

YOUR TOWN

AN AMAZING DESTINATION

The 25 Immutable Rules
of Successful Tourism

Roger A. Brooks & Maury Forman

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of Successful Tourism**

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©2006 Roger Brooks Second edition

©2009 Roger Brooks Third edition

©2011 Roger Brooks International Fourth edition

©2017 Roger Brooks International Fifth edition

Published by:

Roger Brooks International, Inc.

24654 N. Lake Pleasant Parkway

Suite 103-487

Peoria, AZ 85383

ISBN 978-0-9724855-1-7

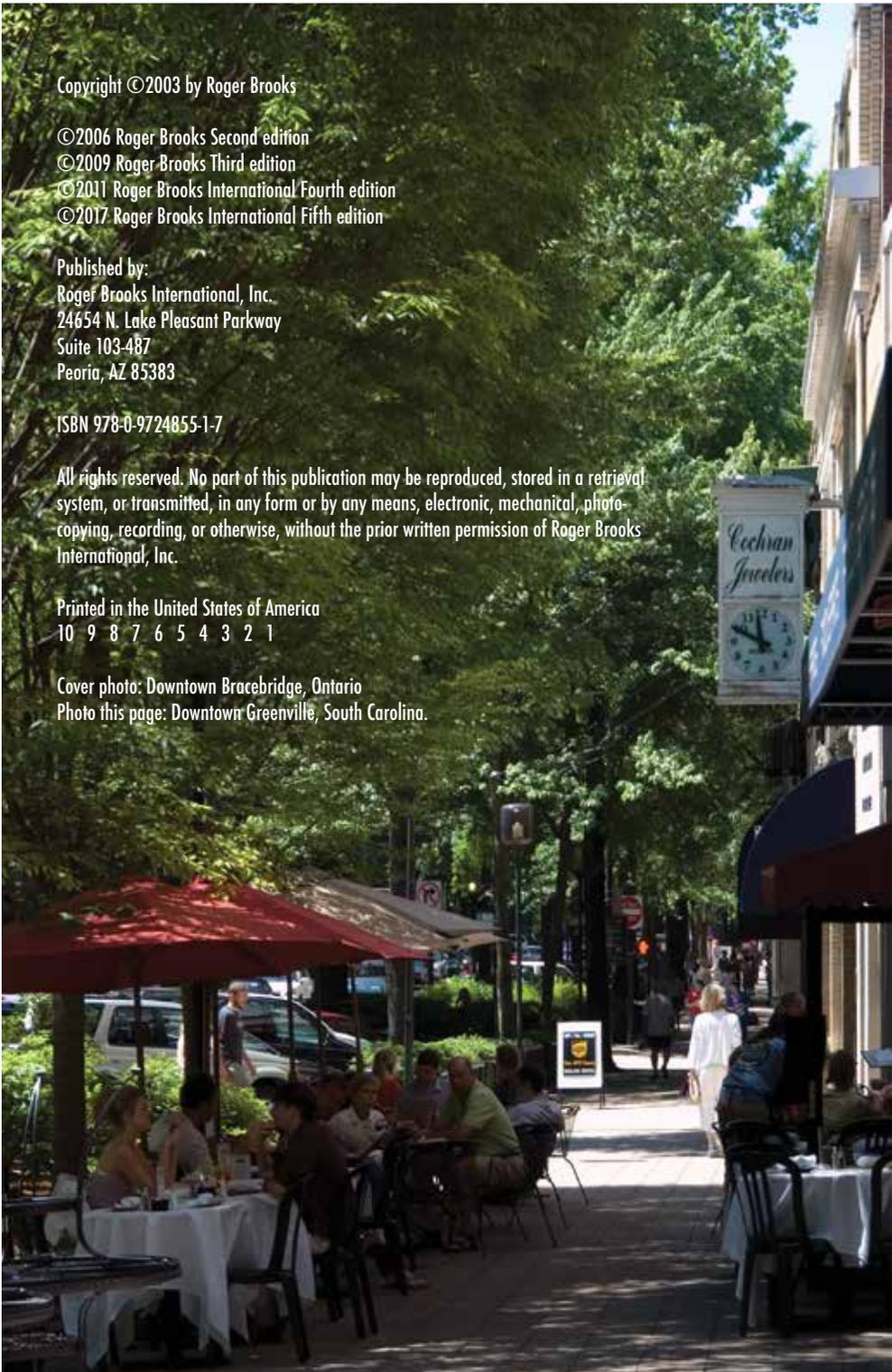
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Printed in the United States of America

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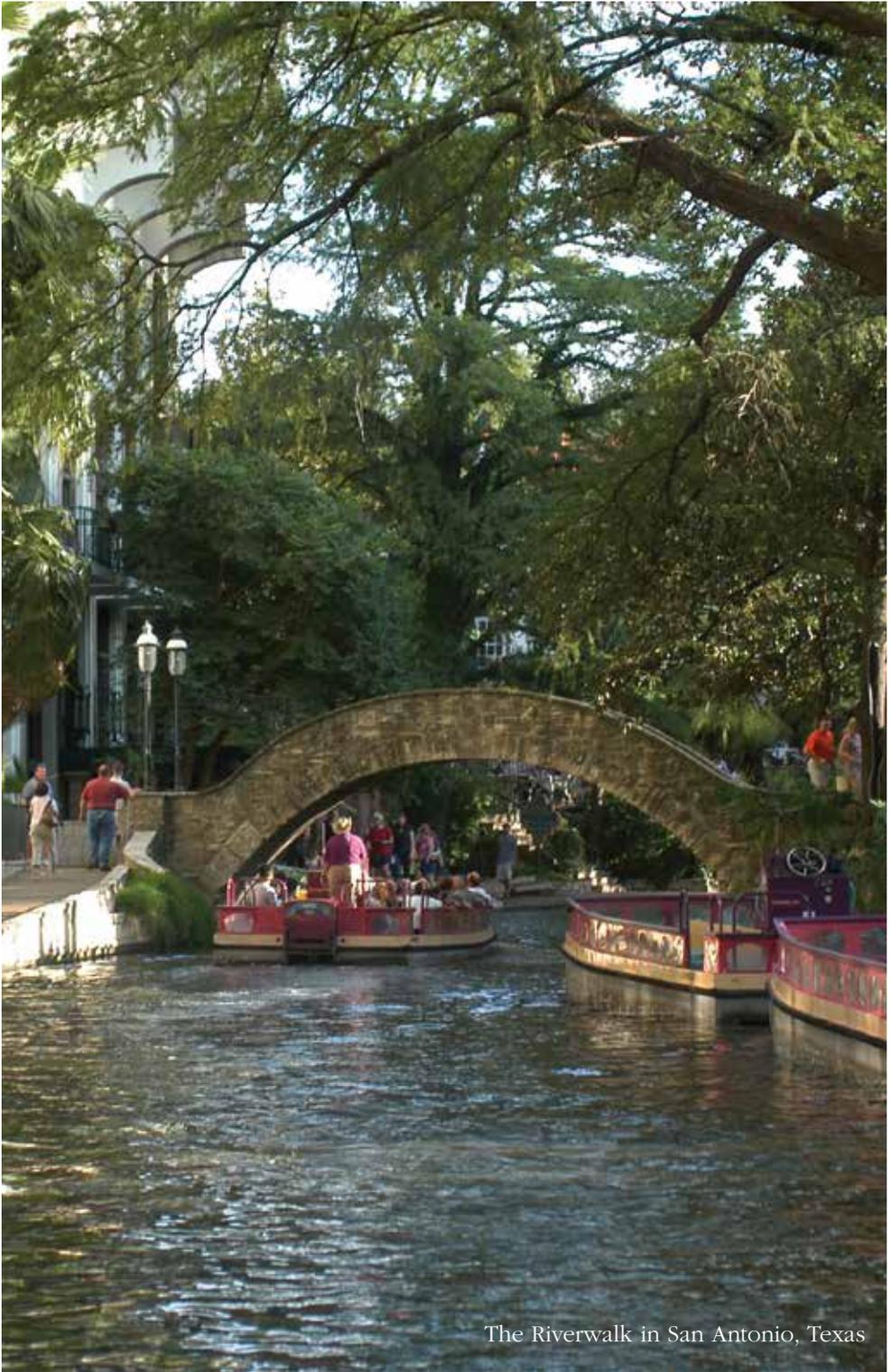
Cover photo: Downtown Bracebridge, Ontario

Photo this page: Downtown Greenville, South Carolina.



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The Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas

Acknowledgments

There may be 25 immutable rules for tourism, but there is only one immutable rule in writing a book. It is the rule of thanks. There are a number of people who have helped me with this book by doing research, coming up with ideas, and editing. Writing a book is similar to planning a trip. It is usually a group effort, and this book would never have come together if it had not been for a number of people that made this public-private partnership possible.

I, and my writing partner, Maury Forman, are very grateful for the excellent input and editing by Sandra Prater and Jane Brooks. Their keen eye for details helped make the book more readable and practical for communities interested in further developing their tourism industry.

I would especially like to thank my long-time (and now retired) friend and mentor, Maury Forman who spent decades helping communities reach their full potential on behalf of the Washington State Department of Commerce. He has, and in retirement, continues to provide assistance in updating this book, knowing that education and training are critical to a successful economic development program.

The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism was introduced at the nationally recognized Northwest Economic Development Games in Ellensburg, Washington in 1996, as a two-hour multi-media workshop. Since that time, this presentation has been seen in hundreds of communities around the world and often followed by an in-depth and practical community assessment. The team at Roger Brooks International deserves a lot of credit for years of research, finding anecdotal stories and case histories from throughout North America. Thanks especially to Jordan Pogue, Jennifer Kelsh, and Jane Brooks for their unwavering support, input, and editing in getting all five editions of this book published.

We would also like to thank the tireless efforts of the people, particularly in small towns and in downtown districts for their tireless and unwavering support in making their communities destinations you would want to visit, live in and invest in. They do the heavy lifting, take the hits for bucking the “it’s ok” mentality, and are almost universally underpaid and incredibly overworked.

This book is for you.

Roger A. Brooks and Maury Forman



Downtown Wickford, Rhode Island

Introduction

What can take months to plan yet is often over in just a few days or weeks? Can be done in a car, train, boat or plane? May cost a whole lot or very little? Requires little (and sometimes nothing) in the way of clothing? Almost always brings people and even nations together? Travel, of course.

Whether for business, pleasure, or rest and relaxation, almost everyone longs to travel. Traveling to Atlanta to sync a business deal might be the trip of a lifetime for a business executive. A family hiking trip through the Sonora Desert might be the beginning of a shared passion for a young family. Or maybe your experience with travel has been more like the Griswold family in National Lampoon's Vacation. Chevy Chase plays the hapless suburbanite from Chicago, traveling with his family across America looking for fun and relaxation. Although everything is planned, nothing goes right. The family endures wrong turns, misleading promotions, rude employees, multiple parking tickets, and unwanted relatives. Yet nothing deters Clark Griswold from spending two memorable weeks with his wife and kids. And apparently, he's not alone.

The family vacation has made a long-awaited comeback, but it looks a bit different now. Families are traveling in cars and RVs more often than planes. Some of them are more likely to take several extended-weekend jaunts rather than one annual two-week trip. Many vacationers avoid the hassle of long-distance travel by discovering attractions and activities in their own backyards. Entertainment destinations are taking the backseat to trips to discover family heritage or explore the arts. People are less likely to stay with family and friends and more likely to strike out on their own. They are more likely to look for things to do rather than things to see. And, they are spending a lot more money in the process.

Tourism is quickly becoming the "industry of choice" in many communities, while in others it has become "the industry because we have no other choice." Thousands of communities, particularly in rural areas across North America and abroad, have seen drastic cutbacks in the industries on which they were founded. Mining, agriculture, fishing, timber, and manufacturing are among the many industries that have seen dramatic cutbacks and closures over the past 20 years as we move into a global economy. As a result, nearly every community wants to diversify - to find its "second act," and tourism often is the most natural and easiest diversification strategy.

With thousands of communities considering entering or expanding their tourism industries, we have entered a new age of tourism: the age of specialization. With so many more choices and information instantly at our fingertips, what does your



“Leakage” occurs when people who live and work in your community spend some of their money elsewhere. Tourism is the number one method to recapture that loss. Successful tourism happens when your town imports more money from people who visit, spend, and leave than it exports from people who work and live in your town and spend their money elsewhere. Successful communities are subsidized by visitors rather than subsidizing visitors. Which category does your town fall under?

community have that the traveler can't get or do closer to home? What makes your town worth a special trip?

Tourism As an Economic Development Strategy

Less than a twenty ago, cities and towns rarely considered tourism as an economic development strategy. Yet today, thousands are developing and promoting the industry and see it as a vital part of their economies. And rightfully so. The strategy behind tourism is to “import” more cash into your community than you “export.” When people earn money in your community and spend some of it elsewhere, it's referred to as “leakage.” Communities with a successful tourism industry import more cash than they export to stem the leak.

Tourism has many economic advantages. For example, tourism:

- Diversifies the economy so that communities are no longer dependent on one or two industries.
- Provides a multiplier effect where many businesses, including non-tourism industries, benefit economically.
- Brings in “new money” that creates growth in a community.
- Increases the tax base that helps pay for community amenities and services.
- Creates a variety of business opportunities for entrepreneurs.
- Provides jobs and experience for entry-level workers.
- Promotes business development. Today's visitor might be tomorrow's investor, something which is seen more often in rural areas.
- Boosts appearance and makes the community visually appealing.

Tourism's economic benefit is easily quantified. In the United States alone, tourism:

- Is a \$1.3 trillion industry (2006).
- Generates \$163 billion in annual wages and salaries.
- Generates \$100 billion in local, state and federal taxes.

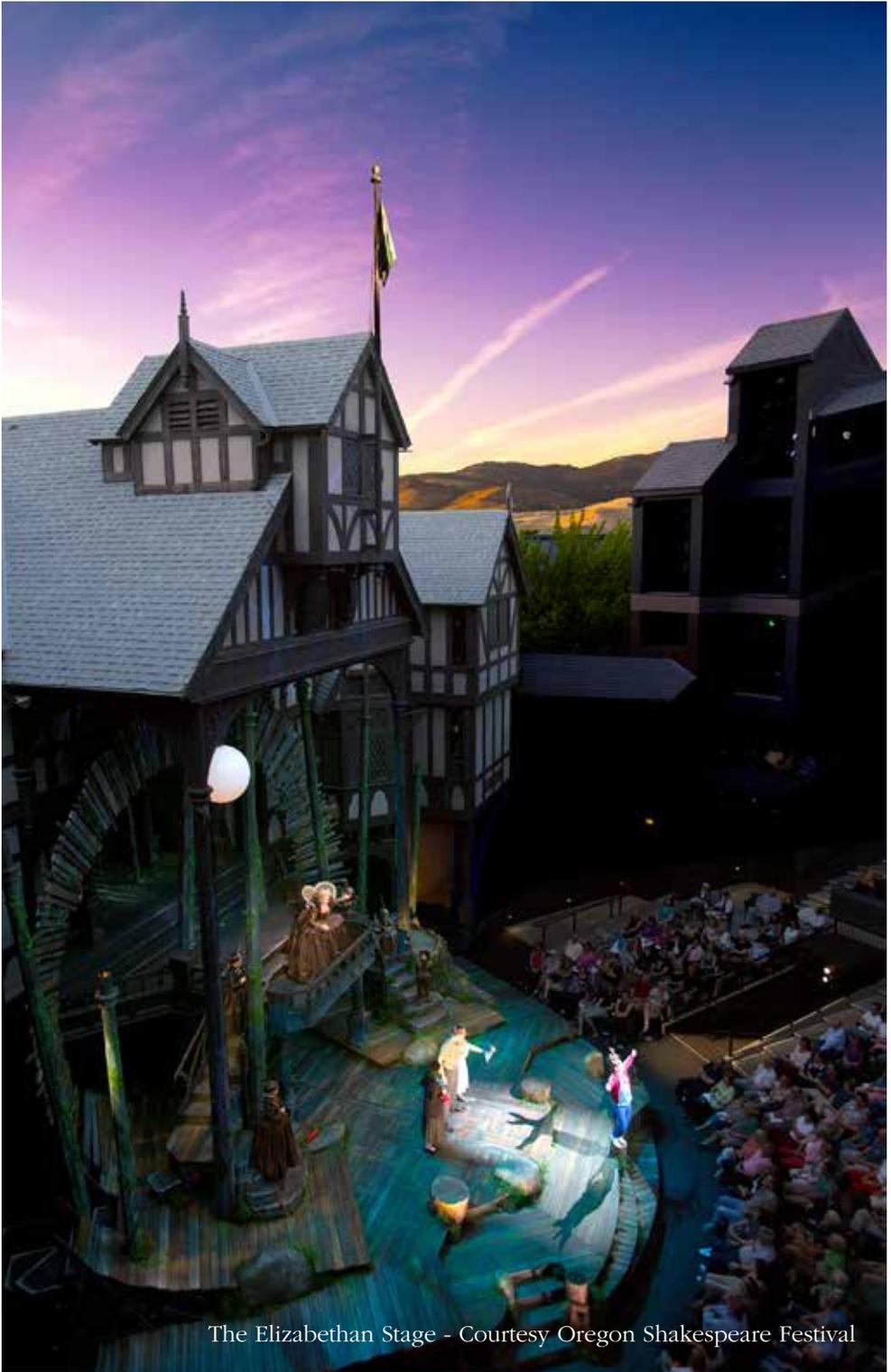
Tourism is the fastest growing industry (and one of the top three) in all 50 states and in every Canadian province. If economic development is about creating community wealth, then tourism is an important strategy for every community to consider.

What Is A Destination?

There are as many different kinds of visitors as there are people, with as many different reasons for choosing a destination. A destination can be defined as the ending point of any trip. It can be a state or national park, a festival, the home of relatives or friends, a convention or business trip destination, an activity that's different or better than what they can get closer to home, or an attraction.

What Are These “Immutable Rules”?

The Immutable Rules are 25 recommendations your community should implement if you want to make Your Town an Amazing Destination, drawing visitors and their cash to the area. Travel might be flexible, but the rules to creating a tourist destination are not. The rules you are about to read are immutable because they are absolute and incontrovertible. In other words, they work! And they are not trendy and change.



The Elizabethan Stage - Courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Immutable means never changing.

The 25 rules in this book are designed to provide simple ways to make tourism a profitable undertaking by attracting the right kind of visitors and getting them to stay longer. Getting them to stay longer is the ticket, of course, because the longer they stay, the more they spend. After all, overnight visitors spend three times that of day visitors, and infinitely more than pass-through visitors. The more the visitor spends in your community, the less you, the local resident, will have to pay for better streets, law enforcement, and the public amenities you enjoy.

In order to be successful in making your community a destination:

1. You must be able to get passers-by to stop.
2. Then create ways to keep them in town longer. Just two hours and spending typically doubles - getting something to eat, drink, or visiting local shops.
3. You should strive for your community to become an overnight or multi-day destination. After all, winning the tourism game is not necessarily about how many visitors you get, but how long you get them to stay and then getting them to come back time after time.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland (population 21,000) produces 11 plays a year for their three theaters, with performances running six days a week, nine months of the year. The show brings in more than 125,000 theater goers each year with an average stay of three nights. On top of that, 88% percent return every year or every other year. Not even Disney can match numbers like that!

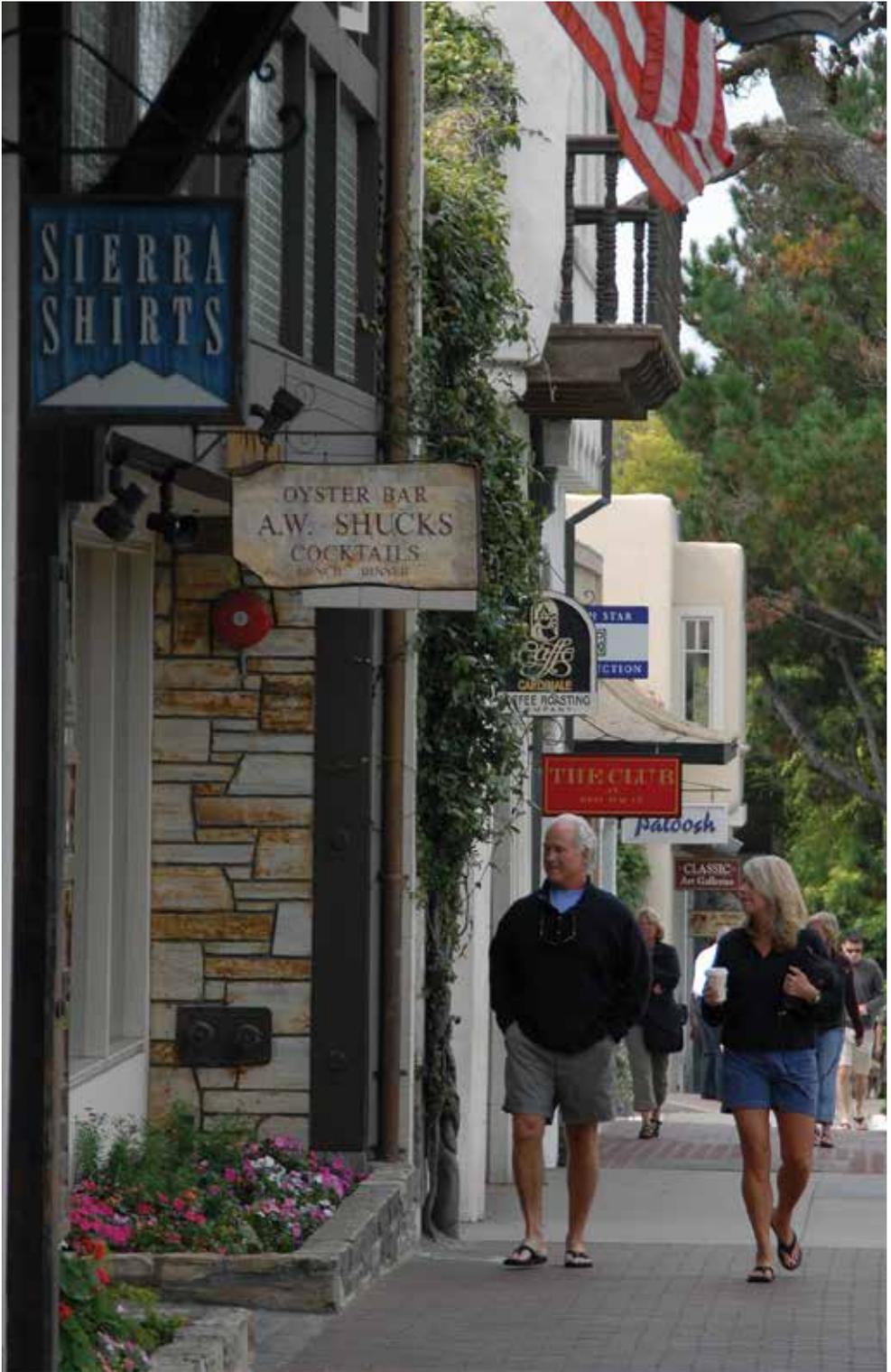
And it's not as though Ashland is next to any large metropolitan areas or major airports. Ashland is about as rural as you can get. Located just north of the California border the city is 300 miles (480 km) north of Sacramento and 300 miles south of Portland.

