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# NINE TIPS TO HELP MONETIZE YOUR TRAVELS

Putting the Business Spin on Fams and Personal Vacations


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21 SEP 2015: When Jerry Seinfeld is asked about his favourite episode from his situation comedy series, he likens it to being asked about his favourite breath of air. "The answer is 'the last

one' that inevitably leads to the next one". And so it goes with travel. The 'favourite' experience for both travellers and travel professionals is the one that stirs up those endorphins (neuro-transmitters that produce feelings of happiness and elation) and leads to the desire or need or compulsion to travel again.



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Travel experience is part of a travel consultant's credentials. It emphasizes the fact that when you talk, you know what you're talking about because you've been there (some refer to this as 'walking the walk'). Travel is part of your provenance—how you became who you are, why your opinions and advice on travel have value, why you can charge a fee for service, or consultation or research, or even why you can call yourself a specialist in certain areas.

But the act of travelling doesn't necessarily translate into making a living unless you conscientiously put in the effort to make it happen. It's funny that some travel consultants still feel that their 'job' is bound by the working hours

in their contract. Therefore when they go on a personal holiday, they revel in the idea of being ‘off duty’ and don’t tie this experience-gathering opportunity into the professional arena.

On the other hand, those who look at travel as a ‘career’, feel quite different. Every chance to explore, learn, share ideas, establish contacts and add experience to their credentials, is an opportunity for business enhancement, customer service and personal satisfaction.

***Here are nine tips on how it’s done.***

*1-Planify and Set Goals:* It only makes sense to plan ahead. How will you use the information on a Fam trip? Make lists of questions you must have answered and on-site contacts you must meet in order to establish relationships for future business. A Fam trip is a business opportunity waiting to be exploited.

*2-Diarize:* Keep a record of everything you do. When I visited 9 European Destinations on a school trip way back in 1967 I kept a diary of my daily activities; something I got in the habit of doing at every travel opportunity thereafter. I can review my notes to recall a first impression, the name of a tour guide, the location of a hotel or the meal I enjoyed or hated. This is invaluable personalized information that allows me to re-visit the destination, on paper, years later, or respond to a specific question about the destination.

*3-Photo and Record:* Memory cards make it so easy. I put a 64 Gig card in my Digital SLR and average 150 photos and 2-3 videos per day. I accumulate the photos on the card but also back them up on a USB. The visual record of your

travels is precious. You can show them to clients, decorate the agency, print them on your business card, add them to emails, post them on social media and compose slide shows. Photos complement your written record: the funny sign by the garden, the plaque outside the attraction, the menu, meal, market and more.

*4-Nichify:* Query your database to retrieve information on clients who may be interested in the destination. Under 'travel preferences', note their needs and niche market interests and bring this list with you. Make it your mission to see and experience as many travel niches as possible and gather the details so you can make it happen for your clients. You want to avoid the "I wish you would have told me before I went..." scenario, but if it happens, you will at least have your list of suppliers and names of people-in-the-know that you collected during the Fam or holiday.

*5-Introduce and Imprint:* You expect me to bring business cards on my family vacation to the Caribbean? Absolutely! The world in which you thrive is 'travel and tourism'. At the appropriate time, present your card to hoteliers, restaurateurs, tour guides, ski-doo renters, wedding planners, hot air balloon operators etc. and get their cards too.

And just like little ducklings imprint on their mom, your goal when you travel is to ensure that you leave your imprint in the form of business cards, smiles, your sense of humour, your list of client needs and the possibility that you may them have the opportunity to work together at some point in time to add value to a client's vacation. This is known as Partner Relationship Engagement.

*6-Publicize and Blast:* In a world gone mad with social media why would you not go crazy to make everyone aware of your travels? How about a press release to the local paper, an article in your newsletter, a sign in the agency window or an inside display of photos and local snacks? How about a blog as you travel or daily Tweets and Facebook postings?

Visual postcards connect you to your clients. Send an E-blast to tell them where you were and what you did. Remember that family and cross-generational travel is very popular. When you talk about your personal family holiday, clients will identify and want a similar experience. And if you talk about a Fam trip, you are sending a message that you continually learn about destinations, with your clients' interests in mind.

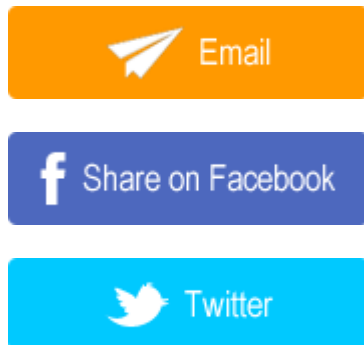
*7-“Trumping” your message:* Refer to your Fam or personal holiday in your client talks, your email signature, your personal conversations and during professional networking sessions. Go out of your way to ask a question during a webinar or seminar and preface it with “When I was in Mongolia two weeks ago...” People will know what you did, how you travelled, what you saw and how you may be able to help them travel there. Having travel savvy is nothing to hide.

Take a lesson from a popular US presidential candidate (hidden in heading #7 of this article). Make people aware of your skills, your travel personality, the destinations you've explored and your willingness to respond to client needs with creative suggestions.

*8-Specialize:* For those who have a unique relationship with a destination, you may wish to

formally specialize. This can lead to acquiring insider knowledge about the destination along with new clients, opportunities to travel, and the ability to exact a fee based on your expertise, advice and the activities you can arrange.

*9-Monetize:* The old travel adage is that “the more you learn, the more you learn”. It means that knowledge equates to the opportunity to respond to the needs of your clients and add value to their travels. You reap the rewards for your hard work and knowledge acquisition in the form of fees and commissions but even more important, you gain the trust and confidence of clients who will not only provide referrals but will want you to keep doing what you do so well...walk the walk of ‘travel’.



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