



CASE STUDY

ESTABLISHING A QUALITY END-TO-END EXPERIENCE THROUGH INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

*Developed by Michelle Reynolds, Skytrek Willow Springs Station,
under the Rising Stars Program.*

*Program designed and delivered by Ali Uren, Kiikstart, with the
ongoing support of the Flinders Ranges & Outback Tourism in
conjunction with Regional Development Australia Far North via
Commonwealth funding - Building Better Regions Fund - Round Four*

INTRODUCTION

Skytrek Willow Springs Station is a 70,000 acre working sheep station that diversified into tourism in the mid 80's.

Today the thriving business operates pastoralism and tourism alongside one another with the ability to stock up to 4,500 merino sheep while offering 7 self-contained accommodation, 17 private and secluded bush campsites, 4 walking trails and a full day self-drive 4WD experience to consumers travelling in and through the Flinders Ranges region.

The business has always pride itself upon its location and rich history however with multiple generations adding its part to the business and technology continually improving, it can be difficult to communicate the many stories of the operation to consumers across various generations.

This case study recognises the steps taken to ensure guests are receiving balanced and factual communications as part of the end-to-end experience with each stage of the process designed to:

- Build Business and regional reputation
- Increase repeat visitation
- Minimise inefficiency - reduce money and time wasted on activity that does not benefit the business or the guest - focus on high value action
- Improve the guest experience before and after they visit us

VARIOUS STAGES OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS



**FIRST
IMPRESSIONS**

PRE-STAY

DURING-STAY

POST-STAY

STAGE ONE - FIRST IMPRESSIONS

VARIOUS STAGES OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Once we have revised our existing communications, we can consider how we can evolve our messaging with our consumers.

Skytrek Willow Springs Station's branding is about connection. Connecting with yourself, your hosts, your family, your friends, nature, the past and the present. It is about having a personal experience with everything/everyone around you and feeling at home throughout the whole journey.

The business is established with existing communications in place through the following:
Marketing - Social Media, Website, Brochures and Signage
Information for Guest – Email, Website, Face-to-Face, Phone, In-Room Compendium

It was recognised through reviewing our communication processes, there were gaps that was stopping some of the required information to reach the guest in best practice procedures.

For example – at the time there was no existing follow up with guests post-stay which meant the business was potentially missing out on return customers. Additionally, it was evident that whilst the business was using booking channels to advertise to a large market, they found the limitations that were being experienced by these channels meant they spent more time trying to communicate information to guests both pre and during stay.

So, what is the best approach to get around these issues?

IDENTIFYING YOUR CURRENT REALITY

To improve we must first recognise what currently exists within our processes and systems:

Reflection:

- What is your brand and message?
- Is your current brand and message relevant to your existing market?
- Is your brand and message relevant to your potential market?
- How are the reservations currently made within your business?
- What communications are in place for these booking processes? How do you confirm a reservation?
- What information is provided to guests upon booking?
- Complete a SWOT on existing communications - what is working? What is not working? What options are available to improve/evolve/vary?

A fantastic tool to work through this analysis is the Innovation Capability Review offered by Kiikistart.

STAGE TWO - MAKING THE PRE-STAY CONNECTION

ADAPT THE BUSINESS TO PROVIDE THE
RIGHT INFORMATION - AT THE RIGHT TIME

Consider the types of methods that could be used to communicate with the consumer:

DIGITAL

Website
SMS
Social Media
Email
APP

VERBAL

Phone
Face-to-Face
Radio
Television

HARD COPY

Brochure
Signage
Newsletter
In-Room Compendium

BEING SMARTER ABOUT HOW THE GUEST IS COMMUNICATED TO

With multiple generations travelling together it is now more important than ever to 'have a finger in every pie.' Today's society is made up of Grey Nomads who may still rely heavily on hard copy media whilst our younger couples and of course millennials are very much digital driven.

To reach all potential clients Skytrek Willow Springs Station used a variety of communication channels including brochures and magazine advertising alongside social media and website marketing.

Whilst this certainly reached the ideal guest of their target market, there were still enquiries asking for further information – this meant there was a lot of time spent communicating with the guest either verbally over the phone or digitally via emails.

Much of the time was spent answering the same question which became increasingly inefficient. There was a better way while still providing quality information and guest servicing.

To overcome this challenge the following tactics were used:

- 1 The business developed a data sheet of Frequently Asked Questions which was uploaded to their website for all potential clients to read through.
- 2 To support this method email marketing was used to introduce the business to the guest and direct them to relevant information such as the FAQ on the website.
- 3 The email marketing was scheduled to send at different times prior to the guests booking, dependant on the information that was being conveyed.

These actions limited the amount of time answering individual emails and minimised the period spent on the phone answering questions, which allowed more time to focus on other aspects of the business.



STAGE THREE - DURING-STAY

USING TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

Whilst Skytrek Willow Springs Station' branding surrounds personal connection and feeling at home, it's not always possible to be available to the guest 24/7 – particularly as a small family business with pastoral practices happening alongside tourism.

The business does provide an in-room compendium with extensive information on history however it only highlighted things to see and do in the area with limited detail.

So, the business needed to revise what is the information the guest normally seeks once they have checked in.