The plays change each year, bringing people back again and again. The average traveler is active 14 hours a day and if they were to attend two plays, it leaves them eight to ten hours for complementary activities, such as shopping and dining, where 80% of the non-lodging travel spending takes place. Ashland's downtown is vibrant and the community is an amazing destination!

How to use these rules to make Your Town An Amazing Destination

The rules in this book are in order of priority beginning with the rules of branding - finding your unique selling proposition: what it is, specifically, you want to be known for. And then there are a number of immutable rules that have to do with product development. After all, product is what brings people back time and again. And then you'll find the rules of marketing - how to tell the world that you are, indeed, an amazing destination.

This does not mean you can't get to Rule #2 until you're done with Rule #1. For instance, you may decide to start with a plan (Rule #3: Success begins with a good architect), and in that plan you identify your unique selling proposition (Rule #1: Make it easy to tell your cows from my cows). In fact, when you get to the rule of planning,



your plan should address ALL 25 of the immutable rules. After all, they are immutable!

Make sure you read through the book once before you dig in. In finding your unique selling proposition, or brand, you may decide to focus on a local historical event or site, or on a lake or beach, only to find out that in Rule #18 you're told not to sell the asset, but instead sell the experience. Instead of the lake it's the best trout fishing or house-boating in the region. Instead of a raging river, you have the most class five rapids for river rafting enthusiasts.

In Southern Utah, the town of Kanab was hanging their hat on being the base-camp for national parks an hour and a half away (each way). Yet Rule #16 states that day-trips need to be within a 45-minute drive of the community. So reading through the book will help you immensely as you work to find your brand, and as you begin to craft your marketing messages - the look and feel of your brand.

You may have noticed that there is a check box next to each rule in the table of contents. For every rule you've nailed or have implemented (read it first to make sure!), simply check the box as completed or is being implemented. Many of the rules are not just "do it once" rules. The rule of customer service (#24: The bellman does more than just answer doors) is ongoing as is the rule of public relations and social media (#19: Bragging is more effective when someone else does it for you). But if these are in your plan and implementation is already taking place then, by all means, check that box.

While you may be working on the first two or three rules, it doesn't mean you simply ignore the rest of the rules. While you're finding your unique selling proposition, Rule #1, there's no reason you can't be implementing the rule of customer service (Rule #24), or the rule of selling experiences over place (#18: Sell the rafting, not the river).

This is the age of brevity. You'll find this book to be fun, to the point, and meant to be dog-eared, written on, passed around, and always sitting on your desk. After all, who wants to read a 250 page book about tourism, no disrespect to our colleagues in the industry? And on that note, this is a book that every elected official should read. Even if they only glance through the book, each chapter title might be a subject and/or project they would champion.

Are You Looking for Tourists or Visitors?

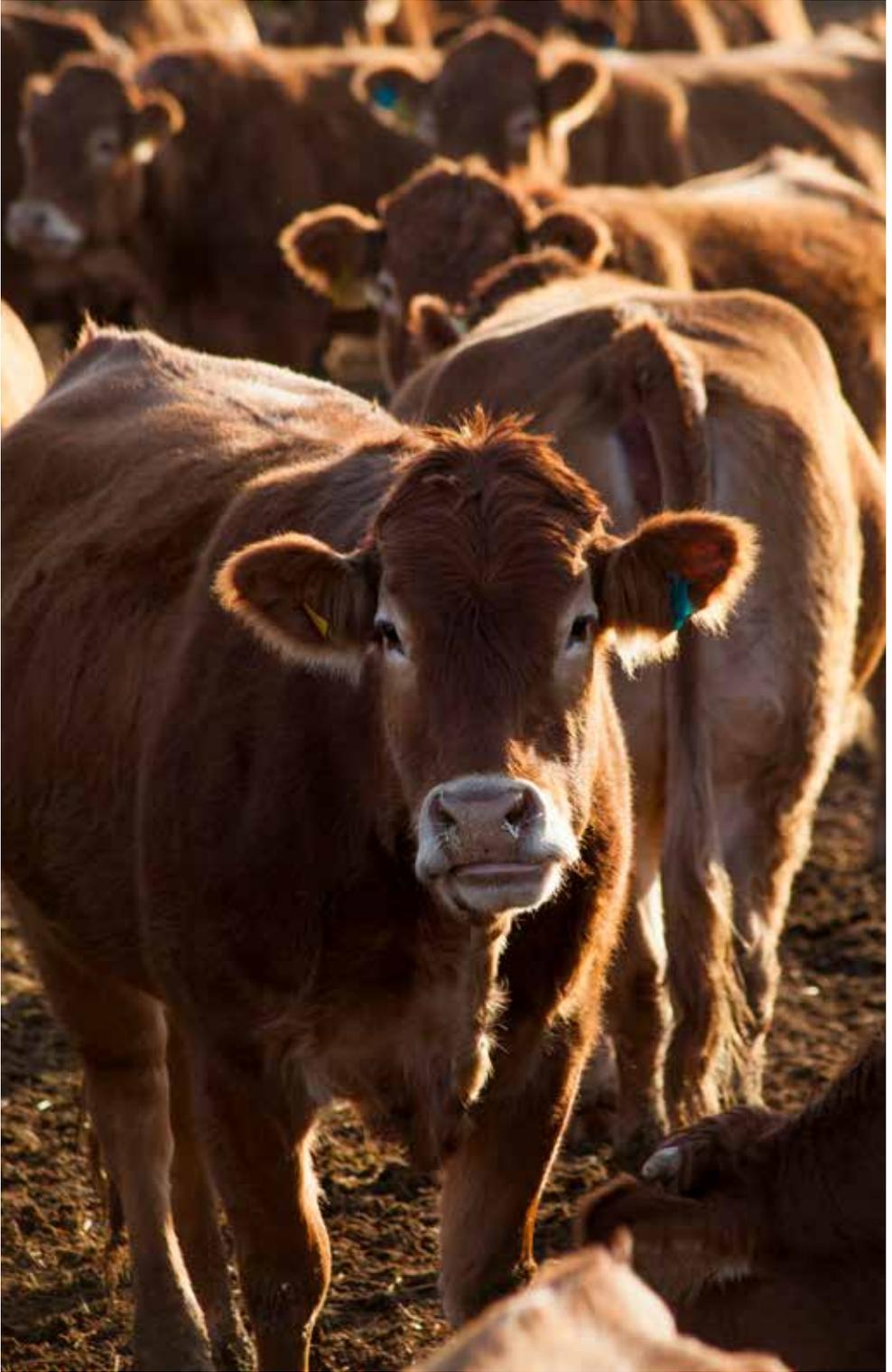
If increasing tourism in your community is in your plans, let's start by defining "tourist." The traditional meaning of tourist is a person traveling away from home for leisure purposes. The tourism industry usually considers anyone traveling at least fifty miles from home — for any purpose — a tourist. If someone comes into your town from out of town, that person is a "tourist."

We prefer using the word "visitor," because "tourist" implies only the leisure traveler. "Visitors" include business travelers, as well. After all, business travel is a primary source of imported dollars for communities. So, when we refer to "visitors" in this book, we are including people visiting friends and family, business travelers, convention and trade show attendees, passers-by simply stopping for gas and/or food, parents visiting



kids in college, and the occasional visitor who is just there to have a good time.

To the visitor, a vacation is a way to create memories. The Griswold family of National Lampoon fame, and the other Griswold's of the world, remember the time they spent with friends and family, the destinations they visited, the experiences they shared, and the items they bought. The trip really had no rules other than to have fun together. But for the community to benefit more wholly from the Griswold visit, another set of rules would have been required. Here's one: it costs a whole lot less to bring the same visitors back again than it does to keep getting new ones.



Rule #1

Make it easy to tell your cows from my cows

The rule of branding

The Romans used brands as symbols to identify their professions. A row of hams depicted the butcher's trade, a cow symbolized a dairyman, and a boot reflected a cobbler. The markings represented crafts rather than specific craftsmen. Soon after, Romans began using their brands to advertise themselves, while the Egyptians seared insignias into livestock to identify their stray or stolen animals. This latter custom was passed on to ranchers and became the symbol of ownership in a business where ownership was everything. Branding became such a big part of a rancher's life that they used to say that a good cowboy could recognize and understand the Constitution of the United States if it were only written with a branding iron on the side of a cow.

Branding, today is still about ownership: owning that one thing in your market area that sets you apart from everyone else. Napa Valley owns the wine capital brand. Nashville owns the country music brand. Las Vegas owns the sin-city brand. Orlando owns the kids and family destination brand. Lancaster, Pennsylvania owns the Amish-made brand. And Branson, Missouri, a town of 10,000 residents owns the music theater brand with nearly 50 music venues and 7.5 million annual visitors. Places that "own" their niche are typically amazingly successful destinations because they have the product in place to back-up their ownership position. And the best destinations never rest on their laurels.

There are 19,500 cities and towns in the United States and another 5,000 or so in Canada. And you can find every single one of them, in seconds, via the web. The challenge is that visitors are typically not looking for cities beyond the obvious choices; they are looking for activities in a general area. And that's how they use the Internet. When we use the web we typically type in the "experience" first, and then the location or area. Here are some examples:

- Job opportunities in Western Washington
- Hiking trails along the Blue Ridge Parkway

- Top motorcycle rides in Northern California
- Ski areas near Montreal
- Italian restaurants in Denver
- New residential neighborhoods near Ames, Iowa
- Best schools in the Dallas Metroplex
- Best place in the Northeast to view moose
- Zip lines near Asheville, North Carolina
- Furniture stores in Montgomery, Alabama

When you type in the name of your community, or your organization, and are thrilled it's at the top of the search engine results, it's time to despair: you're the only one doing it! Everyone else is looking for activities. Do you show up? You see, people don't speak like the hero Yoda in Star Wars, "Amarillo, Texas find trails for hiking."

What makes it even tougher is that 88% of all search-engine users don't go past the second page of search results. Do you? If you search for your top activities, and your general location second, do you show up on the first page of search results?

To win you **MUST** narrow your focus. You **MUST** "jettison the generic" in your marketing. You **MUST** stand out from the crowd if you want to be an amazing destination. You **MUST** find your unique selling proposition - your brand. Find your niche and promote it like crazy. Welcome to the art of "place branding."

Just to clear up the common mis-perceptions that come with the word "branding," take a few moments and read through The Ten Commandments of Branding on the opposite page.

Of all the rules in this book, this is, far and away, the most important. Before you get anywhere you need to ask, "what do we want to be when we grow up?" If you're like most communities looking for it's "second act" after losing the primary industry on which you were founded, then priority number one is finding that one thing that can set you apart from everyone else and will put you "on the map" as the destination of choice for visitors in your niche.

When Ron Doan got a job in the Kansas City area in the mid-90s, he asked his wife Jennie to pack up their seven kids and leave the comfortable confines of Northern California for life in a rural Missouri town. When they arrived in Hamilton, a dying town of 1,800 with a primarily boarded-up forgotten downtown, Jennie looked at her husband and asked "what have you gotten us into?"

Jennie, who was looking to help support the family, had learned a way to help people create a quilt in as little as a day - something virtually unheard of in the quilting hobby, where enthusiasts will work on a quilt for a year - or more. Her son, Alan, decided to help her set up an on-line business and asked Jennie if she'd be willing to do some tutorials. "Sure honey, what's a tutorial?" was her reply.

With some loans and a used quilting machine, they set up shop in one of the down-

The Ten Commandments of Branding

1. **Logos and slogans are not brands.** They are merely marketing messages used to reinforce and communicate your brand. They make up 2% of a brand, but because of local politics, typically get 98% of the attention. Have you ever gone anywhere because they had a great logo?
2. **Brands are perceptions.** They are what people think of you – good or bad. Sometimes communities need a “repositioning” or a “rebranding” effort.
3. **Brands are about differentiation.** What differentiates you from everyone else? What do you have that the people you’re hoping to attract can’t get or do closer to home? What sets you apart from the crowd?
4. **Brands have a narrow focus.** Narrow your focus, then narrow it some more. Brands are specific. Find your niche and promote it like crazy. Pontiac was the “muscle car” brand until they broadened their focus to include low-power compact cars. Where is Pontiac today? Gone. They are a lesson in branding gone bad.
5. **Brands are about ownership.** Napa Valley owns the wine country brand. Nashville owns the country music brand. Branson, Missouri owns the music theater capital brand.
6. **Steer clear of focus groups.** You never build a successful brand using focus groups. The “group hug mentality” will give you a watered-down, generic, “one size fits all” brand. The desire to be all things to all people and make everyone happy is overwhelming, but it can kill a winning brand.
7. **Successful brands are built on product.** Brands are a promise that you will live up to the perception we have of you. And those perceptions are built on product and communicated by marketing – not the other way around.
8. **You never roll out a brand.** A brand is earned – good or bad. It can take years to build a strong brand. Brands are largely developed via word of mouth: publicity, social media. Brands are built on what people think of you – because of their experience. You build your brand through public relations; advertising is used to maintain your ownership position.
9. **Great brands evoke emotion.** They hit you in an emotional spot. They make you want to go there. They are memorable. Disney’s “Where dreams come true” is a perfect example of how to evoke emotion.
10. **Brands require tireless champions.** One of Roger Brooks’ favorite quotes is “A by-product of brands ‘for the people’ is the committee that compromises and kills a potential brand home run. This is why you never see statues of committees in public parks. You see brave leaders.” Local brand champions are brave leaders, helping their communities become better, more successful places.

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town's many vacant buildings and thus were the humble beginnings of the Missouri Star Quilt Company. For the first year no one took a paycheck. Things were tough. But Jennie's You Tube channel, with her now famous quilting tutorials, went viral.

Today, Jennie's tutorials have been viewed more than 50 million times. More than 10,000 ardent quilters make the pilgrimage to Hamilton - each month - from around the world, to see Jennie in person. The town is now a popular tour bus destination (50 buses a year and growing), the business has 200 employees, and is the largest fabric supplier, of its kind, in the world. In an age where the post office is closing up shop in hundreds of locations around the county, they had to hire half a dozen new employees in Hamilton where two-thirds of all the mail coming into and leaving Hamilton is for the Missouri Star Quilt Company.

Downtown Hamilton is home to 15 remodeled buildings now home to quilting and fabric stores, restaurants, retail shops, and a hotel - with more shops and eateries on the way. The company has a large warehouse where thousands of packages, a day, are



Jennie Doan, "the world's most famous quilter" is a YouTube sensation with her quilting tutorials viewed more than 50 million times. The Missouri Star Quilt company, founded by her son Alan (below), his sister Sarah, and friend David, now employs 200 workers, has put Hamilton "on the map" as Alan quips, "The Disneyland of quilting."

Once known as the town JC Penney was from, the Doan's have purchased and remodelled 15 buildings in downtown Hamilton. The town is more vibrant today than it's been in the last 50 years.



shipped. Hamilton is hopping - more than it has in fifty plus years.

Hamilton's brand? In less than ten years, Hamilton moved from being the original home of JC Penney, to perhaps the world's most popular quilting mecca, or as son Alan quips, "The Disneyland of Quilting." The next big push is to find things for the husbands to do since quilting in almost universally a woman's hobby.

Hamilton, Missouri is quickly becoming one of America's Amazing Destinations for quilters who've now made it a pilgrimage destination.

A few takeaways from this story include:

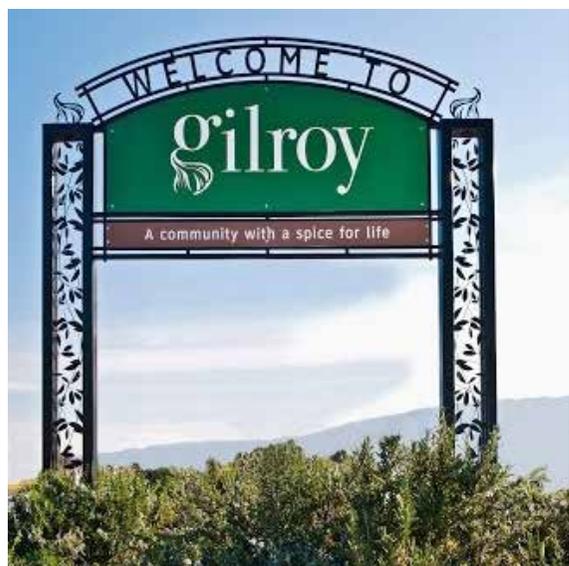
- The best branded destinations were all built on private-sector development, not public-sector amenities. Nashville, Orlando, Napa Valley, Silicon Valley, Hershey, and Hamilton, Missouri, to name a few.
- It doesn't take a Disneyland to win. Little Julian, California (population 1,500) in Eastern San Diego County, California is home to its "world famous Julian apple pie."
- Any town, no matter what the population, can win the branding game. Oatman, Arizona (population 300) located along the famous Route 66 hosts 500,000 visitors a year, who feed the wild burros who come down from the hills each day and happily support their branding efforts.
- Your "brand" or "unique selling proposition" certainly doesn't mean that's all you have to offer. The average visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet only spend four to six hours with the primary activity that draws them, (how many hours a day can you fish, hunt, hike, bike, ski, quilt or eat apple pie?) and then eight to ten hours with "complementary activities." In fact, a full 80% of non-lodging travel spending takes place with those secondary activities. What tops that list? Shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting: your downtown. But we'll get to that in Rule #10: Critical Mass is More Than a Religious Experience.

Some have said that Hamilton is becoming a "one dimensional town," to which Alan Doan replies "isn't that better than a no dimensional town?" Still the birthplace of JC Penney, it's Jennie Doan and her company that has put Hamilton on the map in modern times. Jennie has been featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, on NBC Nightly news, in just about every business magazine. The company won the Small Business Administration's "Person of the Year" award, and has been featured around the world on television, in print and on the web. So where can this brand go and is it sustainable? According to Jennie, "there's South America that needs to learn how to quilt; Asia needs to learn how to quilt, and there are also vertical opportunities that complement quilting as well."

Once you've identified your brand or Unique Selling Proposition (commonly known as USP - and has been used in marketing for decades) remember that all successful brands are built on product, not just marketing. In fact, marketing will bring visitors to you just once. Only product will bring them back.

Your town's brand should be pervasive throughout the community – your wayfinding system, gateways, all community-related websites, brochures, experiences, and photography should reflect the brand. Using successful tourism strategies, communities create a subconscious association with the brand so that visitors picture a place they would like to visit whenever they see the brand.

A common challenge is the notion that you can't use public money to promote private business. If that were true, Orlando would have to promote themselves as "the kids and family destination with more than 170 attractions. We can't name any of them because they are all privately owned." Napa Valley could boast that they have nearly 200 wineries locally, but can't mention any of them by name because they are privately known. In Hamilton, the goal is to have more quilt shops than any other place on the planet. And most will not be owned or operated by the Missouri Star Quilt Company.



A brand must be obvious in your marketing and in your town. When visitors arrive, do they see your brand throughout the community? When you arrive in Hershey, Pennsylvania, you'll notice that the street pole lamps are shaped like Hershey's kisses, reinforcing their brand as the chocolate capital of the world.

The brand association may involve any or all of the senses. In a society that's information rich and time poor, people value feeling more than information. Branding creates the perception a potential visitor has about you. When you hear the word "Disneyland" you may picture mouse ears, the Matterhorn, and Goofy, and automatically associate it with fun, fantasy, and families. You really don't think of Anaheim, where Disneyland is located. Disneyland is the "brand" associated with the city. That's what people remember.

People familiar with the garlic festival in Gilroy, California, may have an olfactory or gastronomical sensation upon hearing about that

event. And everyone knows that “Virginia is For Lovers,” according to its 50-year-long and very successful campaign.

Branding is NOT just slogans and logos. Brands are what people think of your town’s product (attractions, activities), not what your marketing materials say about them. Do you go to Disneyland because their slogan is “the happiest place on earth”? Of course not. You visit the popular theme park because of what you know about it. Perceptions — much of it developed by word of mouth — are the key to developing a brand. The slogan simply reinforces your perceptions. Disneyland is a great place for kids and family and the slogan reinforces the perception that it’s the “happiest place on earth.” Employees, known as “cast members,” are trained and re-trained to make sure the Disney parks deliver on that promise.

Brands are about product more than marketing. Las Vegas would be in trouble if it was touted as America’s adult playground but didn’t have the strip, the mega-resorts, and dozens of shows and casinos. “What happens here, stays here” might not work for Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Successful brands are never generic. This is the age of specialization. To become an amazing destination you must find your niche and work like crazy to own it. “We have something for everyone” will not get anyone to visit you. In fact, the days of being all things to all people are officially over. We all want something for me; we don’t care about everyone. Notice the “Words to Avoid” on the next page. Be specific, fun, colorful, weird, scary, silly, adventuresome, or lazy. But don’t be generic. The more generic you are, the less likely visitors will pick your town over others as a place to visit.

Brands rarely succeed as a top-down effort. Your elected officials were elected to be all things to all people. Brands can’t be. Don’t put them in that position. Organizations that represent the private sector: economic development, tourism, chambers of commerce, should take the lead. The most well branded communities were all grass-roots efforts, privately developed. The city is there to assist where it’s appropriate for them. A perfect example might be Branson, Missouri. This town of 10,000 residents hosts 7.5 million visitors a year. Its brand “The Music Theater Capital of the World” is founded on the 49 privately developed theaters in Branson, and the stars who occupy them. Branson helps market the brand; it didn’t create it.

The real trick to branding is to separate your primary lure from your diversions or complementary activities. The primary lure is the experience or activity that separates your town from everywhere else. Diversions are the secondary activities, things you can do closer to home but will do while you’re in the area. What makes Branson truly unique are those 49 theaters. They are Branson’s primary lure. Diversions include outlet malls and shopping, dining, golf, fishing, boating, a multitude of outdoor recreational activities, water parks, and other attractions, along with dozens of restaurants. But even though Branson really does have something for everyone the brand is the Music Theater Capital.

