy. Happy customers will advocate for your business long after their trip is over. This is one of the most simple, but most important pieces of advice you can follow.

On to proven marketing tactic #2...

2. Target your marketing efforts to specific market segments in order to maximize effectiveness.

Target marketing is the practice of breaking your market into segments and then concentrating your marketing efforts on one or a few key segments. It is impossible for a business to be all things to all people and it is especially important for new or small business owners to identify their key customers and understand as precisely as possible what they want. Focusing your efforts on key segments makes the promotion, pricing and distribution of your products and services easier and more cost-effective.

One of the biggest mistakes new or small business owners make is acting on the misconception that they need to market to everyone so they don't lose out on a single sale. However, if you concentrate on a single market segment your dollars go further and you reach the *right* people rather than *all* people.

The key to target marketing is to research everything you need to know about your primary audience(s) and then market your message directly to them. This includes knowing where they shop, what websites they like to visit, what magazines and newspapers they like to read, what their hobbies are, and what they like to do in their spare time. So for example, we know that baby boomers are quickly becoming the largest consumers of adventure travel. We also know that this generation is over 50 years old and grew up in the heyday of television advertising. They have money to spend and do not spend their time watching the same television shows or reading the same magazines as the younger generations. Therefore, before you spend your money on a print ad or a T.V commercial, it is crucial to know exactly which publications or T.V. shows will reach your target audience in order to make the most impact.

There are three key elements to consider to successfully practice target marketing. These three elements include:

1. Demographics

This includes measurable statistics such as your audience's makeup in terms of age, gender, income level, occupation, education and family status. This information varies tremendously for baby boomers in comparison with young adventurous travelers. So you may decide you want to market to one of these segments depending on the trips and type of adventures you offer.

2. Geographic and lifestyle factors

Research where and how your target consumers live. Are these people conservative with their money or are they spenders? The answers to these questions will help you determine what types of trips you can sell to them, how you can sell them your trips, and at what price.

3. Customer needs

What are the needs of your consumers? Consider all of the reasons why your target market would want to purchase your products and services and shape your marketing efforts to appeal to their emotion.

Once you have completed your research and have identified who your target customer is, you can begin to create your ideal consumer profile. At this point, it is often advantageous to hire a marketing or writing professional to help you shape the message for your campaign. This person will help you to make a more focused statement that describes your target market in detail which, in turn, will allow you to spend your marketing dollars as effectively as possible. It is imperative that you know your target audience and speak to them as if you were a member, not an outsider. They want to know that you understand their needs and have common interests with them. If you would like help with this area of your marketing, [click here](#) or email me at kellerk78@hotmail.com

Now, on to proven marketing secret # 3...

3. Build a consistent/cohesive message.

Potential clients in the adventure travel industry are looking to have fun and you only have a short amount of time to draw in their attention. Remember, your goal is to stand out among your competitors and give your audience a compelling reason to book their travel with you! By providing a consistent look and feel for all of your marketing material, your audience will begin to recognize your brand. This is also a very important step in building a sense of trust with your consumers.

For example, take an enormously profitable company such as Nike. Now take a closer look at their advertising. All of their advertising, from their brand website to their letter head, includes their commonly known swoosh, the word Nike or the phrase, “Just do it.” This enables people (whether a consumer of sports products or not) to immediately recognize the brand and allows Nike to provide a unified and consistent marketing message regardless of the marketing channel.

In the adventure travel industry, potential clients want to see images and messages of past clients enjoying themselves. Remember adventure travel is about having fun so how can you consistently portray this message so that your consumers begin to recognize your brand across all marketing mediums? *The goal here is to work towards building a brand identity that will be instantly recognized in the market.*

As with most industries, consumers commonly book their adventure travel with the top 5 companies in that marketplace. For adventure travel, this includes companies such as Adventure Collection, Adventureengine.com, and AITO. This is because consumers recognize these brands and have a clear idea of who they are and what they have to offer.

In order to compete with these high-end companies, you must also provide one consistent message that will be communicated across all mediums through excellent copywriting. These mediums include e-zines, websites, sales letters, press releases, print and online advertising. As you build a cohesive marketing message, you will stay front of mind when it comes time for a consumer to book their adventure.

Finally, create a fun logo and always use descriptive words to paint a desirable mental picture such as adventure, trekking, steppes, rivers, mountains and fishing. Keep in mind that if your business is new to the industry, your audience does not yet recognize your name. So it is important to use a fun logo and descriptive words to really excite people!

Now, on to proven marketing secret #4...

4. Create a referral generating website

In today's world, it is increasingly important to have a clear and compelling website that is easy to find. According to a recent report from PhoCusWright, "In 2007, for the first time, internet transactions accounted for over half all US travel bookings." Over 80% of all travelers are now online. With so many trips out there, it is essential to provide an easy way for consumers to gather information on line and do as much research a possible on the web. *The company that gets in front of the consumer the quickest, with the chance for instant gratification for customers will be the most successful.*

There is no doubt that building an effective website is one of the most profitable strategies you can follow. An effective website can and should *double* your company's revenue. However, in today's competitive world, it is no longer acceptable to just build a website, post it online, and hope people will call you. Instead, there are very specific tactics you must follow to increase your website traffic and quickly grab your consumers' attention. These tactics include:

- 1. Use compelling images and testimonials of happy customers to quickly communicate excitement.***

You only have between 5 and 15 seconds to draw in your consumers' attention. That's it! Potential customers want to know they will have a good time and the best way to prove this to them is showing them other happy clients.