Upon revision Skytrek Willow Springs Station discovered that guests were seeking more detailed information, maps, suggestions, etc of things for people to do and see while in the area.

MAKING THE RIGHT IMPRESSION EVERY TIME

Reflection:

- How is your brand and message conveyed to the guest once onsite? Do you interact with them personally?
- Is the guest fully informed prior to arrival or is there additional information to be expressed about the business, the area, etc?
- Do you have the time to communicate the additional information? Is there a staff member available in the office to always answer queries? Is there an alternative as to how this could be communicated? Eg, In-Room Compendium? App? Signage?
- What other information would your guest normally seek once checked in?

So how could they offer this information without the use of verbal face-to-face interaction?

As members of the Tourism Industry Council of South Australia (TICSA), Skytrek Willow Springs Station became aware of an industry partner called TouchStay.

This was a digital Guidebook that worked offline once downloaded to the consumers device. This meant the consumer could access the Guidebook upon booking, plan their trip using the information provided and refer to it regularly once in region.



There was no intention that it would completely replace face-to-face interaction, but it meant that the consumer could access personal suggestions and information in the businesses branding language when the staff of the property were unavailable.

It was the ideal solution to a time and resource management problem while still ensuring all the information was on hand to make for a great trip.

It was now evident that Skytrek Willow Springs Station was addressing branding and communications throughout the first impressions, pre-stay and during-stay periods for the consumer – but how could they encourage guests to return to the property and the region into the future?

STAGE FOUR - POST-STAY



MAINTAINING THE CONNECTION AND ENCOURAGING REPEAT VISITATION

Reflection:

- How does your existing marketing impact repeat visitation? Is it building a relationship with the client or only encouraging first time/one-time visitors?
- Does the business have any existing communications post-stay?
- What are the current statistics of repeat-customers? How would you like to see this grow?
- What incentives can you provide to encourage return bookings?
- Are you currently marketing your business as part of the journey, or the final destination? Can you advertise more things to see/do in region to encourage repeat visitation?

JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF CONTACT POST-STAY

Whilst working through the Rising Stars Program, Skytrek Willow Springs Station used Kiikstart's Activation plan to act on the visible gaps within their communications. One obvious gap was the non-existent post-stay communications.

To overcome this problem Skytrek Willow Springs Station considered several methods that could be used to communicate to the guest post-stay and analysed what would be the most useful considering the wide range of target market for the business.



The following methods were set:

- Offer a discount as an incentive to return customers. This was communicated through a post-stay email and the TouchStay Guidebook with directions on how to book and ensure you receive the discount.
- Create a seasonal newsletter which would be sent out four times a year to subscribers discussing:
 - What is happening on the property this season?
 - What is happening in the area this season?
 - Upcoming events
 - New products and operators in the region

A seasonal newsletter promotes the unique differences throughout the time of the year and begins to address the issue of seasonality – a factor that is seen as a key roadblock by the industry.

The newsletter would be used as an incentive by telling guests what is new and why should visit again. A signup page was set up through the business website allowing potential guest to access the newsletter along with a link added to the TouchStay Guidebook ensuring existing clients can subscribe for the newsletter also.

- Create an automated email reaching out to the client exactly one year after their stay reminding them of their holiday and encouraging them to visit again.
- All communication methods included a link to the business social media pages, encouraging the consumer to keep in touch, share their experience and of course it would drive future interest into the happenings of the business.

FINAL INSIGHTS

Throughout the process of analysing the existing communications, discovering the gaps and ongoing problems that were impacting the business' time and resource management and of course exploring options of how to best overcome these issues, Skytrek Willow Springs Station not only discovered how Quality End-to-End Communications can be important for any business but also understood why these four stages of communications can impact the consumer's perception of business brand/messaging.

It encouraged the business to not only look at what was missing but why and how they were going to fix the problems. This in turn required further exploration of several components of the business and its procedures within key areas such including human resources, time management, marketing resources and more.

Skytrek Willow Springs Station recognises that the ongoing improvement of technology, change of demographics of the consumer and of course continual changes in the industry will always lead to continual improvements in communications between the business and the consumer.

This means it is essential that the business regularly revisits the Innovation Capability Review to recognise its strengths and weaknesses and when possible uses consultants and facilitators, such as Kiiikstart, to evaluate what is working, what is not working and what alternative options are available to drive increased visitation to the region.

Establishing a quality end-to-end experience through innovative communications builds a relationship with past, present and future consumers and ensures an effective presence for any business in the Tourism Industry to their clients.



FLINDERS
RANGES
OUTBACK



k//kst^rt



Australian Government



Regional
Development
Australia
FAR NORTH

For more information contact:

Michelle Reynolds - Skytrek Willow Springs Station

E: admin@skytrekwillowsprings.com.au

Ph: 08 8648 0016

Web: www.skytrekwillowsprings.com.au

Skytrek Willow Springs Station, PMB 3, Hawker SA 5434

ABN: 82 097 448 005

© No part of this document may be used, copied or otherwise reproduced by any process, electronic or otherwise, without the specific permission of the copyright owner. Neither may information in this document be stored electronically in any form whatsoever without such permission. Enquiries about this case study should be addressed to the author.