While no one wants to be classified as a diversion or secondary activity, consider the

JETTISON THE **GENERIC**

DESTINATION MARKETING WORDS & PHRASES TO AVOID

- Explore
- Discover
- Experience...
- Outdoor recreation
- Unlike anywhere else
- So much to see and do
- The four season destination
- Where the seasons come to life
- Historic downtown
- Center of it all
- Best kept secret
- We have it all
- Visit (name of town)
- Beauty & heritage
- Naturally fun
- Gateway
- Naturally...
- Culturally rich
- Welcome to my town!
- Always something happening
- Rediscover
- Real Texas (name of state)
- Slowdown & enjoy
- Real people. Real fun.
- Lose yourself here
- Fresh fun (the word fresh)
- Tour. Taste. Toast. (period fetish)
- This is the place
- A real treasure
- Waiting for you
- Far from ordinary
- Relax. Recharge. Rejuvenate.
- Close to everywhere
- Right around the corner
- Your playground
- So much history
- Purely natural
- The place for all ages
- ...and so much more!
- Home away from home
- A slice of heaven
- It's all right here
- Recreation unlimited
- The perfect getaway
- The place for families
- Start your vacation here
- Recreational paradise
- Take a look

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These are words and phrases to avoid in your marketing headlines and tag lines. If you've been using them, don't despair. You're not doing anything wrong. You're just doing what everyone else is doing and, unfortunately, it doesn't set you apart from anyone else. These could fit virtually any town, anywhere.

following: Once again, visitors are active 14 hours a day, yet typically spend only four to six hours a day with the primary lure that brought them to town. In Branson, the average visitor will see two shows a day (four hours total), and then they spend eight to ten hours with diversionary activities. In fact, a full 80 percent of visitor spending takes place with diversions. This is why developers built Branson Landing, a \$400 million retail, dining, and entertainment lifestyle center - in a town of 10,000 residents. Would you go to Orlando if Disney World were not there? If you said no, you just slammed Universal Studios and 170 other attractions. Do they mind being a diversion? Of course not, because a full three quarters of the people going to Disney World also visit dozens of other attractions while there.

*You build your brand through public relations.
Advertising is used to maintain your ownership position.*

Branding a community is not an easy strategy to undertake. In the first place, it requires the varied disciplines of business, product development, marketing, communications, graphic design, and top-notch writing. Second, it requires buy-in from community organizations and stakeholders in order to send a consistent message. Third, it takes time. Communities that are in a rush to get their brand known will inevitably fail as a result of poor planning and inadequate feedback. Budweiser didn't become the King of Beers overnight. However, what used to take 20 years in terms of crafting the perception people have of you, can now take place in as little as three years, once the product, that proves ownership, is in place. This is the power of social media and instant communication. In fact, it's your visitors that will put your brand out there, when they share their experiences with friends, family and the world. You can manage and influence the effort, but they control it.

Building a brand requires a concerted public relations effort. Public relations is used to build the brand, while advertising maintains your position once you're on top. The branding process may include repositioning (for communities turning themselves around), image (defining who your town is), market definition (defining who your town hopes to attract), creation of an icon (the photo opportunity), and finding your town's niche (defining the unique feature that will attract visitors).

There are only three killers of any branding project. Never four.

1. Local politics.

And it's far worse with membership organizations than with elected officials.

2. Lack of champions.

The tireless pioneers who push it forward and never take no for an answer.

3. Lack of funding - both public and private.

If you have the right champions in place, they will work through the politics, will take the hits along the way, and will find a way to make it work (the money) until it succeeds.



Rule #2

Be worthy of a standing ovation

The rule of being the best

The art of branding is the art of differentiating yourself from everyone else in your market area. To own a successful brand, you have two choices: you can be significantly different, or significantly better. To illustrate this, both Roger and Maury, the authors of this book, are from the Northwest. Well, actually, Maury is originally from Texas, but calls the Northwest home. When either of them decides to go downhill skiing, they can visit four ski areas just 45-minutes from the greater Seattle area. But often they, and tens of thousands of others, will skip over those ski areas and head to Whistler Resort, a three to four hour drive away, and 75 miles north of Vancouver, British Columbia. Why?

One of Roger Brooks' first "assignments" in the travel industry was working with development interests at Whistler where the goal, at the time, was to knock Vail, Colorado off its perch as the top-rated ski resort in North America. If you're not different, you better be the best. Whistler accomplished this and for more than 20 years was rated, by Ski Magazine, as the number one ski resort in North America. If you're significantly better, visitors will skip over the same activity closer to home to visit you. But there's a caveat to that: being the best **ONLY** works when it's a third party endorsement, not because you say so. When Ski Magazine said it, it was a resounding "endorsement" or "proof" that Whistler owned the "best ski resort" brand. They got, and continue to receive standing ovations, via social media and other outlets, for the product they put in place, and continue to invest in so they don't lose their standing, which brings up another point: when you are the best at something, people will be gunning for you. This is why you can never rest on your laurels.

Standing ovations typically take place in the theater, at a concert, or at an awards banquet. They are reserved for those people who have completed an excellent performance. A standing ovation is a spontaneous outpouring of appreciation for people who have truly done something outstanding in their craft. They are reserved only for the best.

Your community should strive to get a standing ovation from every person that visits and that will manifest itself on Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, YouTube, and other social media outlets as well as in magazines, and on radio and television. After all, if you're not totally different, the attractions, events, or amenities your town provides should exceed all others in quality. That makes your town worth a special trip. Why promote something that is good when your town can attract more people by being great? Offer the best and people will go out of their way to visit rather than choosing a similar experience closer to home. People have lots of choices when they travel and they can find them in just minutes via the web. They have plenty of options for activities and attractions, and it is unlikely yours is the only community that provides a certain activity. Be different. Be great. Capture more of the visitor dollar.

There are nearly 3,100 counties in the 50 U.S. states. Not surprisingly, every one of them — even in the urban areas — promotes outdoor recreation as a primary activity. Hundreds of counties and thousands of communities in these states promote hiking, biking, horseback riding, surfing, snowmobiling, skiing, bird watching, or sightseeing. Many proclaim that they have it all. County after county continuously proclaims that they have hundreds of miles of hiking and biking trails. But if every county has the same thing, why should people make a special trip to a community farther away?

Case in point: Okanogan County is located in north central Washington, just below the Canadian border. Spectacularly beautiful with hundreds of miles of trails and year-round recreation, it still wasn't attracting visitors from the lucrative Seattle market.



Why? The thirteen counties closer to the metropolitan area were promoting the same thing, so why drive an extra two hours to visit Okanogan County?

The folks in Okanogan "Country" (never market counties) scoured the guidebooks for quotes from people who have actually experienced the recreational activities there and began running ads using quotes they found: "Rocky Mountain powder in the Northwest? Go ahead, pinch yourself, you're in the Methow Valley." "Perhaps the best cross-country skiing on the continent." "Without a doubt, the best mountain biking in the lower 48." "A must visit destination for anyone, of any age, who owns or wants to snowmobile." Quotes like these now make Okanogan Country worth the extra drive.

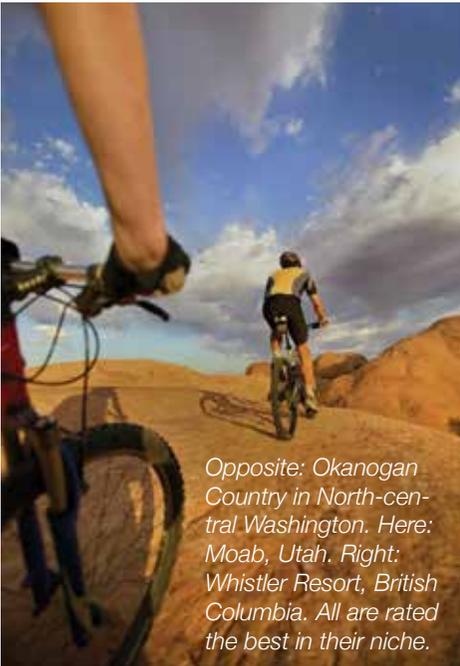
People travel from around the world to ski at Whistler Resort in British Columbia. Why? Because it has been awarded the distinction of being the “Best ski resort in North America” for ten years running. In fact, Whistler, which will host the 2010 Winter Olympics, now does more business in the summer than during the ski season, making it a true year round destination.

Simply self-proclaiming that you’re the best won’t cut it. Your town needs third-party endorsements. Cozumel, Mexico, located in the Caribbean with hundreds of other legendary islands, was competing for a share of the lucrative scuba diving market, but had a hard time distinguishing itself from Aruba, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, Barbados, and countless other islands. That was until Cozumel was labeled the “drift diving capital of the world” by Skin Diver Magazine. This is now the thrust of Cozumel’s marketing effort to the dive community. By being the best, and being recognized by credible sources as such, Cozumel has seen great tourism success.

Moab, Utah, is considered to have the best “slick rock” mountain biking in North America. Just hop on the web and search for “Moab biking” and you’ll see thousands of links. It’s not just a self-proclaimed title; enthusiasts, magazines, television documentaries, clubs, and a host of organizations have all bestowed the title on Moab.

Your town can’t afford to rest on its laurels just because it is the best today. People are always gunning for the number one spot, and they’ll take it away from you unless you do whatever it takes to keep your town on top.

Communities should develop attractions and supporting businesses that make them the absolute best. Your goal is to get all visitors to stop their cars on the way out of town, get out, turn toward the town, and applaud because your performance was so extraordinary.



Opposite: Okanogan Country in North-central Washington. Here: Moab, Utah. Right: Whistler Resort, British Columbia. All are rated the best in their niche.





The Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California

Rule #3

Success begins with a good architect

The rule of planning

Can you imagine building your dream home without a set of plans? The result would be a quirky set of misaligned walls and stairs leading nowhere, perhaps suitable as a tourist attraction in its own right, but not that livable.

In fact, that's just what the wealthy heiress, Sarah Winchester, did in San Jose, California. To foil evil spirits, she continually built onto her existing mansion. There are 2,000 doors (that's an average of twelve per room), forty staircases, and numerous secret passages. It is so complex that even the mistress of the manor required a map to get around. And after her death, the Winchester Mystery House did indeed become a popular visitor attraction.

Winchester House is the exception to the rule; most communities do not wish to be known for their lack of planning. Too many communities use the shotgun approach: "Let's run an ad here, let's send a press release there, we need another sign over there...." Without continuity, you cannot build an industry that will stand the test of time.

Before you roll your eyes at the prospect of hiring expensive consultants to develop a plan for you, this is something you can do internally if you've got the time and expertise. To make it easier, here are the primary components for creating your plan.

1. Forget strategic plans

Thank goodness, the days of strategic plans are coming to a close. How many 300 plus page plans have you actually read or followed? Most people read the executive summary and then park it on a shelf where it gathers dust for months or even years. In fact, strategies, goals and objectives should consume no more than three pages



Remember to always promote the activity, not the asset. As in this example, hang your hat on the canoeing, not the waterway. If this is your brand focus, it must be significantly better or different than what your audience can get closer to home so that you become the destination of choice for all canoeing and kayaking enthusiasts in your geographic market area.

of your plan. To win you need to develop a concise, to the point, step-by-step “how to” Action Plan that can be fully implemented over the next three years. If you want to create a 20-year plan, provide details for the first three years, list the rest and when you get to year two and a half and have implemented most of the three-year list, then you add the details for the next three years.

2. Develop an Action Plan

An Action Plan lists each recommendation, or to-do item, in chronological order of when they would be implemented, who would take the lead (city, chamber of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, tourism, downtown, economic development, etc.), the approximate cost to implement it, where the money would come from, and the rationale for doing it, and “how to” instructions on how to implement it.

Each recommendation should take no more than a page and your plan should be never be more than 100 pages. In fact, fifty or less is even better. Your table of contents should have check boxes next to each recommendation so

you can check them off as they are implemented.

3. Sell the vision - the outcome

Instead of an executive summary, craft a Vision Statement: what implementation of this plan will do for the community and your tourism efforts. This is your sales pitch - when people can “catch the vision” you will have them as staunch supporters of your efforts. In the end, this is a plan that sits on your desk, not a shelf with a number of other unrealized plans.

Now that you have some idea of how the plan is laid out, the plan needs to cover three incredibly important themes: branding, product development and marketing. In fact, your plan will be your Branding, Development & Marketing Action Plan.

4. Find your brand

Branding is about finding your unique selling proposition - that one thing that sets you apart from everyone else and makes you worth a special trip. This was just covered in Rule #1: Make it Easy to Tell Your Cows From My Cows. Some of the craziest ideas make the best destinations. The Winchester Mystery House in San Jose is one of those.

5. Concentrate on product development

Every amazing destination is successful because of product development, not marketing. Marketing will bring visitors to you just once. The only thing that brings them back is product - the primary attraction, complementary activities, and your amenities. No one can rest on their laurels, not even Disney. They constantly improve, upgrade, and add to each Disney experience so you'll come back time and again.

Because product development is so important the day of the Destination Marketing Organization is now officially over. That's right. Over. Instead you must now become a Destination Management Organization. You MUST get into the product development game. I know, there will be no increase in pay, you'll have twice as much work, and will constantly be pushing partnering organizations to help, but without a product development effort, your efforts will be short-lived and you won't accomplish the goal of this book becoming an amazing destination.

This is why advertising, graphic design, and marketing agencies are not the people to help you develop your plan. However, they certainly need to be at the table for the third element: marketing.

6. Then tell the world

The marketing portion of your plan is where you include your messaging (what you're telling the world), the look and feel of your efforts, and how you're going to tell the world that you are, indeed, an amazing destination.

In a nutshell, here's what your plan covers:

Branding (what sets you apart from everyone else, specifically)

Development (the product and complementary activities that back it up)

& Marketing (how to tell the world)

Action Plan (you - and your partners - to do list)

This is your blueprint and every community should have one. The plan should be so detailed that anyone can follow its recommendations and build a thriving tourism industry. Brevity is the name of the game. Get to the point, provide specifics, take out all the filler stuff that is NOT action-oriented.

As you develop your plan, remember that visitors are not attracted to you because you are home to lakes, rivers, beaches, forests, trails, museums, and historic downtowns. These are all terrific resources, but in themselves are not the primary draw. People will visit you because you offer exceptional fishing, river rafting, sandcastle building, hiking, cross country skiing, mountain biking, local history, and a vibrant shopping and dining district.

BRANDING (What you're known for, specifically)

DEVELOPMENT (what needs to be done so you "own" it)

& MARKETING (how to tell the world)

ACTION PLAN (the to-do list)

Visitors are looking for things to do - activities - not things to look at. And those activities need to be different or better than what they can find closer to home. I'm sorry, but scenic vistas last three minutes. Then what?

After a community identifies what it has that sets it apart from every other community, finding out who to target - both geographically and demographically - becomes a little easier. Tourism plans must target different types of attractions to different types of visitors. There are day visitors, convention attendees, business travelers, people visiting friends and family, vacationers, and niche groups from bird watchers to motorcycle clubs. They all spend money when they come to town. But they all want different services and amenities to cater to their particular needs and desires.

7. It takes a team to win

This is why having a plan is so important. And this is why the plan is a community-wide plan - everyone plays a role in a successful tourism effort: the city or town including various departments like parks and recreation, planning, and public works. Other partners might include the county or district, local chamber of commerce, economic development, local schools, and downtown organizations and merchants. Former First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton used four words in the title of a book she authored, and those four words are very appropriate in creating an amazing destination: "It takes a village" to win.

Approach your tourism plan as if you were designing a house. It should feature a welcoming entryway, all the necessary amenities such as bathrooms, a place to play, a place to relax, and a special room for each of your guests. If only Sarah Winchester had known - planning is the best method to keep the evil spirits at bay.



Above and left: Make sure your brand is more than an annual event. After all, once the balloon fest, car show, your showcase event or festival is over, what's your unique selling proposition the other 362 days of the year?



Rule #4

Insanity has its own rewards

The rule of getting people to stop



How would you like to spend some time at the annual Mike the Headless Chicken festival in Fruita, Colorado? Or browsing in the gift shop inside a four-story high Brontosaurus near Palm Springs? Or climbing into a large inflated “hamster ball,” known as a Zorb (opposite page photo) rolling down a hill while you roll around inside, totally out of control. Or how about attending the National Lentil Festival in the Palouse Region of Washington and Idaho?

They may not sound like the most exciting places to visit, yet tens of thousands of people flock to these communities every year to celebrate lentils and a chicken that supposedly lived for years without his head. People come from all over the world to shop inside a giant dinosaur’s belly, feast on the largest pot of lentil soup, or participate in a great game of Chicken Bingo (the numbers are chosen by where the chicken droppings fall on a numbered grid.) What may seem rather insane to you means hundreds of thousands of dollars to the communities that came up with these zany ideas. For many people, being part of such silly fun is just too big an attraction to miss.

In the last rule you learned to never hang your brand - your unique selling proposition on a single event. And here we are touting crazy ideas and events. The first rule in tourism is getting people to take notice (you do something that’s newsworthy or could go viral) and to get passers-by to stop. If you can’t get them to stop, then how can you become an overnight destination? The tourism progression goes something like this:

1. Get passers-by to stop. Gas, food, the best cinnamon rolls in the region...
2. Get them to stay two hours and spending will double.
3. Get them to tell their family and friends through social media, spreading the word.
4. Becoming an overnight destination. Visitors who spend the night spend four times that of the person who stops and spends a couple of hours in your community. That

is your ultimate goal.

This rule is about finding crazy, fun, or novel ideas that will get people to stop, spend two hours, tell their friends about the experience, and in the process working towards becoming an overnight destination - or a year round destination. Hopefully, the insane idea you have will be part of your long-term brand - what you want to be known for.

In the beautiful town of Canmore, Alberta (population 10,000) just minutes away from Banff National Park, the town is known for its winter sports. During the Canmore Winter Carnival, two blocks of Main Street are closed to traffic (see photo below) and it becomes a cross-country ski track down the middle of the street. Canmore Ski Tracks lasts for five days, and gets a lot of publicity and draws thousands during a rather slow time of year for downtown merchants.

Coming up with an insane or unique idea does not mean that you have to be half-cocked in its development. It takes a great deal of planning and consensus in order to turn an idea into the theme that sets your town apart and makes visiting it worth a special trip. Your town's uniqueness may emerge in a variety of ways, such as architectural, event, or marketing themes.

A good way to start the insanity bandwagon is to look at the ideas of other communities. Don't copy them, but use them to inspire your own creative imagination. Let's say you start with Mike the Headless Chicken. We can agree that headless chickens are out - been there, done that. But maybe your community is the rubber chicken capital of the world ... or is rumored to have been the inspiration for The Headless Horseman ... or there was that flying pig incident back in the 1920s.

Riverside, Iowa, proclaimed itself the future birthplace of Captain James T. Kirk of Star Trek and began holding annual Trek-Fests. Hollywood and William Shatner played a practical joke on the whole town as a consequence, pretending to film a new movie



there, and the town ended up with lots of publicity and a short series on Spike TV. Riverside's fame grew, and it's become a destination for Star Trek fans from as far away as Finland.



Along the Historic National Road in Illinois, travelers can gape at a 170 foot tall bottle of catsup, which is now in the Guinness Book of World Records. The City of Metropolis, Ohio, the self-proclaimed hometown of Superman, boasts a 15 foot bronze statue of the hero, to the delight of thousands of comic book fans. If you're traveling through Nebraska, make sure you stop in Alliance to see Carhenge, a project that local resident Jim Reinders and family built from 39 cars (above).

In Lovelock, Nevada, a town of 2,000 residents located 90 miles east of Reno, the town was desperately looking for ways to tap into the 20-million people who drive through Lovelock along Interstate 80 each year, but rarely stop. The Nevada Commission on



Lovers Lock along Great Wall of China



Tourism was making a push into the growing Chinese market, and their staff person from China heard “Lovelock” and instantly thought of the popular “Lovers Lock” near Beijing along the Great Wall of China (photos below). Perhaps with a name like Lovelock, it could become a destination where travelers could stop, purchase a lock and lock their love.

The local chamber of commerce jumped on the idea. They put up bollards and chain around the iconic round courthouse and worked with retailers who would sell heart-shaped locks - and here’s the clincher - if you’d like your locks engraved, it will take a couple of hours. Meanwhile, visitors are spending time in the shops, having lunch, and that translates to visitor spending. Within months visitors were driving the 90 miles from Reno just to lock their love in Lovelock. The goal is, over time, to develop a never-ending chain of locks all through town.

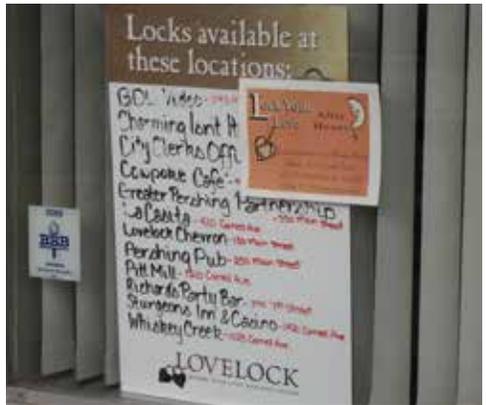
Over the years they’ve had several stops and starts. Often retailers were out of locks with visitors scrambling to purchase ordinary padlocks and then using anything sharp they could find to do their own engraving on each lock - an often frustrating and less than desirable outcome for what should be a terrific experience.

The point is that when you come up with that crazy idea, it can become a lasting brand IF you have the one or two local champions who will always push it forward, and always make sure the community “delivers on the promise” - what they expect when they arrive.

Americans may find comfort in the familiarity of a McDonald’s on every corner, but they will seek out that which is truly unique. Sometimes it is as close as the nearest garage. A gentleman in St. Maries, Idaho, has collected every model Corvette ever manufactured, plus Corvette Indy pace cars. St. Maries has a timber heritage, but can you imagine the attraction if the whole town adopted a Corvette theme, with every store or restaurant adopting a model year, and, room permitting, placing one of the cars inside the store? Can you imagine the number of Corvette clubs, rallies, and classic car events that would gravitate to scenic St. Maries? Once there, visitors could learn more about St. Maries, including its timber heritage. The Corvette theme would be a powerful magnet. Much more so than, say, a timber museum.

A car museum is rather ordinary, but having the whole town adopt a Corvette theme with Corvettes in nearly every shop, would make St. Maries extraordinary.

In order to be successful in tourism a town must set itself apart from everyone else. If your community offers the same thing a visitor can get closer to home, then why should they make a special trip to visit your town? There really is no such thing as an insane idea. One man’s headless chicken is another community’s golden goose egg.



Head to Lovelock, Nevada, purchase a heart-shaped lock for yourself and one for each of those you love, have them engraved, lock them together, and place them on the never-ending chain locking your love forever. Eventually the chain will go throughout their downtown.



PLUS: SWEATING IT OUT WITH THE WIZARDS DANCERS;
LIZA MUNDY ON THE PENTAGON WATCH

DECEMBER 2, 2001

The Washington Post Magazine



SHELL

El Aguila Real
MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Nowheresville, U.S.A.

Gene Weingarten's Tribute to the
WORST PLACE IN AMERICA

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Rule #5

If it stinks, use deodorant

The rule of turning negatives into positives

When it comes to this subject of branding - finding your unique selling proposition - sometimes the perception of a community is somewhat, if not outright, negative.