2. Use short bullets and descriptive text to paint a desirable mental picture.

Your consumers will be immediately turned off by large paragraphs of copy. It is essential that you have a convincing home page that communicates excitement, commands the user to read more and quickly answers unknown questions. If your user has to spend time reading large amounts of text in order to find what they are looking for, you will immediately turn them away.

3. Control what your user reads and in what order they read it!

Organize the design of your website to control the most dominant features of your site so you are guiding the consumer through your site rather than allowing them to overlook the most important aspects.

4. Make sure your contact information is readily accessible and if online booking is offered, ensure the process is very clear and smooth.

Website abandonment happens very quickly when the consumer cannot find what they are looking for. Think about *your* behavior when you are searching the web. If you cannot immediately find what you are looking for, you will go on to search the next website. After all, there are so many websites available with similar information that users become easily distracted!

5. Quickly answer questions and concerns.

Consumers do not want to search for answers to common questions; rather they want to find their answers immediately. The most common way to address these questions is through a Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ page. But make sure that this page is easy to find and provides clear answers.

Once you have built your website, the next most important thing you can do is increase your search engine optimization. It is very important that your website shows up in the top 30 search engine results for adventure travel. Search engine optimization is the practice of ensuring that your website is accessible to search engines and is focused in a way that will increase the chances your site will be found. If your consumers can not find your website, you will lose out on revenues that could be worth thousands of dollars.

In order to increase your search engine optimization it is important to have clear content and use keywords near the top of your site such as in the headline or the first few paragraphs of text. Search engines assume that your pages are relevant to the topic and will mention these keywords right from the beginning. For this reason, it is vital to have compelling website copy. By utilizing a seasoned copywriter to help you create convincing copy, more often than not, you will see a positive return on your investment. If you would like professional help with your web copy, [click here](#) or send an e-mail to kellerk78@hotmail.com.

The other important factor to consider is frequency of keywords. A search engine will analyze how often a keyword is used on a page and results will be returned in order of relevancy. There are several free websites that will help you create relevant keywords.

Now, on to the final marketing tactic that will help you ensure the success of your adventure travel business.

5. Encourage repeat customers!

Getting repeat visitors is like getting free money. You don't spend any money on marketing to or recruiting these consumers. Getting repeat business equals pure profit for the business owner. Plus, since these people book their travel with you again and again, it is a given that they recommend your company to their friends and family.

Here are a few proven guidelines to follow to encourage repeat customers:

1. Make your consumers feel like they are at home.

The easiest way to accomplish this is through your staff. From the driver who picks up your customers at the airport to the most experienced guide that manages client activities, make sure they convey the idea that everyone is family. Express to all staff members that this is your core philosophy and that it is crucial to pass on your values.

2. Create a feeling of community.

It is important that *all* of your customers have a sense of belonging to the group and feel that they are a valued member. Creating a sense of community is one of the quickest methods to nurture and grow client trust.

3. Always provide great food and great service.

Remember, different people like different foods and have different ideas about great service. Provide something for everyone so your customers know you care about their specific needs. It is important they feel that you are catering towards them rather than them feeling like you are doing the minimal work possible to get by.

4. Reward repeat visitors.

You can do this in several ways. An obvious option is to provide a 10% discount for repeat customers but also consider different loyalty or points programs. This is a great way to encourage people to come back and also provides a way of saying “thank you for your business.”

Never underestimate small, simple measures to ensure the quality of your business. If you follow the tactics discussed in this report, you will see a large return on investment and watch your business succeed. It is difficult to compete with this ever-changing industry, however there is unlimited potential to be reached with exciting rewards!

About the Author



Kari Keller is a professional copywriter who has been working in the sales and marketing industry for the past 9 years. She began her writing career as an online editor for SKIING Magazine in Boulder, Colorado. Since then, Kari has worked in marketing, writing articles, proposals and reports for such companies as Nike, Inc., Front Range TechBiz (a sister company of the Denver Business Journal) and the Integer Group. While employed at the Integer Group, Kari worked primarily on the Coors Interactive Marketing account writing web content and presenting interactive ideas to the client.

As a child, Kari grew up as a nationally ranked alpine ski racer which enabled her to travel around the world in search of “the next” competition. She has trained and raced throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Alaska. It was during these early days as a ski racer that Kari developed a love for both travel and adventure.

Since graduating from the University of Colorado with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Kari has been living in Colorado trying to spend as much time as possible skiing and enjoying the outdoors while balancing her passion for writing.

Kari now works as a full time copywriter and writes all type of marketing materials including on and offline newsletters, web content, sales reports, brochures, press releases, on and offline advertisements, and more! For a free consultation, please contact Kari by phone at 303-859-9233 or by e-mail at kellerk78@hotmail.com.