When the Washington Post designated Battle Mountain, Nevada, as “The Armpit of America” a small, friendly community suddenly became the butt of late night TV humor. Similarly, Highway 50, connecting five communities in Nevada, was referred to as “the loneliest road in America” in a LIFE magazine interview with a person from the American Automobile Association. He went on to say that people would need a survival kit if they were to get stuck there.

Certainly these comments did nothing to enhance the reputation of Battle Mountain or the communities along Highway 50. In fact, they dissuaded anyone from wanting to visit.

In cases like this, the community needs “re-branding” or “repositioning.” Many times the perceptions are inaccurate or are outdated, yet the perceptions persist. In Oxnard, California, the city with the unfortunate name, the general perception throughout Southern California was that Oxnard was a hotbed of crime and gun violence. The city, at one point, outlawed low-hanging jeans and hoodies. Of course this made the news and perpetuated the negative brand. The truth is that Oxnard hasn’t had a gang problem for years so they continually sent out press releases and did everything they could to dispel the negative perceptions.

The challenge is that when you tell the world you no longer have a gang or crime problem, the words “Oxnard,” “gangs,” and “crime” are still being used and you’re telling people that you used to have an issue. And since the messaging was coming from Oxnard that there is no longer an issue, it’s not believable - and the brand persists.

Up the coast in the East Bay area of San Francisco, the city of Pittsburg also had a major perception problem. In fact, a common perception was “when Oakland cleaned

up its crime, it moved to Pittsburg.” The city was constantly in the news, are rarely in a good way. But the city council and new city manager took this seriously and heavily-handed cracked down on the situation, condemning apartments where meth labs were found, strictly enforcing loitering and panhandling laws, and putting anyone and everyone on notice that the city would have a zero tolerance policy about crime in their city. They cleaned up the city in short order, yet the “brand” persisted.

So how do you break the cycle? How do you change those perceptions? By telling a different story. Telling the world “we no longer have a problem” does nothing to change the perception. In Oxnard, there was a move to actually change the name of the town to Oxnard Shores so the public would know they have some beautiful ocean beaches. Over several years, downtown Oxnard saw incredible investment: new multi-screen movie theater, a dozen new restaurants, a weekly farmers market, new boutique shops. The marketing concentrated on Oxnard as the hub city for day trips



Pittsburg, California (left) in the East Bay area of San Francisco, and Oxnard, California (below) located in Southern California between Malibu and Ventura both struggled with negative perceptions.



In both cases they “fixed” the problems and then told a new story, based on positives, including the renovated California Theater in Old Town Pittsburg (middle). By doing this they were able to successfully reposition themselves as desirable destinations.



to the Channel Islands, its stunning and underused beaches, its vibrant downtown, it's two incredible marinas. No mention was made of past issues or yesterday's Oxnard. And it worked.

In Pittsburg, The city aggressively recruited new investment into their marina and "Old Town Pittsburg." The community was founded as an Italian fishing village, so downtown adopted that motif. Investors developed the Vidrio, a mixed-use development downtown. The marina underwent a massive renovation in a public/private partnership, making it a showcase for the East Bay area. Word got out that San Francisco 49er players loved the New Mecca Cafe, and people started checking out Pittsburg. The California Theater underwent a transformation, bring more people downtown. And when they showed up, they had a great time. And the "new story" took hold. Locals, visitors, and the press started talking about the car shows coming to Pittsburg, the restaurants, the new marina, the restaurants. Within just three years Pittsburg was one of the great places in the San Francisco Bay area to live, raise a family, do business, and visit.

The media, including social media outlets, have tremendous power in persuading people to do something or go somewhere. They provide movie reviews, restaurant ratings, and other commentary to help people enjoy themselves while spending their money wisely. And visitors trust peer reviews 90% of the time over ads at just 14%. This is why TripAdvisor is the most visited travel website on the planet. More often than not, social and traditional media reviews will have a positive impact on an establishment. However, if a community gets a bad review for a festival gone wrong, or if something negative takes place that is reported all over the country (or even in the region), its entire economy can be devastated and it can take place in just a day or two, with lasting consequences.

It doesn't matter whether the information is correct or not. Once a negative comment is made, the story often takes on a life of its own, with little regard for its effect on the people who live in the area. In this age of instant communication, you can no longer control what is said about you. You can only influence it, try to manage it, and seed new stories that shed a different light on the community. A smart community with bad reviews may find that it's not necessarily bad for business.





In July of 1986, Life Magazine published an article that pronounced U.S. Highway 50 in rural Nevada "The Loneliest Road in America." The article, for the most part, portrayed this area of Nevada as devoid of civilization. White Pine County and the Nevada Commission on Tourism decided to play it up, creating a Passport Survival Guide, and convincing the Nevada Department of Transportation to join in.



Subsequently you'd find Highway 50 in official highway logs and maps labeled "The Loneliest Road in America," a public phone dubbed "the loneliest phone on the loneliest road," and signs marking the designation along the route.

It has become so popular, it has caused at least one travel writer to dispute whether the highway still deserves the title.

Rural tourism officials in Nevada met with the folks in Battle Mountain after the Washington Post article was released and decided that they could do one of three things: they could be mad and write letters to the editor and even cancel their subscriptions; they could let it go, hope that no one read the articles, and wait for it to go away, or they could turn a negative into a positive. As you might imagine, they agreed to the latter.

Folks in Battle Mountain began promoting the “Festival of the Pit.” Instead of an old-fashioned egg toss they staged a deodorant toss as part of the festivities. Firefighters from around the country took part. The chamber even purchased a billboard on Interstate 80 encouraging motorists to make a “pit stop” in Battle Mountain. It also sent a blanket invitation to any community that has been considered an armpit, they can have a free booth at the festival if they’ll just show up and staff it.

Battle Mountain’s stinky notoriety even landed them a sponsor for their annual event. Old Spice underwrote a portion of the activities. CNN and USA Today have covered the festival. And not only did USA Today run an article on the situation, they’ve offered to make bumper stickers saying, “Don’t roll on by. Make Battle Mountain your next pit stop.” Your town can’t buy publicity like that. On top of all that, the community rallied together, and in just two weeks, hauled off more than forty tons of trash from around town. A major revitalization has been underway, and Battle Mountain has been seeing resurgence in its community pride, and in its tourism industry.

The Loneliest Road in America was another challenge for Nevada’s tourism commission. A survival kit was created, promoted, and made available at retailers in every town along the route. It didn’t take long before visitors from all over the country were exploring the loneliest road including the discovery of the “loneliest phone booth in America.” Eureka, Nevada, promoted itself as the “Friendliest Town on The Loneliest Road in America.” All this publicity brings tens of thousands of people to the area each year. It is a good example of Yogi Berra’s maxim that “Nobody goes there anymore. It’s too crowded.”

Being stinky and lonely may not be attributes that you would want to put on your town’s résumé; however, a few choice hints to USA Today and CNN could turn that odor in the air into the smell of money rolling into your economy.



Rule #6

Happiness is positive cash flow

The rule of marketing versus product development

Cash flow is the lifeblood of the economy. The goal of every business is to have enough cash coming in so that it can pay the bills and improve what it has to offer. As long as more money is coming into the business than is going out, people are happy. The benefit of tourism is that it is an import industry. Visitors come into town, spend money, and go home, which imports cash into the local economy. Successful communities import more cash from visitors than they export from residents who earn money locally and spend it elsewhere.

A goal of just about every community is to effectively promote their attractions and events and help keep their businesses in positive cash flow. The more money that goes into effective promotion, the more local businesses will reap as a result of visitor spending. The more money a business makes, the greater the tax collections that go back to the community. The more money the community collects, the more money that is available to use on community promotions and quality of life enhancements. Thus, the cycle continues, always improving the business climate and opening up opportunities for new and growing businesses.

While the marketing effort is important, it should not be the only priority. Many communities make this mistake, when they should also be investing in upgrading or adding to their product. If a business puts all of its money in advertising and little or nothing into inventory or product development, the business will ultimately fail. Quite often, travelers will visit a community as a result of the marketing effort and go home disappointed, never to visit again. For others, when it comes time to plan the next trip, they will cross your town off the list as a “been there, done that” community. Others won’t be convinced that your town has enough to offer to make a special trip in the first place, and some travelers will simply know better.

The point is that every single community should make product development the top priority. Activities. Attractions. Amenities. Always invest in product development first

and marketing later. A smart community will initially spend 90 percent of its available tourism budget on product development, and as the product gets better and better, gradually tip the scales to perhaps 50 percent product development and 50 percent marketing.

If there's one sentence in this book that bears repeating - here it is:

**Marketing will get visitors to you exactly once.
Product (your activities & amenities) are the ONLY thing that will bring them back.**

It's a whole lot cheaper to bring people back than it is to keep attracting first-time visitors. Sooner or later, you'll run out of visitors when they've all "been there, done that."

Also worth repeating is the fact that the days of Destination Marketing Organizations are officially over. That's right. Over. Instead, you're in the age of Destination Management Organizations. This means you must champion and further the cause of product development. It also means you now have twice as much work and no increase in staff or funding. At the end of the day, you will be judged, as a community, on your product, not your marketing. Additionally, you are only as good as the product you have to promote.

Parowan, Utah, a small community of 2,800 residents, is located in Southern Utah between Interstate 15 and Brian Head, one of Utah's premier ski and summer destinations. During the winter months, the only way to Brian Head from I-15 is through Parowan. The town is one of Utah's poorest communities in terms of incomes and jobs, the town itself has little in the way of funding to do anything substantial, and has never played a role in Utah's tourism industry. Their location, while nice, is not on the top of development lists so what should they do? They are starting at square one.





What they do have in Parowan is the popular Parowan Cafe on Main Street, a couple of other small retailers, and a few others closer to the Interstate.

Garden City, a town on the shores of Bear Lake in Northern Utah is famous for its raspberry shakes - even written up in the New York Times. Julian, California, a town of 1,500, is known for its apple pie. Orderville, a town of less than 600 in Southern Utah is known for its Forscher German Bakery. Perhaps Parowan could be home to the best cinnamon rolls in Utah. And that's exactly where they are headed.

Imagine hoards of skiers heading to and from Brian Head, stopping for fresh cinnamon rolls, hot chocolate or coffee, and other treats that will warm them up. Imagine half a dozen places serving up their own special cinnamon roll recipes - strawberry, chocolate, sourdough, carmel, creamy, or gluten free. For pick up or to eat inside. And with it visitors can pick up juices and drinks as well as other snacks. Over time they will stop for breakfast as well. And as more people stop, other retailers and shops will begin to pop up. There will be cinnamon roll pole banners throughout town. Merchants can sell cinnamon roll "starter kits" and can give away recipes. Every event could include a "bake off" - a cinnamon roll taste test competition.

A small team of local enthusiasts, working with the chamber of commerce, sat down and once cinnamon rolls were chosen as the product, the ideas just started pouring from the team.

Over time Parowan could be featured in magazines, on the web, and become known for the best cinnamon rolls in Southern Utah. Then the best in Utah. And then in the West. And then in the country. The ultimate prize: the best cinnamon rolls in the world.



So, to start, they are looking for participants: restaurants and retail shops with certified kitchens. Then will come the vetting process. With lofty goals like this, it only takes one bad apple - you know the rest of that line. There will need to be some rules, such as all cinnamon rolls need to be fresh - baked that day. They need to be exceptionally good. They can't let politics get in the way so they may need to rely on outsiders to actually do the vetting for them. They have one chance to get it right. And once they've got a winning product, the word will quickly spread through social media, on the local news and radio stations, then in print.

It will take a year or two, and the local champions will need to stay on top of every business and every recipe being used locally. But with very little money and a fair amount of drive-through traffic, and champions with great vision, there's just no reason why Parowan can't make the New York Times like Garden City has done with its raspberry shakes.

While every community is different, the scales should never be tipped to more than about 70 percent for marketing. Product development never ends; it's an ongoing process and should ALWAYS be the top priority. Remember, people visit your town because of the product(s) it offers. Keep adding to it and making it better, and you'll get more repeat business, have a longer season, and a strong brand that will require less effort to market.

No business or community can rest on its laurels if its wants to have longevity. Not even Disney and those at the top of the destination charts. For those who've been successful, look out, success means others will be gunning for you - ready to knock you off their perch, or copy you, eroding your "ownership" of your brand and taking visitors away during the process.

The product development budget should not be spent solely for community events and attractions that draw visitors. Your town must also invest in signage, wayfinding, visitor information kiosks, public restrooms, theme development, beautification, supporting businesses, your activities, and so forth. Communities must also make sure that they talk to their business owners and learn what infrastructure should be upgraded or developed to help enhance their community — the product — and keep people coming back. This is part of a business retention program. Without a strong business retention program to support local businesses, a tourism program will never succeed.

A great product successfully marketed will result in continued cash flow that will keep businesses and the community happy. That's the power of positive cash flow.



Rule #7

Movie credits tell the real story

The rule of supporting businesses

Can you imagine buying a ticket to a movie where one person did everything? He or she was the star, the director, the producer, the grip, the casting agent, and even the best boy. It doesn't happen. There's a good reason why so many people work on a successful production. It's because no matter how big the star, no matter how good a job they do in marketing the show, the actor is nothing without a supporting cast and a team of technical experts. Successful filmmaking requires a team effort.

In successful tourism, there is never only one business holding up the entire industry. Not even Disneyland can do it alone. It needs airports, rental car companies, hotels, restaurants, and even other attractions that will keep people in the area longer.

Communities can develop an entire marketing campaign for their greatest attraction, but without supporting businesses, the attraction will never reach its full potential. Thirty years ago, Whistler Resort in British Columbia was just another rural community with about 750 residents and a dream. Whistler started as a seasonal ski destination, and most of the town's retail businesses couldn't survive the remaining seven months of each year. Then in the early 1980s, the development of the renowned Whistler Village began to take shape as a backdrop to the mountain attraction. Next door Blackcomb Village was coming together. In the early 1980's they joined together creating Whistler Blackcomb. Whistler and Blackcomb Villages are now home to more than 200 retail shops, nearly 100 restaurants, and 4,000 first-class accommodations. Additionally, there are mountain bike rentals, river rafting guides, two golf courses, and a host of other "supporting businesses." Even though Whistler Blackcomb is rated as the "Best Ski Resort in North America," it now does more business in the summer than in the winter months. Oh, the power of supporting businesses.

Not every community will have a mountain in their backyard, but most have attractions that are unique to the area. If you have a certain biking or hiking trail that is your claim to fame, seek out retail businesses such as bike rental, sales, and repair shops,

tour guides, and supply stores. Sprinkle in a few restaurants and hotels that have lockers for bikes and gear, and you've got the makings of your supporting cast.

How do you find a supporting cast? The first rule of any business recruitment program is to ask your primary attraction, "What are the businesses that would help you be successful in bringing in more visitors or getting them to stay longer?" They will provide a list of suppliers as well as amenities and other attractions that will keep people spending money in the area for days, if not weeks. Primary attractions know the advantages of having their suppliers close by and a range of diverse activities available. They even appreciate competitors, knowing that the presence of one supports the other.

Once you have your brand - that primary activity that puts you on the map, you'll know what kind of audience you'll be attracting. Disney World attracts a lot of families and multi-generational tourism. So the restaurants, retail shops and activities in Downtown Disney are there for that particular audience. You can bet that the shops, eateries and accommodations in Hamilton, Missouri with its "Disneyland for quilters" attracts an entirely audience than does the often wild nightlife along New Orleans' Bourbon Street.

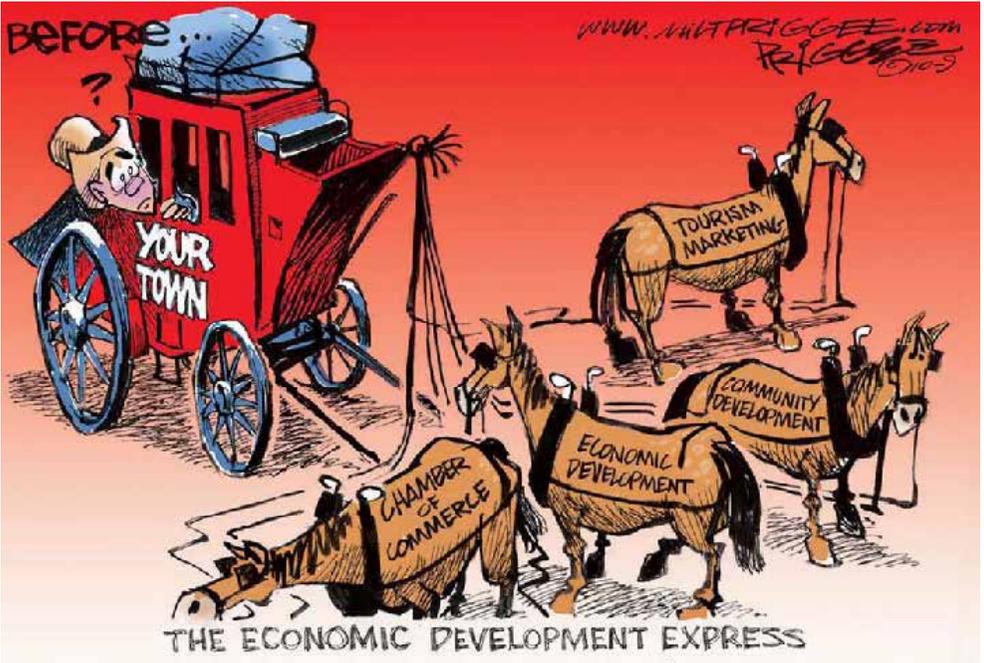
Once you know your audience, it will be easy to come up with a great list of supporting businesses, activities and amenities.

The most important element of a supporting cast, is having a cast that supports what you do. Go back to Rule #3: Success Begins With a Good Architect. As you develop your plan, the to-do list will include a host of local organizations from schools, to the city or town, to the chamber of commerce and list goes on. Once you have everyone working on the same film, so to speak, working from the same script, on the same page at the same time, you will succeed.

Notice the two drawings on the opposing page. The top is the typical economic development express and it's not going very far as each organization is working in its own silo and not talking to each other. When you identify your supporting cast, put your plan together, and get everyone working from the same script, you move to the bottom drawing. Notice the color of green? That's the color of money and success.

Communities also want to make sure that the supporting cast can be successful all year round. After all, being the best ski destination is only a four-month run. Whistler pioneers wanted the area to become more than just a winter resort, so their businesses could succeed. That is why you'll find the lifts open for mountain bikers and hikers during the off-season.

Whistler may continue to receive accolades as the number one ski destination in North America, but the supporting businesses are reaping the rewards of being profitable all year long.



Imagine the nightmare if every Coca-Cola bottling plant was charged with their own design and marketing of Coke products. There would be no continuity, consumers would be confused as to what the company was selling, and the brand's value would be zero. In fact, Coke would probably not exist today. This same rationale applies to communities. You are far more effective as a single unified voice than a number of small separate individual voices, with no power in the real world to get yourself on the map as THE destination of choice.





Rule #8

Great stories make the campfire memorable

The rule of telling stories

The rancher's cattle were disappearing at alarming rates. A look at the dusty terrain did not uncover any human footprints, so they must not have been rustled. But carcasses weren't found either, ruling out wild animals. And since the fields were fenced, the Nevada rancher was quite sure the cattle didn't just wander off.

After months of agonizing losses, the rancher sent out a couple of farm hands to stake out the fields. They bedded down on a hilltop, and at dawn one morning, they heard loud whooping and hollering and the sounds of bellowing cattle in the valley below. They scrambled out of their sleeping bags and ran down the hill as fast as they could to where the cattle were gathered. With guns loaded and cocked, they stopped, dead in their tracks, gaping in amazement...

Storytelling has been a form of education and entertainment since the Stone Age. It began with stories around the campfire and etchings on the cave wall and has progressed to bedtime stories and midnight readings of Harry Potter. Storytelling, like opposable thumbs, is a characteristic that distinguishes humans from all other animals. Stories entertain, teach, establish moral precedents, and recall our genealogy. They can do just about anything and always bring people together — including bringing visitors into a community.

Culturally rich tourism is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry. It takes visitors on a journey of discovery, beyond the gift shops and amusements and into a community's soul, into its history, environment, and the arts.

Museums are a mainstay of cultural tourism. They will often display items from the town and showcase some of the unusual characters that lived there. But many museums fail because they simply show artifacts rather than tell stories. They have collections of old bottles, typewriters, furniture, industry equipment, and all sorts of memorabilia that have meaning but no context. And if you hope to attract audiences

from the Millennial and GenX generations (Millennials now outnumber baby boomers as the largest generation in U.S. history) museums and historical attractions need to change their focus. For one, quit using the words “artifacts,” “collections,” “displays,” and “donated by...” Just saying the words out loud will foster yawns and droopy eyelids.

If you want visitors to remember you, tell others about your history, and come back, then you need to “evoke emotion.” Those two key words are critical in creating a lasting, memorable experience.

After secret-shopping more than a thousand communities and at least that many historical sites and museums throughout North America and abroad, the Roger Brooks team was assessing the small town of Concordia, Kansas. A couple of years later, not too much about the town was overly memorable, but one little museum, housed in a small train depot, turned out to be one of the most amazing experiences in a 35 plus year career in the travel industry.

This rural town of 5,000 is home to the National Orphan Train Museum, dedicated to the preservation of the stories of those who were part of the Orphan Train Movement that took place from 1854 to 1929. Without going into too much detail, there were thousand of orphaned kids on the streets of New York - immigrants from around the world. Volunteers put them on trains to adoptive homes around the country. This little museum tells the stories of those orphans: why they were orphaned, where they ended up, what became of them. The stories are amazing - most requiring multiple hankies.

In each window is a black and white tin-type photograph printed on opaque cloth, so the light comes through creating a ghostly, but lifelike image of the orphaned child. Next to it is their personal story with a photo of them as an adult. Many include stories told by their kids. And all are very touching.

The photographs are large and vivid and you are transported back 100 years to the plight of these children and the amazing efforts of the Orphan Train volunteers. In decades of looking at displays, artifacts, and historical writings, one story, told by Reverend Herman D. Clarke, who placed more than 1,300 orphans in homes around the country included the following in his journal:

“People...expect more of an orphan child than they do of their own. The faults seem greater; are magnified greater...I was sent to take away a boy...for the “awful” crime of going in the cellar and sticking his fingers in some jelly. Would they send away their own child for that?”

“Those who take a child...and keep him or her...will have a great reward. It is the rearing of a monument far greater than that made from marble or granite.”

Wow. That’s just one of many touching stories. There are many others where orphan kids became doctors, builders, and gave back to society. It’s really the story of how

It's not fancy, in fact, it's a pretty basic museum, but the stories are simply priceless. The photography is large and pulls you immediately into each story, which is easy to read, incredibly captivating, and emotional. Few museums have as much heart as the Orphan Train Depot Museum in Concordia, Kansas. Even if you're not a student of history, this is one little museum worth a special trip.

A Growing Problem: Unrestricted Immigration

Between 1881 and 1921, 21 million immigrants arrived by land through New York Harbor. Many were poor, uneducated, and lacked resources or means of employment. Desperate parents sent children out to earn money by working on the streets selling shoes or taking orders. "Little merchants" hawked matches, newspapers, apples - or themselves. They had to be wary.

Immigrants flooded into the city daily. Those without means crowded into filthy, disease-ridden tenements with no heat, running water, street air or sunlight. Twenty adults and children may have lived in a space intended for a family of four. Fifty or more people may have used a single toilet or bathroom. In crowded, airless rooms, disease spread quickly. But control was nearly nonexistent.

In a large family, when a mother died in childbirth, a desperate father may have had to give away the baby, which heeding the advice - ended up dying on the - streets for weeks.

Photo from the Children's Aid Society, ca. 1900



America was built and the plight of immigrant families who arrived on Ellis Island in New York City.

Take a look at the photos and stories on the opposite page. If you're ever near Kansas City, take a nice three and a half hour drive Northwest and visit the Orphan Train Depot. And while you're in Concordia, don't miss the beautifully restored Brown Grand Theater, and meet the Sisters who will tour you through the amazing Nazareth Convent. And while there, stop in for lunch at Maria's Joy Bistro. You'll love it.

When visitors can "feel" what conditions were like, or can "feel" the pain, the joy, the panic, and fun, it will imprint into their memories forever.

When a visitor can actually pick up an "iron," made of iron for the purpose of ironing clothes, they will see what strength it takes to hold a five-pound object, that's been heated on a wood stove, in one hand for even a couple of minutes.

When you pull people into your stories, they will remember you and they gain a new respect and love for your history. Make sure your stories are about people - make it personal. When buildings were constructed, who the architect was, and who lived there, (unless they are famous) is all secondary to what took place there, and what life was like at that point in history.

Every museum should have a focus and should then tell the stories of the people who "lived" that history.



Huntsville, Texas is home to the HEARTS Museum: Helping Every American Remember Through Serving. This amazing veterans museum does something that makes it one of the best museums of its kind. Inside are "booths," each set up by a veteran, who is there for a week or two or three to tell his or her story. Michael Comella, who has since passed away, was at the museum for several weeks where he displayed his bullet ridden helmet, war-time memorabilia as well as photos of his time serving during World War II. A bit embarrassed to be there, one you got him talking you'd find that he fought on Omaha Beach in Normandy that fateful day in June of 1944. It has been said that the first twenty minutes of the Steven Spielberg movie Saving Private Ryan, were among the best scenes in cinematic history. Officer Comella tried

to sit through those 20-minutes and was seen in tears while he relived those moments and where he lost his best friend and army buddy.

As these veterans come into town, hotels put them up at no charge, restaurants feed them, they visit the homes of local residents and they are treated, rightfully so, as heroes.

The HEARTS Museum tells everyone “we are not a typical military museum, in fact, we don’t consider ourselves a military museum at all. We are a museum about people.”

What makes a museum successful is its ability to tell stories, either oral, written or visual. An artifact without a story is boring to most people. But a story brings it alive. It makes it real and memorable. And it keeps visitors in the community longer, which translates into more spending. Museums that tell great stories will captivate visitors for hours, and they’ll develop a bond with the community. Best of all, they’ll tell other people, who more than likely will have to see it, read it, or hear it for themselves.

And now, for the rest of the cattle rustling story:

...they stopped, dead in their tracks, gaping in amazement as they came face to face with the old crook, Crazy Tex Hazelwood, rustling the rancher’s cattle while wearing the novel shoes you see here (right).

Want to see, read, and hear some more great stories? Visit the Northeastern Nevada Museum in Elko. But be forewarned; you’ll be there for hours.





Rule #9

First impressions really are lasting impressions

The rule of perceived value

The first eight rules of this book covered the topics of:

- Branding - either being the best in your niche, or substantially different so you become the destination of choice
- Creating a plan and implementing it
- Cleaning things up if needed (those first impressions)
- Making product development the top priority after branding
- Putting your team in place
- Working with your historic attractions so they tell captivating stories that will be passed on, and will keep visitors in town even longer.

This combination is the rock solid foundation to becoming an amazing destination - the primary purpose of this book. When you get to this point, visitors will be knocking on your doorstep - or entrances to your community. How will they be greeted? When coming into York, Pennsylvania, visitors on this route are greeted with a nice Welcome sign, and a sign in front of it (opposite) that says “DO NOT ENTER.” How are you greeting your visitors, your customers? What will be their first impression?

It may be true that we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but it's also true that we do. Think back to your first moments with this book. Before even turning a page, you were already forming expectations about the level of quality you would find inside.

Each entryway into your community is the cover of its book. It provides the first hint about the character and quality of the people and businesses within your community. Make no doubt about it, your community WILL be judged by its cover.

Look at your community as a mall. You want visitors to come, spend time and money in your mall, tell friends how great it was, then go home, and come back often to visit again. The entrance to your mall is wherever you've posted the first sign that states “Entering Smallville” or “Welcome to Smallville.” Take a critical look at your gateway

signage to see if it reflects the community picture you want to project. Is the sign decorative, interesting, and easy to read? Or is it a typical aluminum street sign that is easy to ignore and says nothing about you? Look at the landscaping, the lighting, and the businesses, or homes adjacent to the entryway. Does your entrance create a good first impression?

When you're on the road, hungry and want to take a meal break, how likely are you to stop at a drab building with a big sign that simply says EAT? Worse yet, how do you react to a restaurant with a sign that says CLEAN? Two things you want to assume about a restaurant: you can get food and the place is clean. If this were everything the restaurant owner could think to say about his establishment, you'd probably have to be very hungry, indeed, before you'd even consider stopping there.

On the other hand, if the building is painted and tidy, the landscaping trimmed and free of debris, has a cheerful appealing sign, and cars in the parking lot, you're likely to be eager to stop for a meal.

In fact, studies have shown that a full seventy-percent of first-time sales come from curb appeal. That's right: 70%. When you travel have you ever noted "that looks like a nice place to eat"? We all do! And probably more often than we care to admit. When it comes to choosing a quality place to shop, eat, stay, or visit, we have three ways to make a decision about the place: we can visit an app like TripAdvisor, Yelp, or another peer review site, or we may get a referral from a friend or local resident. But for a spur of the moment decision, in a place we're unfamiliar with, chances are pretty good that the decision will come solely from curb appeal.

In fact, the term "curb appeal" comes from the real estate industry where statistics show that nearly ninety percent of potential home buyers will drive-by a home being offered for sale first and then, based on that first impression or "curb appeal," whether or not the home warrants going inside. They look at two things: the neighborhood, and the home. This very same rule applies to communities and its businesses. A home owner may have spent tens of thousands of dollars putting in granite counter tops, new carpet, new paint, updating appliances and other interior improvements, yet only ten percent of potential home-buyers may see that investment, because the other ninety percent made the decision based on the neighborhood and the home's appeal as they drove by.

The same rule also applies to lodging establishments, attractions, golf courses, and retail stores. If we're strangers in town and an establishment has not been recommended by someone, we make judgments based on appearance, because it's the only immediate guide we have. The first impression will ultimately result in either "This looks like a nice place to stop," or "Let's keep going while we look for something more appealing."

Here are four important rules to creating a good first impression:

- 1) Always put your gateway signs where you'll make the first best impression. Rarely is that at the city or town limits. Most communities mark their territories by placing them at the city or county limits, but that boundary rarely has little or no marketing value.



Based on the welcome sign (top) what is your impression of Borrego Springs, California? Does it look like a community you'd want to visit? It just so happens that Borrego Springs is surrounded by the incredible Anza-Borrego Desert State Park — the largest state park in the nation. The community offers several terrific golf courses (above), outstanding resorts, interpretive centers, and a shopping village. What is your first impression of the Mount Shasta Resort (above right) or the Big Pillow Motel? Based on your first impression, which do you think would be the nicer place to stay?

Because less desirable businesses (industrial areas, for instance) and houses are often on the outskirts of town, placing signs there often paints a less-than-attractive picture of your community. Place your signs close to the action. Where people feel like the community begins is more important than government boundaries.

2) Avoid sign clutter at town entryways. People don't need to see a listing of all your churches, service clubs and annual events on separate signs as soon as they drive into town. Find the right place for those types of signs around town and offer visitors a chance to stop and get more information about whatever interests them, but reserve your entry sign to tell visitors why they should stop and stay awhile.

3) Never list more than four items on your welcome sign - or any sign for that matter - and keep your verbiage to a minimum. People are in a hurry, so create signs with a message that can be quickly absorbed.

4) Don't skimp on your town's welcome signs. Consider them an investment with a tremendous potential for return. Make sure the signs are attractive, professionally produced (sorry volunteers and local auxiliary organizations), impeccably landscaped with lots of color, lit at night, and cleaned and/or repainted once a year. Welcome signs and entry landscapes should be large, creating a "grand" entrance. They should be placed on both sides of the street or even span the street, if possible. Your "welcome" or "entry" should create a sense of arrival and make the visitor want to stop.

Based out of Phoenix, Arizona, Robson Communities spent well over a million dollars just on the entry to Quail Creek (opposite top), a 55+ residential resort community in Sahuarita, about 15 miles south of Tucson, Arizona. Why would they spend that kind of money when they are in the business of building and selling home sites, not entryways? Here's why:

- It says something about the community. Were you thinking "Wow, this must be a nice mobile home park!" Of course not. You most likely assumed that this is a very upscale community based on your first impression. In other words, your gateways set a perceived value of your community - either good or bad.
- It creates pride of ownership. In fact, Edward Robson, the founder of Robson Communities said, "homeowners will come up to me and thank me for building a wonderful place to live."
- It certainly commands attention as you approach.
- If done right, as in the case of Quail Creek, it sells the real estate faster at an increased value, and that's exactly why developers spend so much on their gateways. It's an investment, not just an expense.

Every single one of these reasons applies to communities and local businesses, particularly those in the tourism industry. Once again, as much as seventy percent of sales at wineries, golf courses, restaurants, lodging facilities, and retail shops come as a result of curb appeal — by creating outstanding first impressions, by making visitors want to open the cover of your book.



The bottom line? Create a quality entry that proclaims the quality of your town and increases its perceived value. The greater the perceived value, the more visitors will spend, the longer they will stay, and the more likely they will come back.

For residents, perceived value translates to increased property values; stronger community pride; and the desire to live, work, and play in the community. A community can make an excellent first impression by just putting out an attractive welcome mat.



Downtown Cambria on the central California Coast (left) graced the cover of the first editions of this very book - and for good reason. It's beautiful. This brings up two good points: 1) You're only as good as your neighbors, and 2) curb appeal is extremely important - as a business and a community.

What's your first impression of the restaurant, shown above? It may be fantastic, but most people, without looking TripAdvisor, Yelp or other apps to find out, would most likely think otherwise.



Rule #10

Critical mass is not just a religious experience

The rule of convenience

There are two types of retail stores in a community. There are neighborhood retail stores, which include hardware stores, professional services, taverns, pharmacies, grocery stores, and other shops geared primarily to local residents. Visitor retail, on the other hand, includes gift shops, galleries, bookstores, antique dealers, clothing stores, collectibles, restaurants, espresso shops, souvenir shops, and arts and crafts stores catering to both locals AND visitors. In some communities these are zoned separately but still convenient to one another.

If visitors want their shopping, dining and entertainment experience to be a real blessing and a truly religious experience, their best bet is to find a community that has visitor-oriented retail in a compact setting. In economic development this is referred to as clustering. For downtowns, it's critical mass.

You'll find that fast-food restaurants and gas stations congregate on all four corners of an intersection because they all benefit from the critical mass of having lots of convenient choices in one spot. People will spend more money in a community if they don't have to drive from one shop to the next.

The town of Sisters, Oregon, (population 1,500) was a dying timber town in the '70s until Black Butte Ranch, a neighboring resort, began its development. Knowing how the resorts guests would want a pedestrian-oriented shopping district nearby, the resort offered Sister's building owners the money to help create facades on the dated buildings in the core three-block area along the highway. Over the years, the town took on a new appearance (top photo, next page), and visitor-oriented retailers flocked to the newly designed shops. The neighborhood retail moved off the highway, because they no longer needed the highway exposure.

The town of Chehalis, Washington, saw its many antique dealers congregate to a section of downtown, making the city the antique capital of the Northwest. By locating 30 or 40 stores together, it became convenient for visitors and locals alike to shop.



The small town of Sisters, located in Central Oregon, saw just one in 1,100 cars stop as they passed through town. Today Sisters is one of the most popular day-trip destinations in the state. Now one in forty cars stops. They can't help it. Downtown's three blocks along the highway includes more than ten dining choices, more than ten destination retail shops, all in a pedestrian-friendly setting. The challenge? They need them open after 6:00 if they hope to be an overnight destination.

The same strategy applies to the success of outlet malls. Would you make a special trip to a community to visit its outlet stores knowing that the 30 stores were in different locations all over town? Would you feel differently if all of the stores were in a single location? Of course, you and millions of other outlet mall shoppers can attest to that.

Why would a Chevrolet dealership want to be right next to the fierce competitors of Ford, Toyota, Subaru, Chrysler, and half a dozen other auto dealerships? Because they do up to seven times the business when grouped together. People are always drawn to locations where they have lots of choices immediately available. Think food courts, antique malls, retail centers.

By creating a critical mass of visitor-oriented establishments, towns can reap huge retail sales. As few as 15 visitor-oriented retail shops with dining and treats within a couple of blocks can spur very strong retail sales and can totally revitalize a town. Communities that develop a pedestrian-friendly, visitor-oriented retail village end up succeeding and know that critical mass can truly be a blessing.

Of all the rules in this book, this may be the most important. After all, the number one activity of visitors, in the world, is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. It may not be the reason they come to visit, but it's the number one activity once they arrive.

On top of that, this is where a full eighty percent of all non-lodging visitor spending

takes place. That's right, eighty percent. Why do you think Disney built Downtown Disney outside each of its parks? Naturally, to capture that eighty percent.

This is why tourism and downtowns need to be joined at the hip. To get the most visitor spending, you need just three lineal blocks and in those three blocks you need to have the business mix that follows the 10+10+10 Rule:

At least ten places that sell food. This can include bakeries, butcher shops, wine stores, delis, confectioneries, bistros, micro-brews (that also sell food), sit-down restaurants, cafes, cupcake shops, soda fountains, ice cream and frozen yogurt retailers and, of course, coffee shops.

The second ten would include destination retail shops. These might include, galleries, clothing shops, outfitters, book stores, antiques (not just second-hand stores), home accents, bike shops, and brand-specific shops. If your brand or Unique Selling Proposition revolves around fishing, having a bait and tackle shop would be an ideal fit. If your brand revolves around wine, then having two or three wineries - or tasting rooms - in your downtown, would help cement ownership of your brand.

The third ten is having at least ten of these twenty places open after 6:00 pm. Did you just groan? Consider this: Seventy percent of all consumer retail spending now takes place after 6:00 pm. That's right, a full seventy percent. Is it any wonder that Walmart, most grocery stores, hardware retailers, fast food restaurants, and on and on are open well into the evening hours - if not 24 hours a day?

Consider this: If you're a destination that relies on recreational activities as your primary draw, they take place during the day: fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, climbing, kayaking, river rafting, golf, field sports, wildlife and bird watching, boating, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and the list goes on and on and on.

When they're done and come back for the evening, are you open? People spend the night where there are things to do after 6:00 pm. People, generally, don't want to be holed up in their hotel room watching television because the sidewalks rolled up at 6:00, if not earlier. Without evening activities, you will generally be a day-trip destination. Remember that overnight visitors spend four-times that of day visitors.

When it comes to conventions, conferences, trade shows and meetings, the top destinations always include places that offer great shopping, dining and entertainment at the end of each day. This is why the metropolitan areas command so much of this market.

To win, your downtown must get the "Mall Mentality" with common operating hours and days (closed on Monday's for instance), and like businesses grouped together. No successful mall or lifestyle retail center includes a laundromat, law offices, an accounting firm, a pregnancy clinic, public works office, and non-retail businesses. To get that eighty percent of visitor spending, it may take a religious experience locally to get your property owners and businesses on the right page, singing out of the same hymnal.



Rule #11

Real men don't ask for directions

The rule of wayfinding

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson won approval from Congress for a visionary project that was to become one of American history's greatest adventure stories. Jefferson wanted to know if Americans could journey overland to the Pacific Ocean following two rivers: the Missouri and the Columbia.

It has been more than 200 years since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark made their historic 8,000-mile, 28-month trip. What makes their travels even more amazing is that they did it without any signs that said, "Scenic Body of Water This Way."

Most travelers today do not have the time or the patience to travel the lengths that Lewis and Clark did. Yet haphazard signage in some communities leads visitors into an unrecognizable wilderness, with no navigational aids to guide them. Signs should lead people to a destination, not cause confusion and irritation.

There are two primary signage issues that are critical to the success of any community: gateways and directional (or wayfinding) signage. Gateways introduce visitors to your community and provide a sense of arrival. Directional signs help visitors navigate through the area, while telling them what there is to see and do, where amenities are located (public parking, restrooms, visitor information, local services), and where the attractions are.

The second a potential customer exits the highway into your community they should have adequate signage to help them find amenities, services and attractions. These signs should be decorative and should fit the community's theme instead of being the standard aluminum municipal signage.

Developing a wayfinding plan should be a top priority to help you connect the dots through your community. Some communities have developed color-coded signage so that visitors can identify their next destination from a distance. As an example,

public amenities might be in yellow, attractions in blue, and shopping areas in green. Signs should promote spending in your community, and can be a very powerful and effective selling tool.

Kingman, Arizona, is known as the “Heart of Route 66.” The renowned cross-country route was made famous in the 1950s television show, the book *Grapes of Wrath*, and in countless songs (*Get Your Kicks on Route 66*). The city’s new wayfinding program begins at the base of each freeway or highway exit and extends throughout the town. It not only plays up the theme, but also lets visitors know what the town has to offer and makes it easy for them to find the things that most interest them.

In the case of Kingman, four different types of signs were designed: entryway signage, banners along Route 66, directional signs (at each major intersection), and attractions signage (at the entry to each visitor attraction).

The journey that Lewis and Clark took was a difficult undertaking. Today’s travelers are not looking for that type of challenge. Place your feet in the boots of those two historical trailblazers by identifying the quickest route from point A to point B and posting markers that show the way for those who follow.





Your “Wayfinding System” should promote your brand: what you want to be known for. Can you tell what the town of Leavenworth’s theme or brand (below) is? One of the most popular destinations in the Pacific Northwest, Leavenworth, Washington, is a stunning Bavarian-themed town. Its signage reinforces its brand.

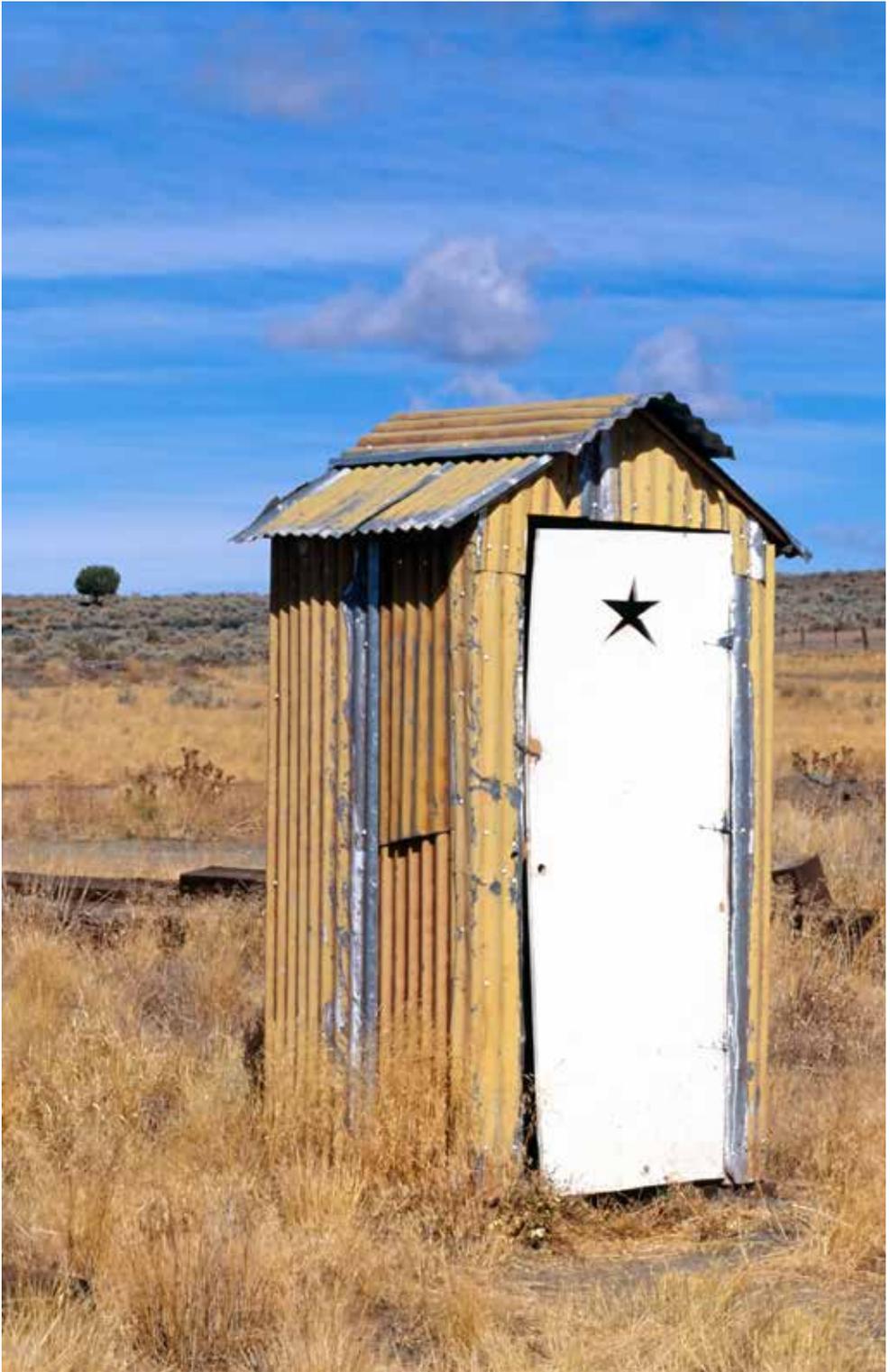
Newport, Rhode Island’s wayfinding signage fits the nautical theme of this beautiful port city. If you happened to be visiting Newport and came across the sign (left) promoting the Oldport Water Taxi to Goat Island and Fort Adams State Park, would it pique your interest? Does it sound like a great activity?

Not only does wayfinding reduce traffic and make your attractions, activities and amenities more convenient, they also educate front-line employees about what your town has and where things are located. An attractive and professionally produced system is a great marketing tool that will increase sales.



Questions for Success:

- How easy is it for visitors to find the attractions, amenities, and services your town offers?
- Is your signage in keeping with the community’s overall theme or ambiance?
- Does your town have an ongoing signage program in place?



Rule #12

Toilets attract more than flies

The rule of necessity

“I gotta go.” Those are the three most feared words heard by a parent on a long trip in the family car. You know it will be miles before you reach the next rest stop. It hasn’t been that long since you passed the last one and asked the kids, “Do you have to go?” Of course, no one said a word. You press your foot down a little harder on the accelerator, hoping to make time pass quickly as your children begin to squirm in their seats.

Who would have ever thought that a small bladder would be such an important part of a community’s tourism strategy? Restrooms are one of the easiest devices for luring visitors into your community. After all, you never know when the urge to go will cause them to stop.

Most state highway departments won’t post signs for public restrooms other than rest stops, but if communities can promote the fact that they have them, they are sure to benefit from additional visitor spending.

You’d be surprised how a billboard with the words “Clean public restrooms — easy access” can translate into visitor spending. How? After you have used the facilities, have you ever said, “While we’re here, why don’t we look in that shop over there?” Or, “While we’re here, why don’t we get something to eat?”

If your public restrooms also incorporate a visitor information kiosk, or are located next to an antique store, restaurant or attraction, the “facilities” can be surprisingly effective at bringing in customers. People like to stretch their legs a bit. They like the break. Your town needs to take full advantage of the most basic of human needs and the number one reason passers-by make unscheduled stops.

Businesses make a big mistake when they post signs stating that restrooms are for customers only. Most people don’t even think about buying anything until they come out of the restroom. They will always empty the bladder before the pocket book. Pro-

hibitive signs discourage visitors from becoming customers.

McDonald's doesn't offer public restrooms, but it knows that its restrooms are often seen that way. Every restaurant makes a priority of keeping its restrooms clean because their use typically translates into sales.

It's simple math. Imagine seven people crammed into a van on their way to a conference. After about one hundred miles, someone squirms uncomfortably and shouts, "Take the next exit. I see a restroom!"

What the person sees are golden arches. At the McDonald's, seven people pour out of the van. A couple of them go across the street to the Chevron Mini-Mart, and the rest enter the restaurant. Fifteen minutes later, they pile back into the van relieved of \$40 spent on drinks and snacks to fuel them up until the next stop.

You'd probably be surprised at the sales volume mini-marts make as customers walk past the candy aisle and drink cooler on the way to and from the bathrooms. Or, maybe you aren't surprised because you are often one of those customers.

Multiply this one van by the number of vehicles that could be taking your off-ramp every day, and it can pay for a lot of toilet paper.

Smart communities have a profitable little secret when they provide people with the thing they need the most – restrooms. Located close to attractions or other visitor amenities with easy highway access, toilets will attract more money than flies.



The charming port town of Gig Harbor, Washington (population 6,500) has three public restrooms in various areas of its downtown. They also provide visitor information at each. They've got a captive audience and use it as an opportunity to encourage visitors to spend money while they're in town.



Instead of saying "sorry, no public restrooms" or "for customers only" G. Willaker's in Wickford, Rhode Island has set a great example by letting customers know where the facilities are located. This creates additional spending in the community (the pharmacy with public facilities is a few doors down) and creates a sense of loyalty between the town and its customers.



Questions for Success:

- Do you have restroom facilities available to visitors?
- If so, do you have signage letting them know they're available?
- Are your facilities close to places where those visitors can spend time and money?
- Are they well maintained?
- Are they easy to find?
- Is visitor information readily available?
- How do your restrooms stack up?
- Do they fairly represent your community in terms of cleanliness, curb appeal, etc?



Rule #13

20/20 signage equals \$\$\$

The rule of retail blade signs

As you drive into a town for the first time, your vision is automatically directed forward through the windshield as you attempt to make sure you don't violate local traffic laws or cause an accident. You are also trying to find your way around town. You may be looking for a place to park or checking out the town to determine whether or not there's any reason to stop. This keeps the driver looking primarily forward, rather than from side-to-side.

Most visitors are, arguably, pretty good at obeying local traffic rules. However, few people have the peripheral vision required to both drive and see what a town has to offer. That is, of course, unless the town and local retailers know the importance of perpendicular signage.

Many shops in a downtown district simply place their signs above the door or have them painted on windows. More often than not, these signs are missed by potential customers totally unaware of what they have to offer or that they even exist. Even driving ten miles per hour through town will make it difficult to read this type of signage while watching for pedestrians in unfamiliar surroundings. Remember driver's education? Eyes forward! Signs placed perpendicular to the building allow drivers to read them without turning their heads and can also be noticed from a further distance.

To further improve readability, the letters must be tall enough to see at a distance. The general rule for lettering is one inch for every 12 feet of distance. Letters eight inches tall can be read from 96 feet away, which is about right for a downtown core area with visitors traveling 15 to 35 miles per hour.

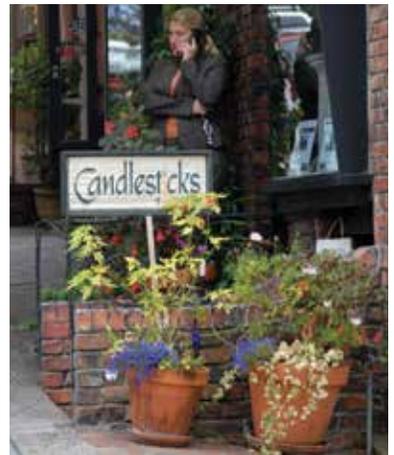
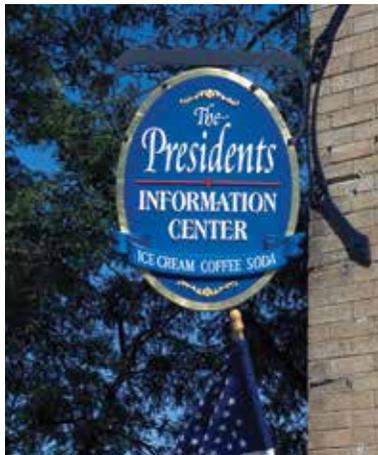
Pedestrians, too, will appreciate signs suspended over the sidewalk at a reasonable, consistent height. Have you ever had to crane your neck to figure out which store you wanted to enter because the signs were all displayed high atop the buildings? The Bavarian themed town of Leavenworth, Washington has done an excellent job of placing

perpendicular signs that are easy to read by all visitors, whether they are in the car or on the sidewalk. The signs are decorative and in keeping with the town's theme. Perpendicular signs of uniform height and similar size are less likely to obstruct one another, are more pleasing to look at, and are more effective in bringing in customers.

A common mistake made by many retailers is not telling the visitor what the store sells. Visitors are not locals; the store names are irrelevant and typically meaningless to them. Often, they are looking for a certain type of store, such as a restaurant, gallery, antique, or toy store. No one will know that Kelly's Laffin Crab sells windsocks and kites, but the shop probably gets a number of people interested in eating shellfish. Your perpendicular signs should advertise the type of store — that's the lure that will bring shoppers inside — while the window or door should be used for the actual name. Sell what your town has, not what it is. This will greatly increase coveted drop-in shopping traffic.

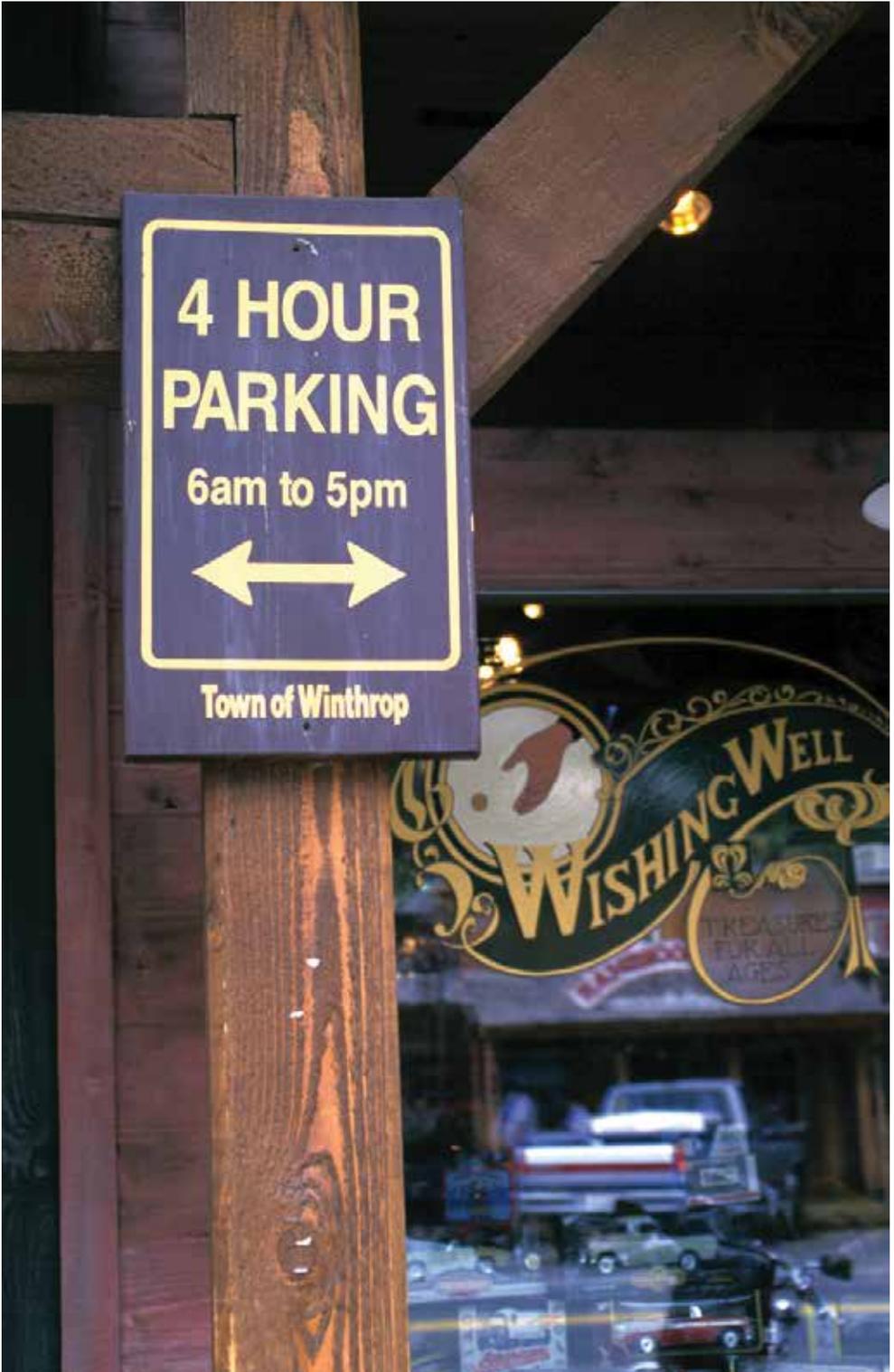
Imagine what would happen if the highway department placed road signs parallel to the road, instead of perpendicular, or if they used only one inch tall lettering, or a script typestyle. They'd be largely ignored. Consider what works for them and apply the same sign design principles to downtown storefronts. Perpendicular signage allows motorists to keep their eyes on the road AND see what you are selling.





Rules for Success:

- Perpendicular, or blade signs should be consistent in height and size.
- Promote what you are selling not the name of the store. We know what Candlesticks (above) sells as a primary lure. We know the retailers in the top photo sell chocolate, collectibles, trains, and food.
- Create a call to action. Ice cream at the Presidents Information Center in Rapid City, South Dakota is a great reason to visit the center.
- Never use script text on signage and use no more than six words.



Rule #14

Parking is not just for lovers

The parking limits rule

Imagine that you have just been lured into a community's shopping district. It's a delightful place, and you can't wait to begin your shopping spree. You pull into a parking space, feed the meter, and soon discover that the stores were every bit as wonderful as you thought they would be.

Going from shop to shop, your credit card stays nice and warm from its constant use, as you buy gifts for your friends and, of course, lots of things for yourself. Before you know it, you end up spending hundreds of dollars in this great little town. You are so excited, you can't wait to get back home to show friends what you bought and share your experience with them.

You are soon walking back to your car, arms full of packages, reveling in the thought of coming back with your friends so they too can discover this gem. As you get closer to your car, you notice a slip of paper tucked under the windshield wiper. Immediately your joy turns to irritation. You got a parking ticket for exceeding the two-hour limit. Aargh!

Shopping and dining in a pedestrian setting is the number one activity of visitors across the country, and the one activity that generates the most amount of revenue for the community. It is the primary benefit of tourism. So why do communities discourage shopping and dining by restricting the time customers can stay? Many communities chase visitors away before they are done spending, and they do it for the wrong reasons.

Towns typically post two-hour parking limits so local retail employees will be forced to park elsewhere. Employers are unable to teach their employees the relationship between parking and shopping, so they have the city enforce an arbitrary deadline. Inadvertently, towns punish their customers because they can't get local workers trained to park elsewhere. Of course, this also punishes local businesses that could generate

more revenues if they would just give their customers a chance to spend more time and money in their establishments.

Numerous studies have shown that shoppers — especially ones from out of town — take approximately four hours to satisfy their shopping and dining interest. Visitors forced to keep watching the time usually leave before they complete their spending. Rarely will visitors go out, feed the meter or move the car to another location, and then return to continue breaking out the plastic. Instead, they leave to spend their money elsewhere.

There are some communities that have discovered clever ways to help shoppers “shop ‘til they drop.” Spokane, Washington, a community that understands the importance of visitor spending, will put a “ticket” (opposite page) under the windshield wiper of cars in violation of the parking limit. To the shopper’s delight the ticket states, “Thanks for visiting downtown Spokane. While you were enjoying incredible shopping, world-class entertainment, the region’s best dining, or professional services, your parking meter expired. Don’t worry! This courtesy parking ticket extended your parking privileges for an extra hour, allowing you to continue to enjoy your visit to Downtown Spokane.”

Be sure to provide locations for RV and truck parking. RV travel is increasing by double-digit numbers every year, and these folks have higher-than-average disposable incomes and room to store lots of stuff. Don’t put up signs that state “No RV or truck parking this block,” without providing a solution: “RV and truck parking, next right.”

If you insist on two-hour parking, then direct visitors to places where they can park for longer periods, four hours or more. Visitors will pay for parking if costs are reasonable and change available, but will leave if parking is expensive, restrictive, and hard to find.

A public parking garage in Covington, Kentucky, does it right. If you show receipts to the parking attendant that total \$20 or more while you parked in the garage, the parking is free. Otherwise you pay the standard parking rates. People will spend more money than they normally would just to get free parking. Smart. Very smart.

Communities must recognize that the road to increased visitor spending and a vibrant downtown starts with plenty of tempting parking places with lots of time for spending. Successful communities will reap far more money from dollars spent in stores than from quarters spent in meters.

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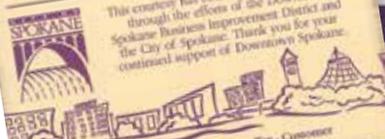
THANKS FOR VISITING
DOWNTOWN
SPOKANE

While you were enjoying incredible shopping, world-class entertainment, the region's best dining or professional services, your parking meter expired. Don't worry! This courtesy parking ticket extended your parking privileges for an extra 1hr allowing you to continue to enjoy your visit to Downtown Spokane.

8/19/02	1:35 am	3052	Meter N./Location
Date	Time		
04458 X	WA	Ford	
Lic. Plate	Lic. State/Yr.	Make/Model	
	40435	Remarks	
Ven. Color	Off		

After this grace period, we ask that you move your car off this block or we will be forced to issue a parking citation. We suggest utilizing off-street parking lots and garages for your long-term parking needs.

This courtesy has been made possible to you through the efforts of the Downtown Spokane Business Improvement District and the City of Spokane. Thank you for your continued support of Downtown Spokane.



White - City Canary - BID Tag - Customer

Making cents out of parking

Did you know that there are more than 6,000 off-street parking spaces Downtown?

If you work Downtown, or like to shop here often, there are alternatives to parking at the short-term meters that can save you time and money.



Downtown **easyPARK**

If you enjoy leisure time Downtown for shopping, dining out, or doing business, the EasyPark coupons from participating businesses are good for \$1 off of parking lots, garages and transit. Ask your favorite retailer or business for EasyPark validation.

CITYTICKET

A better way to commute
CITYTICKET provides a cheap alternative for Downtown employees by providing arena parking and transportation to and from Downtown for only \$19 a month.

Information
EasyPark call
0580.
CityTicket
328-RIDE.



Questions for Success:

- Do you have places for trucks and RVs to park?
- Do you have two hour (or shorter) parking limits that may be chasing customers away before they're done spending money in your community?
- Are your parking areas well signed, easy to find, and within a block of the downtown core area?
- Have you removed your parking restrictions after normal business hours?
- If you charge for parking, is change available? Is the cost reasonable?



Rule #15

Kiosks never sleep

The 24/7 and 365 rule

The primary objective of a visitor information center is to do exactly what its name implies: provide information to visitors. Typically, local chambers of commerce or convention and visitor bureaus are partially funded by lodging tax dollars, which visitors pay when they spend the night in the community. Hopefully, they are seeing some return on their investment in your community. Since a community never knows when a visitor will want information, the ideal VIC (Visitor Information Center) will stay open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

However, since the volunteers that staff most centers require occasional sleep, few are able to provide one-on-one contact with people who may be passing through town any time of day or night.

This is where the kiosk — typically a small structure that stays open 365 days of the year and never sleeps — comes in handy. Often made of wood, kiosks come in all sorts of sizes and shapes. They can be used to tell a story, or they can be used to promote events and attractions. Not only can they tell you where you are (“you are here!”), but they can also tell you where to go (“you can get there from here”).

Install kiosks at several key locations that are easily accessible from the highway and primary thoroughfares. Work with the state transportation department to make sure that visitor information centers are given highway signage to direct visitors to the right location.

There are five keys to having a successful kiosk program in your community:

First, each should be able to withstand all sorts of weather. They are the mail carriers of tourism. They stay out in the rain, snow, and sleet. They deliver messages that people need in order to enjoy your community, and their messages promote the area, making it worth a longer stay or another special trip.

Second, kiosks should fit the character of the town. Communities that have themes or a well-known event or attraction should build the kiosk with that in mind. The kiosk then becomes not only a source of information, but also a marketing tool.

Third, they should be maintained regularly with current information about events and activities. Have volunteers remove expired events.

Fourth, the kiosk should also include a “take one” weather-resistant display rack offering a printed activities guide that visitors can take with them. Local and area maps should be available and plentiful. And remember, the kiosk is primarily for visitors, so avoid making it a bulletin board for classified ads and local pancake feeds that have little or no interest to visitors.

Fifth, a town can never have enough visitor information sites. Convenience is critical. Not only should a kiosk be placed outside the doors to your visitor information center, but in other “stand alone” locations near your gateways and entrances to town. There should be one next to your public restrooms, in your shopping district, at major attractions and sites where they will cross-promote other sites. They should all have a similar look but be slightly different in the attractions they promote, have a user-friendly style, and include photographs and brief text selling the area attractions. Kiosks should be considered a sales tool and not just a location finder.

Kiosks should complement the volunteers that work at the visitor information centers, to be substitutes for human contact. They are useful when staff and volunteers are asleep. As the famous Motel 6 slogan



EXAMPLES:

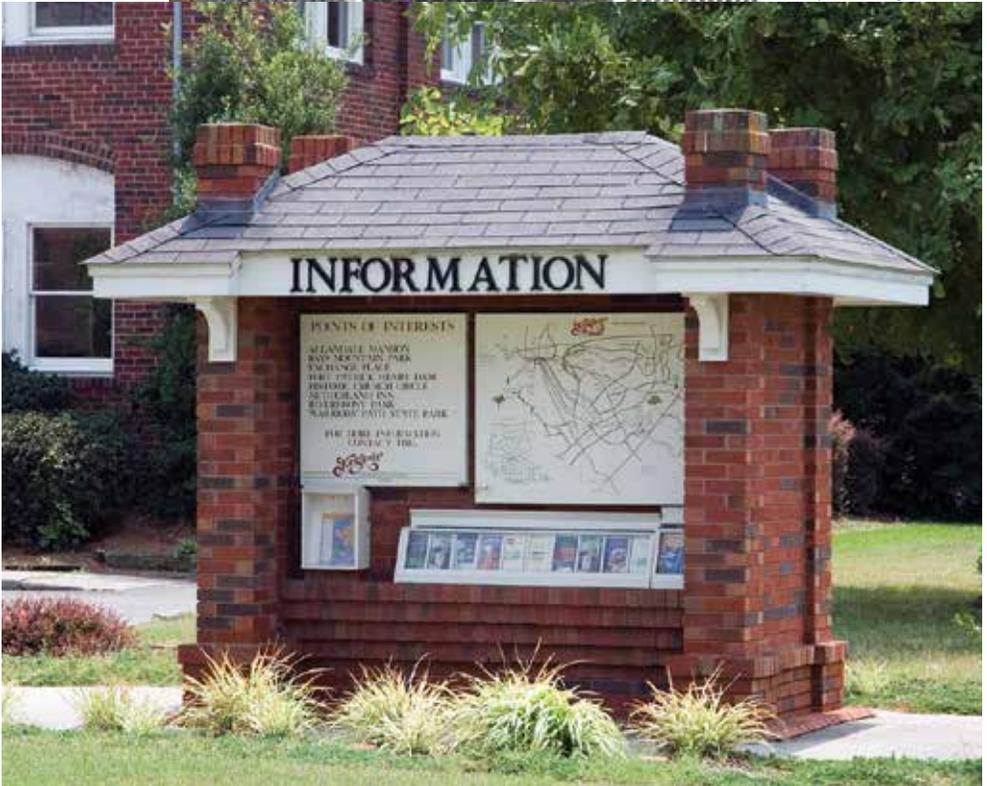
Kingsport, Tennessee, developed an excellent kiosk (opposite) that lists points of interest. Events are posted on the back side, and brochures are readily available 24/7. The kiosk blends in nicely with the historic brick architecture of downtown Kingsport.

Ashland, Oregon, offers visitor information in several places downtown, but when staff and volunteers have gone home for the day, information is still available (left).





Kiosks come in all shapes and sizes and can cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars to thousands. They can be free standing, or wall mounted. Each kiosk should be slightly different cross-promoting other





Rule #16

The shortest distance between two points is a good time

The Four-Times rule

If you live in a rural area and need to make periodic trips to the big city, do you develop a mental list and run a number of errands while you are there? Sure. You are making it worth the drive by getting more done and saving precious time. You certainly don't want to spend more time in the car than you do in the shops.

When it comes to tourism, people determine their trips the same way. People will visit your community if it has activities that interest them, and that will keep them busy four times longer than it took to get them there. So if you expect a visitor to drive fifteen minutes to see your town, it will need to have at least an hour's worth of activities in order to make it worth the drive. This is referred to as the Four Times Rule.

If your community is located an hour from the major population area from which you are trying to attract visitors, it needs to have four hour's worth of activities that cater to that visitor.

Planners and builders often utilize this rule when making their decisions on where to locate facilities. For example, when a movie theater decides on a location, knowing that most movies are about two hours long, they look at the population within a 20- to 30-minute radius. Few people will travel more than twenty minutes just to see a movie, unless it is combined with other activities such as shopping or dining.

The Four Times Rule will determine your town's major market area. The more you have to offer and the more powerful the draw, the farther people will travel to visit. Look at Branson, Missouri, with its 49 music theaters. It's a national draw and keeps a majority of its visitors busy for days.

The Four Times Rule also determines whether or not your town can become an overnight destination. To lure overnight visitors to your primary attractions, your town needs to have at least eight hours of activities that will cater to the visitor. Your com-

munity must also have the other amenities that go with overnight stays such as lodging, dining, entertainment, and supporting businesses.

The ultimate goal of a community with a focus on tourism is to become worthy of multi-day and repeat visits. After all, overnight visitors spend three times more money than day visitors. Areas that create overnight stays are worthy of a special trip. You may have heard of a few of these: Orlando, Branson, Hawaii, Disneyland, and Yellowstone National Park.

Let's say you really need a break, highly unlikely, but let's just pretend. Would you buy (at regular prices) a ticket to Hawaii, leave Saturday morning, get there late Saturday, and then come back Sunday afternoon in time for work Monday morning? Chances are, you'd probably call in sick or take some additional vacation days to make it worth the trip. This is why the average stay in remote locations, like Hawaii, is typically a week or longer.

The same rationale works for smaller communities as well. What makes visiting your town worth the drive? Does your town have enough attractions to become a destination community?

Traveling in cars and planes used to be fun and exciting, but lately it has become much more time consuming and uncomfortable. Communities need to create an environment that people will look forward to, where the pleasure of community activities and attractions outweigh the discomfort of travel. Only then will people remember that the quality of the visit outweighed the length of time it took to get there.



Questions for Success:

- Have you taken a look at your town's activities and their drawing power?
- Have you determined who your town's major markets are?
- Does your town have the activities that make visiting it worth the drive?
- Have you explored how you use the Four Times Rule to attract more visitors?



Rule #17

Relationships require more than one person

The rule of partnerships

What kind of “ship” never sails alone?

If you answered partnership, then you have just recognized the most important rule in creating a successful tourism strategy. Partners are so important that it is impossible to even think that tourism programs can be successful when executed by a single entity. Take San Diego, California, for example. By partnering with an assortment of attractions — San Diego Zoo, SeaWorld, and even Disneyland, which is about ninety-five miles to the north — San Diego presents itself as part of the larger Southern California experience, worth traveling a longer distance to visit. Their strategy convinces millions of visitors to stay for a longer period of time.

In most communities, a single lead agency typically coordinates tourism development, promotion, activities, and events. It may be a visitor’s bureau or the local chamber of commerce. But just because they are leading the charge does not mean they should do it alone. Tourism development and promotion must be a team sport, especially in smaller communities where resources are limited.

Partnerships accomplish a number of goals: they create continuity in the marketing effort, build a stronger brand for the community, reduce the duplication of efforts (multiple websites, toll-free numbers, etc.), and make “selling” the community easier. Prospective visitors are more likely to act when presented with a single vision, a single contact, and a single source for getting initial information.

There are three types of tourism partnerships, and all three should be developed.

- First, there are financial partnerships with other communities or tourism promoters, in which two or more — even all — of the partners pool funds to accomplish

certain

tourism objectives. This allows communities to leverage available funds for discounts on advertising, hiring public relations services, development of quality photo libraries, and first-class website development.

- The second type of partnership involves shared resources, which avoids the common duplication of services and visitor confusion. Imagine the benefit of shared photo libraries and press kits, single toll-free information request lines, etc.
- The third type of partnership involves leveraging the dollars and resources with private sector businesses. Quite often, the best attractions are privately owned.

Work

with them. Bring them into the program. Create public/private partnerships. For a guide, look at what San Diego and other successful tourist destinations have done.

Partners involved in tourism should include economic development organizations, convention centers, chambers of commerce, tribal units, cultural attractions and organizations, and event organizers, as well as city, state, or federal agencies. The more partners your town has, the more successful it will be. The biggest partnerships should be between communities, counties, or regions. Your town will always be much more successful as one loud voice, rather than a bunch of small voices.

A good example is when the Washington State Audubon Society, a nonprofit organization, teamed up with three state agencies (Trade and Economic Development, Fish and Wildlife, and Department of Transportation), six communities, and the Bullet Foundation. Each organization had a role in providing technical, professional, or financial support. The final result was the creation of the first "Great Washington State Birding Trail."

Tourism partnerships are very much like a marriage. You agree, disagree, get upset, compromise, and then move on to a decision that will make all parties reasonably happy. The only difference is that in tourism, it's perfectly legal to have multiple partners, especially when you are building partnerships.



Questions for Success:

- Have you developed partnerships that include both public and private attractions?
- Is everyone on the same page in terms of your branding effort?
- Is there continuity in your tourism marketing and development efforts?
- Are you working closely with state agencies and taking advantage of other available resources?



Rule #18

Sell the rafting, not the river

The rule of selling experiences

One of the most spectacular places to river raft in the Pacific Northwest is along the Skykomish River, near the little town of Index, Washington. A spot along the run is called Boulder Drop, and many guidebooks rate it as a four on a scale of one to five. A five rating is the most treacherous. What makes it remarkable is the clear blue water that allows you to see to the bottom of the river, followed by a sudden rush of frothing white water rushing around huge boulders and dropping off into ten-foot waterfalls, which you attempt to navigate around and through. The ice-cold water slaps you in the face as you try to navigate the raft toward the next spot of calm water without capsizing and leaving stranded rafters floating down the river or hanging onto the huge boulders.

As you tighten your grip on the oar while attempting to see through the water in your eyes and hear the laughter and screams of your friends (mainly screams), all thoughts leave your mind. You're in the moment, living only for that rush of adrenaline.

The next time you think about Index, you will probably remember Boulder Drop and the excitement and the cool mist on your face; you won't care whether the town was named Index or Thumb or Ringfinger.

All too often, communities get stuck promoting the place and not the activities. Visitors are far more interested in the things to do than in the location. People will travel farther to feel the rush of 40-degree water splashing over them than to visit a quaintly named town that sounds a lot like quaint towns closer to home.

County marketing groups are notorious for promoting the county as a destination. Have you ever gone anywhere because it was a county? Would you prefer to visit the world-renowned Napa Valley or Napa County? Napa County sounds like a government entity, while Napa Valley sounds like a beautiful place to see and visit. The Napa Valley is widely known as Wine Country, which truly gets to the heart of the experience, and why it is known worldwide.

How do you make the experience tangible for someone who is still sitting at home in his or her armchair? One of the least expensive channels is the Internet. Brief, eloquent descriptions of your surroundings, accompanied by professionally shot photographs and third-party reviews will lead visitors to the water and make them grab the nearest raft. As high-speed connections become the norm, action-packed short movie clips (it only takes a few seconds) delivered over the Internet can bring activities to life and make visitors want to go there.

One of the most popular forms of promotion is the development of an activities guide rather than a standard brochure. An activities guide is a multi-page booklet or brochure that dedicates at least one page to each major activity or attraction. Too many brochures provide only lists of things to see and do, when photos and descriptions selling the experience would be a more effective lure. The more your town has to offer, the longer people will stay, and the more likely they will return. Even using the simple words “activities guide” tells a potential customer that your town has things to do. The word “brochure” says nothing. Would you be more likely to “call for your free brochure” or “call for your free Activities Guide to the Northwest’s Best River Rafting?” We all want things to do, not just things to see.

Effective tourism marketing revolves around two words: Evoke emotion. The thrill of the roller coaster; the relaxing, serene feeling of sitting on a quiet beach at sunset; or screaming at the top of your lungs as your raft spins sideways and drops down over the waterfall. Once you can effectively sell the experience, people will flock to your location.



Pay a visit to Plimoth Plantation (left), located along the Massachusetts Atlantic coast, where “actors” live, work, cook, and speak as they did when the first pilgrims stepped off the Mayflower.

Welcome to the “Experience Economy,” recently outlined in a book of the same name by authors B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore. Their premise is that work is theater and every business a stage. We might take that even further and say that every town is a stage, and to become a destination, you need the screenplay (your brand) and the actors (local businesses and events).

More than ever before, visitors want things to do, not just things to look at. They want to be immersed in music and culture, the environment, recreation, history and even food.

Pay a visit to Plimoth Plantation (left), located along the Massachusetts Atlantic coast, where “actors” live, work, cook, and speak as they did when the first pilgrims stepped off the Mayflower.





Rule #19

Bragging is more effective when someone else does it for you

The rule of publicity

Oyez, Oyez (roughly translated as “hark” or “listen”) became a familiar call in town squares, markets, and public meeting places all over Britain in the 1700s. Town criers used those words to summon the townspeople to gather and listen to news of plague, victories in far-off lands, royal births, and deaths by execution.

Criers were usually people of some standing in the community, as they had to be able to read and write the proclamations. The crier would read a proclamation and inform the public of matters of importance. They were considered the first “talking newspapers,” but in reality they were the mouthpieces that promoted the king’s actions and programs. In modern times, we call them public relations people, but their duties are still the same: to promote the client from a third party’s viewpoint, and to spread the word.

Public relations is a vital and very important, but often overlooked, complement to advertising. Studies show that 10 percent of vacationers choose their trips as a result of ads they see, 40 percent as a result of an article they have read, and 50 percent because of word-of-mouth recommendations made by friends or family.

Together, advertising and public relations can easily account for more than half your visitor spending, and it’s important to have a balance between them.

With advertising, you pay for the privilege of seeing your message run in a guaranteed position, exactly as you wrote it. With public relations, the route is less direct. You suggest a good story to an editor and hope it will be picked up by the news media, trade publications, and websites. The cost is always lower, but you have less control over the final message. You pay for advertising, you pray for good PR.

Given the relative lack of control, why is public relations so successful? Credibility. A magazine may publish an article that you have provided, verbatim, but to the reader

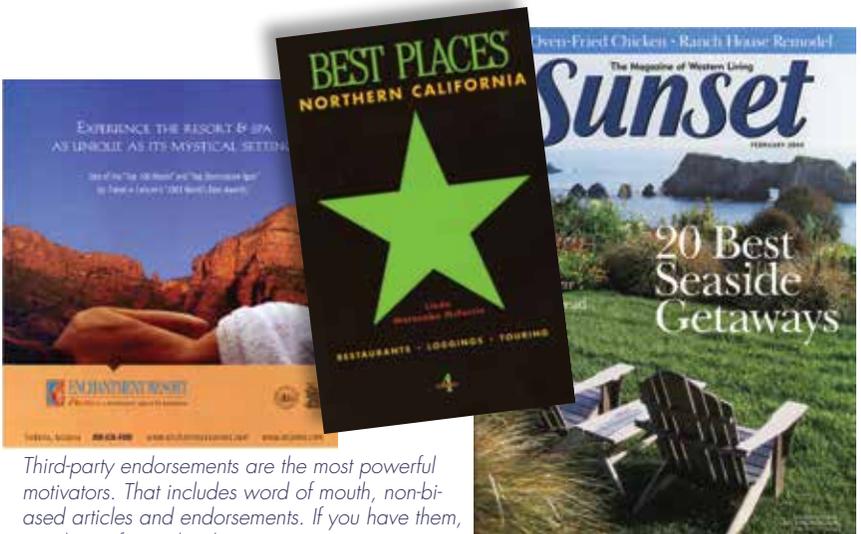
there is an appearance of objectivity. Public relations generates a third-party endorsement, while in advertising you're tooting your own horn. Moreover, articles are three times more likely to be read than paid ads. People subscribe to the local paper and magazines for the articles not the ads.

Some people think PR means sending out a few press releases. A good public relations program goes much, much farther, establishing relationships with editors and sometimes creating stories — and attention — where none existed beforehand.

Paying a professional public relations firm to place articles in targeted outlets should be a priority and is always cost effective. Print, radio, and television ads can cost an enormous amount and must appear regularly in order to be effective. In comparison, public relations offers a greater return on investment. Some studies have shown that \$3 of publicity (referred to as earned media) is attained for every \$1 spent on a public relations campaign.

Bragging about your community is fine as long as you let others do it. Some communities may decide that it is time to bring back the town crier who can act as an ambassador, deployed to draw attention to special events and attractions in your area.

Oyez, oyez, oyez.



Third-party endorsements are the most powerful motivators. That includes word of mouth, non-biased articles and endorsements. If you have them, use them. If not, develop a PR program.



Rule #20

Photos are worth a thousand nights

The rule of “wow” photography

Nothing sells tourism as well as photography. The use of outstanding photography should truly sell the experience. The picture of a resort is nice, but what makes the sale is the photo of guests playing tennis or lying by the pool. People are looking for experiences, things to do, activities. Don't show the river, show the kayakers. Don't show the water slides, show the fun. Your photos should evoke emotion; they should make a potential customer say, “Wow. I want to go there,” or “That looks like fun!”

Brochures and advertisements are the most expensive parts of any tourism strategy. You want to provide enough information to guide people to the next steps: making plans and making reservations. Too much text and you'll lose your audience. Photographs are a way to tease people, to pull them into your ad, article, or activities guide. They are a way to say, “This could be you climbing or hiking or getting that relaxing massage.”

Every community should develop a professional photo library with between 60 and 100 photographs. They should showcase every season, and at least 75 percent of them should feature people enjoying activities. While scenic vistas may create ambiance, in reality, they capture the visitor for only a few minutes. Your goal is to entice people to come and spend money in the community, not stop for a minute, look, and then leave.

The best way to begin your search for photos is to go to a bookstore and look at the numerous pictorial travel books that feature your area. You will generally see books that are filled with stunning photography. Look at the credits and make contact with the photographer(s) to ask if you can use some of their photos to promote the area.

Another way to find photos is to identify the professional photographers in your region and tell them that you want to promote the area with highlighted events and activity photos. It will be easy to distinguish between those that take wedding and graduation pictures and those that take action shots.

Costs can vary, but expect to pay for quality work. Think of this as an investment. Every person that looks at photos of your community could be spending some money as a result of the picture you choose.

Expect to negotiate with the photographer. This is their work, and they take great pride in it. They not only want to make sure they are compensated fairly, but also that the photos are presented correctly. Most photographers will retain the rights and limit your use. You should expect to professionally digitize the photos in a large, high-resolution format. Anything else will diminish their quality.

Many communities make a limited number of high-resolution photos available on their websites for use by the media. Working on deadline, a publisher may discover a hole that needs filling after regular working hours. You can be a hero to the editor and improve the odds that a story about your community will be seen and read by offering 24-hour access to online photos. Some websites require registration before downloading photos to discourage inappropriate distribution of these professional images.

Some communities will seek to have photos taken by amateurs. Some even hold periodic photo contests. Though these photos can be kept in the library and displayed at community events, they rarely meet the professional standards required for marketing materials. Remember, these photos will be used to entice people to come and stay in your community. They must have “wow” appeal.

Photos are not only worth a thousand words; if they get people to stay for several days, your photos will be worth a thousand nights. Room nights, that is.



Questions for Success:

- Have you budgeted for the development of a photo library?
- Does your photo library include activities more than scenic vistas?
- Do your photos have “wow!” appeal?
- Have you looked at other ads, brochures and/or websites to see what a difference good photography can make in closing the sale?



Rule #21

Don't let your last opportunity become a lost opportunity

The rule of closing the sale

Newspapers, brochures, magazines, special events, direct mail, trade shows, the Internet, television, radio, transit advertising, billboards, dioramas — these are just a few of the tools and outlets that companies use to get people to buy their products. People are bombarded hundreds of times every day with someone trying to sell them something. Watching television for just one hour will expose you to nearly fifty commercials. Looking at a magazine or newspaper may expose you to twice that amount. The bottom line? Your marketing materials **MUST** be good enough to close the sale. Each piece may be your last opportunity to convince a potential visitor to pick you over the next destination or event.

An excellent advertising or PR program can get potential visitors to call for your “free activities guide” or get them to log on to your website, but both better be good enough to close the sale. Otherwise, your marketing dollars are largely wasted.

There is an old saying that “I know that half my advertising dollars are wasted. The problem is I don't know which half.” It's not really very funny if you're the one spending the money. Most communities waste more than 85 percent of their marketing dollars because they fail to understand how to market effectively. That's right, 85 percent. Pick up a magazine or the travel section of the Sunday paper. Look through the travel ads. Which ones are good enough to get you to make a call or log on to a website? Then, when you get the brochure or look at the website, which places entice you to visit?

Every community promotion, regardless of the medium, should do two things: First, it must create a positive image of your community. People want to visit places that are reputable, that seem like a nice place to go. Visitors want to see and experience events and attractions that are highly regarded, either by word of mouth or by objective third parties. It's not necessary to use a lot of text. Short quotes from recognizable people will go a long way toward bringing customers to you.

Welcome to Fredonia, NY

Set amid the Vineyards of Northern Chautauque County, Fredonia is a picturesque & friendly Historic Victorian Village in Western New York.

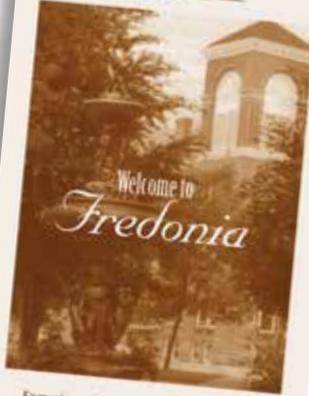


Barker Common/Village Hall
Photograph by Jim Bell

Experience the many shops, antiques and restaurants, the 1891 Fredonia Opera House, Barker Historical Museum, The Telecommunications Museum of Fredonia, and self-guided walking tours.

Fredonia... Timeless... Treas
Relax in a Gracious Victorian Village

A Picturesque Victorian Village Set Among the Vineyards of Western New York



Experience the many shops, antiques and restaurants, the 1891 Fredonia Opera

Quick tip:

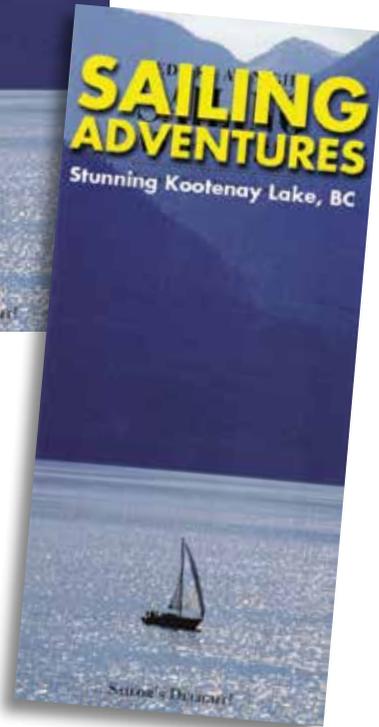
Look at the brochures in the rack to the left. Which one grabs your attention? Look before you read on. Now, did it happen to be the Sea Kayak Tours & Rentals brochure? Yellows always pull the eye faster than other colors. The bold type on yellow, or yellow type on a black background (notice the cover of this book) will grab the viewers attention.

Do the words "Welcome to Fredonia, NY" make you want to pick up this brochure? What picture comes to mind when you hear about Fredonia? If you're not from the area, the town's name means little.

Just for fun, we picked other words for the cover of the brochure and focused on selling the ambiance, the brand, the experience. When you hear the words "A picturesque Victorian village set among the vineyards of Western New York," does the town sound more appealing? Perhaps a place you'd like to visit? Would this entice you to pick up the brochure if you were planning on visiting nearby Niagara Falls?

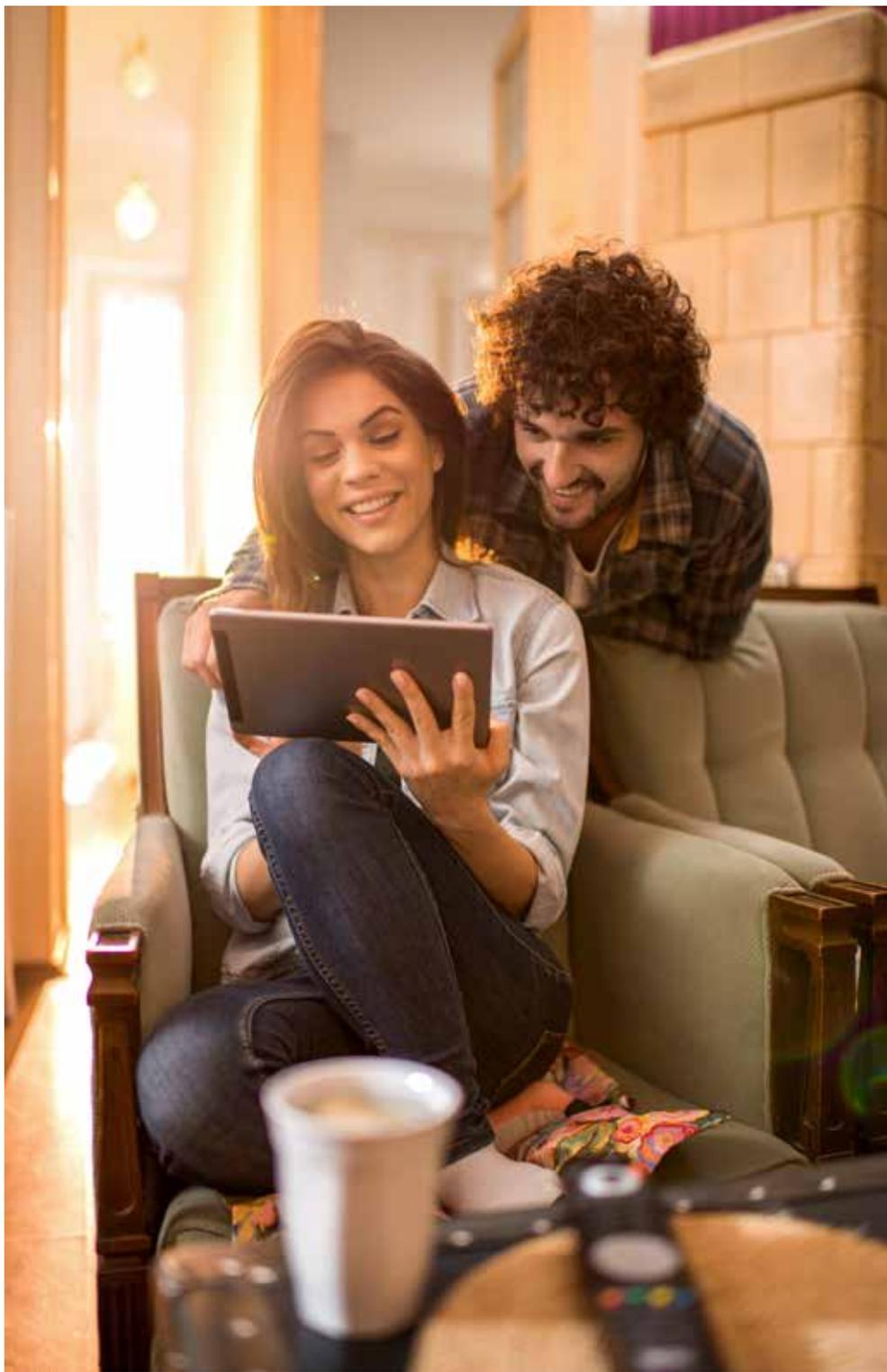


When developing brochures, make sure you use contrasting colors. From a distance would you be able to read Red Sky at Night's Sailing Adventures brochure? We did a very quick makeover, making the experience bold and yellow on the contrasting dark background. Note: Always sell the experience before the name of the business (Red Sky at Night Sailing Adventures is the name of the business). Promote Sailing Adventures and then elevate Kootenay Lake by using a superlative such as "stunning." Then promote why you're the business to pick once they pick up the brochure. Would you notice the made-over brochure from a distance? Does it sound like a fun experience?



Questions for Success:

- What was it that convinced you to book your last vacation trip?
- Are your marketing materials good enough to close the sale?
- How do your materials stack up to other communities' marketing materials?
- Are the top three inches of your brochure good enough to capture the attention of a potential customer?
- Do your brochures sell activities (things to do not just see)?



Rule #22

Let your fingers do the walking

The rule of websites and apps

Back in the 1960s, the phone company developed a marketing campaign that encouraged people to use their product more. “Let your fingers do the walking” became synonymous with picking up the yellow pages and finding a business. People still let their fingers do the walking, but they are more likely to be found on a keyboard than on a dial pad.

Consider the following:

- a A new website goes online an average of every three seconds.
- a More than 64 million travel-related domain names have been registered so far.
- a The Internet is fourth only to electricity, the automobile, and television in its influence on daily American life.
- a Seventy-five percent of all Americans use the Internet regularly, and sixty-eight percent have immediate access to the web either at home or work.
- a New Internet users are growing at a rate of nearly ten percent per month!
- a Ninety-four percent of all Internet users plan their travel using the web.

Website use for travel planning has grown incredibly fast and varies little by age, income, or gender. Older Americans use the web for travel planning as often as younger Americans. This means that the highest potential travelers (those older, retired consumers with the greatest disposable income) can be effectively reached via the Internet. According to one study by Stanford University, Internet users spend nearly 10 percent of their online time researching travel sites.

So, how excited were you when your community's website went live? And now that your town has a website, have you wondered about its purpose? If you have a website just because other communities have one, too, that's not good enough. Many towns say that the website is simply an information source for local residents, businesses, and community leaders. But the real power of the Internet lies in its power to promote.

It's rare to find a community that isn't looking for some form of economic growth: residential, business, industry, or tourism. The Internet is the most powerful and cost effective way to market your community.

There are two major challenges with a website: Is it good enough to close the sale? And can your customer even find it?

So how can your area compete on the super highway? Assuming that your community already has something of interest for visitors, there are hundreds of ways to make your site stand out. Here are a few:

- a Make the site informational but not wordy. Research has shown that users are more likely to read web content that is concise and factual. Use bullet points.
- a The site should answer any questions that the visitor may have. They want to know, "What is there to do? What does the town look like? How do I get around? Where do I stay? Are there any package deals? Are there special activities for kids, seniors? What's going on this month?"
- a Think about organizing your site by activity type from a menu that asks, "What do you want to do?"
- a Include testimonials from satisfied visitors —those third-party endorsements we talked about earlier.
- a Make your activities guide and other literature available for download as PDF files.
- a To ensure large numbers of people visit your site, establish reciprocal links with other tourism-oriented websites and register with the most popular search engines.
- a Find a qualified, professional web designer. Go for experience rather than just local. With the Internet, access to every web designer is at the tip of your fingers.
- a A good website is meant to showcase your best qualities – the things that make you worth a special trip. Be sure to budget properly. \$15,000 to \$20,000 is not too much to spend.
- a Use lots of photography, especially activity shots. Potential tourists want to get as close to visiting your

community as they can without actually setting foot on your sidewalks. Photos will draw people in.

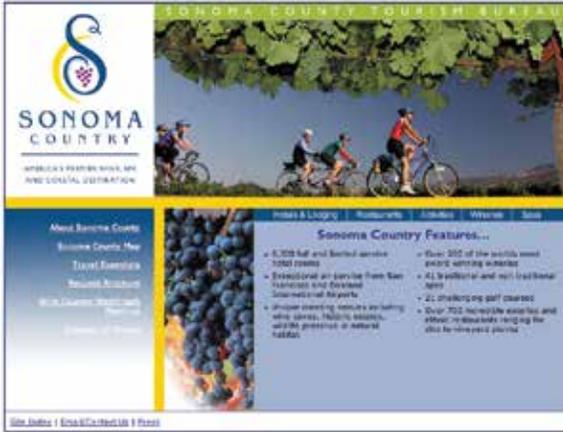
- a Purchase key words, often referred to as “pay per click” programs. Eighty percent of Web surfers never go past the first two pages of search results. Pay-per-click can help you be on the first page.
- a Promote experiences, not geography. People are looking for activities and seldom for cities. If your town is the bird watching capital of North Carolina, will they find it if they Google “bird watching North Carolina?”
- a Market experiences by type of travel (RV, motorcycle, bicycling, private auto, tour bus), by activity (history, culinary, gardening, entertainment, culture, events, etc.), and by season.
- a Develop itineraries by type of travel and activity. Do half-day, full-day, two- and three-day itineraries. Include specifics, not generalities.
- a Photos should be optimized for quicker downloading. If you want to display a lot of photos on one page, use thumbnail images that users can click if they want to see a larger size.
- a Develop an e-newsletter that includes upcoming events and special travel savings. Make it easy to subscribe and unsubscribe. This is “permission marketing” not spam and creates top of mind awareness.
- a If your town has the budget, dedicate a person full-time to the web. It’s that important. Keep your site fresh, up to date, and ever changing so it doesn’t become a “been there, done that” site.
- a Travelers use their computers to book flights and reserve rooms. If your site doesn’t offer that e-commerce connection, make sure it provides links to sites that do.

The Internet has become a remarkable tool for people who want to plan their vacations from the comfort of their own homes. Nimble fingers and a ready mouse are all it takes. The Internet has also become a marketing tool for communities to encourage people to get out of their homes and see what is great about this country. The Internet



Victoria, British Columbia's tourism website (this page and opposite) (www.tourismvictoria.com) has an outstanding home page. It's easy to navigate, is clean and elegant, has a central focus, uses world-class photography promoting a range of experiences – all of which pull visitors into the site.





The Sonoma County Tourism Bureau's website (www.sonoma-county.com) does an excellent job of promoting activities using excellent photography, uses quick facts, and is easy to navigate.





Rule #23

Repetition gets results. Repetition gets results

The rule of frequency

We all have sayings that we live by: "Don't forget to wear clean underwear," or "Don't talk with your mouth full." Our mothers put them in our heads, and even though we ignored them when we were young, we remember them now and pass them on to our children. We remember them not because they were so wise, but because our mothers kept repeating them to us over and over and over again until they sunk in.

In tourism, repetition is often the key to getting people to visit your community. How many times have you heard the announcer approach the most valuable player after the Super Bowl and ask, "Where are you going after the game?" The player then responds, "I'm going to Disneyland!" People have been talking about and making fun of that ad for years. Yet it works. People remember it, and at one time in their lives have probably gone to Disneyland.

Frequency creates Top of Mind Awareness (TOMA). When people think, "Gee, it would be good to get away for a few days," you want your community to be the one that comes to mind. If it's on their minds, it's either because they have been there before, or because they have heard about it enough times for it to register. In the newspaper industry, they sell TOMA packages for this very purpose. When people make decisions to go to a new place, it is more than likely that they have seen or heard about it numerous times.

Ads typically need to be seen five times before they are remembered. You are far better off running an ad in a single magazine five times (or more) than you are running the same ad once in five different publications. At least the readers of the single magazine will remember you; your ad will barely register a blip on the radar of readers with only one exposure.

In order to be successful, your ads and exposure must be frequent. Some of the most effective ads on television would be considered terrible by most standards, but be-

cause they are played so often, you remember them. And in tourism, that is the name of the game: be remembered.

Tied to frequency is consistency. While you may see the same photo, the same slogan, the same ad promoting your community time and time again, the customer doesn't see it as often as you do. If there is too much variation between messages, it's the same as running a different ad for a different community each time. And there goes the five times rule. Rather than remembering five distinct messages, each seen only once, the customer will remember none of them. Depending on the campaign, you can easily use the same slogan or concept for two or three years.

Chances are, when people see or hear your ad, they may not be planning a trip or even a quick getaway. But when they do sit down and think about where they would like to go, you want their mind to travel to your town. Say it once, say it twice, then say it again and again. Frequency sells. Repetition gets results. Repetition gets results.

Repetition will create top of mind awareness. You are hoping that your name will become synonymous with your primary lure. When you see the following communities, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

- Nashville, Tennessee
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Branson, Missouri
- Salem, Massachusetts
- Green Bay, Wisconsin
- Orlando, Florida
- Hershey, Pennsylvania
- Hollywood, California

Let's try it the other way around. Here's what some communities are known for. Can you name the community?

- Amish, Dutch
- Wine Capital of the U.S.
- Federal Government
- LDS (Mormon) Church
- Tossing salmon at the market

Want some answers? From top left:

Country Music • Adult Fun • Music theater • Witch trials • the Packers • Disneyworld • Chocolate • Movies
Lancaster, PA • Napa Valley • Washington, DC • Salt Lake City • Seattle's Pike Place Market

Questions for Success:

- Is your town using TOMA in its marketing efforts?
- When you think of a fast-food restaurant, what's the first name that pops into your mind? Why?
- When someone wants to experience what your town has to offer is your community the first place that comes to mind?



Rule #24

The bellman does more than just open doors

The rule of frontline sales

You just finished a wonderful meal in a community that you know very little about. Rather than immediately getting in your car and heading towards your destination, you decide to walk off your meal by exploring the downtown area and doing some window-shopping. You enter one of the shops and begin talking with the employee behind the counter.

You ask, “How is it going?”

“Fine” the employee replies.

“Business good?”

“Not really.”

“Lived here long?”

“All my life.”

“Anything exciting to do in town?”

“No. This is Mayberry.”

Does this seem like the sort of place where you would want to spend much time? Unlikely. In fact, this employee not only lost a sale in this store, but also probably discouraged you from doing anything else in the town since there is nothing to do.

If, during the course of the above exchange, the employee engaged in any of the following behaviors: eye rolling, glaring, sighing impatiently, nursing a recent piercing, or ignoring you to discuss his or her love life with a fellow employee, you wouldn't even

want to ask that person if there's anything to do. And, you wouldn't have anything nice to say about this community when you get back home.

Frontline employees are not just cashiers, stockers, wait staff, front desk personnel, or gas station attendants. They are also sales people for the community. In addition to making sales for the employer, they should sell events, attractions, and even the competition. Every dollar spent in the community will eventually become dollars in your pocket through increased tax revenues that will build parks, fix potholes, and encourage more visitors to your store for repeat spending experiences.

Frontline employees should be taught to ask three simple questions of their customers.

1. Where are you from?
2. How long will you be in town?
3. Have you been to... (or what brings you to town)?

These three questions will usually spawn a short conversation in which your sales person can promote a local attraction that fits the customer's taste. The longer you can keep a customer in town, the more likely that person will spend money there.

Huntsville, Texas, an historic town located about seventy miles north of Houston, has a clever attraction-adoption program created by town merchants. Each store promotes a different attraction to store visitors. This approach is much simpler than trying to train every frontline employee about every attraction or site in town. Additionally, by adopting one attraction, the staff can really get to know it, and can better promote it as a "must see" thing to do while visiting the area.

Frontline employees are a major part of the sales effort. Make sure they know how important they are; when they open the doors to your store, they also open doors to the community.





Rule #25

Put your bait out on the highway

The rule of billboards and exits

When people go fishing, they know that if they want to catch fish, they have to bring the right bait. Whether it's a distant shining object or a wriggling morsel, something must entice the fish to take notice and say, "Now that looks tasty."

People are not that different from fish. They need to be lured into your community. Billboards, highway signage, and other teasers are your bait. Offer people something tasty so they'll stop, linger, and spend money.

Billboards are brief marketing opportunities that need to grab drivers' attention and make them realize that what you're offering is what they need. It may be food, an attraction, an event, or even "the facilities." Simply stating that the exit leads to Our Town, founded in 1928, interests no one but you. (And, I'm not sure that even you really care when the town was founded.)

Use billboards to tell visitors why they should visit your town. Focus on things to do (visit the historical museum, take a winery tour, cruise the craft fair), things to see (world's biggest ball of waxed paper, smallest chainsaw carving), or places to eat (an ice cream shop, soda fountain, Italian restaurant, coffee shop). You get the picture. Now, make people who are driving by picture why they should stop for a visit.

The traveler may not even know what they want until they see your bait dangling from a billboard while driving past. But without that bait luring their attention away from the lonely road, they won't have a reason to take the exit into your town.

In order to be effective, highway signs must be presented in an eye-catching manner. There are four keys to success: use the right words, make it brief, keep the design simple, and keep the sign well-maintained.

Strong action words are the most successful draws to a community. Avoid worn-out

or meaningless words like “welcome,” “discover,” “explore,” or “we have it all.” These signs seldom work because they don’t give the visitor a reason to stop. You can only “discover” something once. The goal of your community-marketing plan is to keep people coming back time and again.

Promoting your town as a “gateway” is overused and used incorrectly. Gateways are something you drive through to get somewhere else. You want your town to be that somewhere else.

Make sure your highway signs are brief. People traveling at highway speeds have approximately four seconds to read your message. If it’s too much to read or too cluttered to grasp, the average traveler will simply ignore the sign. Have you ever turned to the person sitting next to you and asked, “Could you read all that?” or “What did that say?” The most effective signs include fewer than fourteen words. The best ones use fewer than ten. Fish won’t bite if you hang half a dozen lures on the same line. In fact, they’ll make a point of staying away.

Keep your signage and graphics simple. Most photos and graphic images are difficult to absorb from a distance. If a traveler has to spend all four seconds making out the graphic or photo, you’ve lost them. Magazine-style ads never make good billboards.

Finally, make sure that someone is assigned the responsibility of maintaining and updating the signage. Weeds and grass grow high when left unattended, and crucial information is often blocked from the view of speeding motorists. Do not expect the highway department to do this. Keep the signs up to date, there is no reason for motorists to stop in your town when the sign promotes an event that has already taken place. Highways are a community’s front door. Welcome people with a well-manicured entrance and promotions of current activities. Make a good first impression.

Like fish, your potential visitors will be enticed by eye-catching bait that is too tempting to pass up. But, they won’t bite at all unless you drop your line where the fish are swimming. In the case of tourism, this means out on the highways.

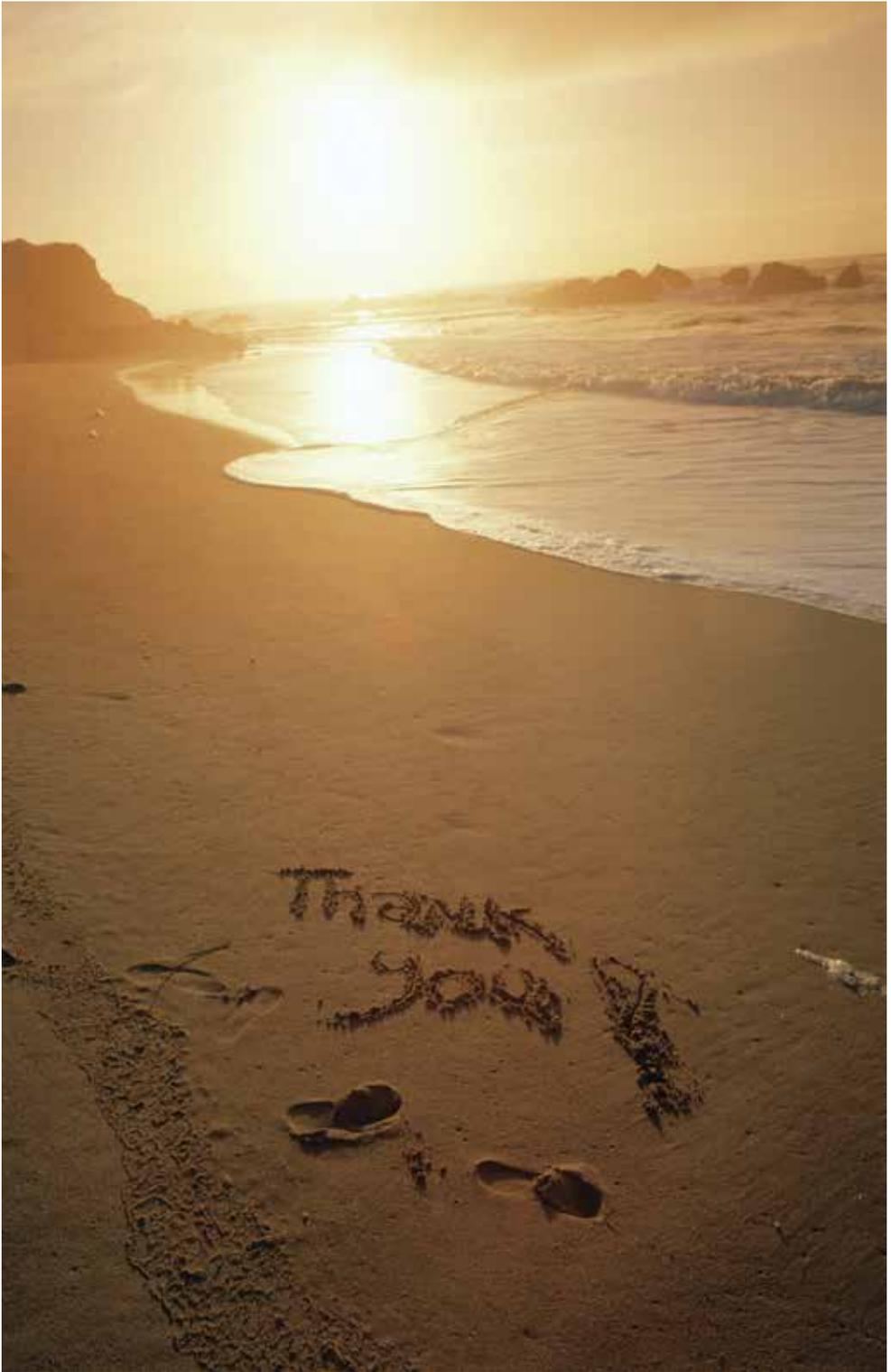


While the billboard (opposite) is attractive, does it entice you to take the next exit? Does the event listed sell you on making a special trip back to Lovelock for Frontier Days? In promoting its casino gaming (below), Winnemucca played off the legend of Butch Cassidy who purportedly spent time in Winnemucca. The billboard provides a great teaser that will pique interest, is easy to read, has only nine words, and uses simple graphics.



Here are two excellent examples: One simple graphic, few words, and easy to read from a distance. The "free wine tasting," using yellow on a black background, commands attention and creates a call to action. Both the museum and winery make it simple to find with easy to remember, simple directions.





Who are these guys?

Author biographies



Roger Brooks is the CEO of Roger Brooks International, which specializes in community branding, tourism and downtown development, and marketing with offices in the Seattle, Washington and Phoenix, Arizona areas. Over the past 35 years, Roger and his team has assisted more than 1,500 communities in 45 U.S. states, across Canada, in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and Africa. Additionally, he has recruited more than \$3.2 billion of private investment to destination resorts and communities, and is one of the world's top-rated keynote speakers in the tourism industry. His tell-it-like-it-is, bottom-line approach, and tremendous enthusiasm for the travel industry has empowered organizations around the world in their tourism efforts, and has made Roger one of the most sought after place-branding and tourism experts in North America.



Maury Forman, Ph.D., is the Director of Education and Training for the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. He was the winner of the American Economic Development Council's Preston Award in 1998 for outstanding contributions in educational advancement, the U.S. Small Business Administration's 1998 Vision 2000 Award, and the ROI Research Institute Award for Innovation in Adult Education. He is a popular speaker across the country and is known as an educator and humorist. Dr. Forman is the author and editor of numerous books on economic development, including *Race to Recruit*, *Learning to Lead*, *Washington Entrepreneurs Guide*, *Community Wisdom*, *How to Create Jobs Now and Beyond 2000*, and *Journey to Jobs*.



About Roger Brooks International

It takes a team to win the tourism game



The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism grew out of the multimedia workshop of the same name. Here are a few reviews:

We have gotten nothing but rave reviews for the 25 Rules of Successful Tourism. There's no doubt they'll be used throughout the state by dozens of communities. Many have already started implementing them!

Larry Freidman, Interim Director • Nevada Commission on Tourism
Carson City, Nevada

The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism are perfect for communities both large and small. Communities that follow the rules can definitely compete for the economic development dollar.

Audrey Taylor, President • Chabin Concepts, Inc.
Chico, California

The 25 Rules of Successful Tourism should be the bible for any community where tourism is part of their economic development program.

Jim Mooney, President • Development Services
Valparaiso, Indiana

These 25 Rules are absolutely what the doctor ordered for communities everywhere. This is a must-read book for everyone who has an interest in making his or her community a better place to live, work and play.

Jack Wimer, President • Wimer Industrial Leadership
Overland Park, Kansas

For communities interested in developing the tourism industry, the 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism will put them and their visitors on the right road.

Robin Roberts, Executive VP Economic Development
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

How eye opening can you get? For the first time, I saw our community through the eyes of a visitor. We've got lots of work to do, and we'll be using every single one of the 25 truly immutable rules as our 'to do' list.

M.J. Cousins, Executive Director
Venture Kamloops
Kamloops, British Columbia

