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YOU ARE THE INCENTIVE

Steve Gillick

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27 AUG 2018: Maybe you have never considered the job of Travel Advisor to be in the 'incentive' category, but perhaps you should. A few years ago I offered to contribute an article to a magazine produced by one of the Incentive organizations in Canada. The response was that travel professionals don't really 'get' what Incentives are all about so thanks but no thanks. Boy, were they wrong!



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‘Incentive’ is a 15th century word that literally means “that which moves the mind or stirs the passion.” It comes from the Latin word ‘incentivus’ meaning ‘setting the tune’. It was not until the post-war period when ‘incentive’ became associated with ‘rewards meant to encourage harder work’.

I kind of like the original meaning of ‘incentivizing’ someone. The idea of ‘stirring their passion and setting the tune strikes a chord with me (!), as it fits into the idea of ‘travel’ so well. At the recent Incentives tradeshow in Toronto. I chatted with many tourist boards representing provinces, states, towns, communities and attractions and not one person asked WHY I wanted to travel to their destination. Instead they embarked on a sales pitch that could have been heard at any event, anywhere. No one explained how their products or services could actually be used as an incentive. They didn’t seem to care about the ‘why’; they just wanted to respond to the ‘how’.

Savvy Travel Advisors know that they need to understand why the client wants to travel and once they know the answer, the rest follows: identifying needs and satisfying those needs.

In fact, grasping WHY the client wants to travel can be a very exciting, investigative experience, for both you and the client. This is part of the 'qualifying' process: interviewing the client and establishing a relationship of shared interest and trust.

So if incentivizing the client (moving their mind and stirring their passion) is dependent on WHY the client wants to travel, we need to check out a few of the classic 'WHY's. Here are 20, for starters.

1. **I saw it on Reality TV:** Many reality TV programmes either overtly or subliminally deal with travel. Examples include Survivor, Naked and Afraid, Ice Road Truckers, American Pickers, Caribbean Life, The Osbournes, Dolce India, Deadliest Catch and others.
2. **Attenborough, Suzuki and me:** Nature programmes are great marketing destination pieces. Watching either of the Davids interact and narrate fascinating programmes about the natural world stimulates those "I wonder if I could also see Lemurs in Madagascar" impulses.
3. **Lucy and Me:** As a kid I (and thousands of other Boomers) watched I Love Lucy as she drove to Hollywood and travelled throughout Europe. The idea that I too could stomp grapes into wine in Italy, as Lucy did, is still top of mind. Andiamo!
4. **Get Away to Relax:** The ideal of turning off the cell phone, leaving the iPad at home and just getting away is a strong travel motivator.
5. **Get Away to Pretend to Relax:** However, the reality of turning off the cell phone can hit hard as

you feel the incoming text message vibrate in your pocket just as the Tour Guide is explaining the artwork in the Hermitage. As long as the client 'thinks' they are relaxing...that's what matters to them.

6. **The Great Escape:** This was called the Grand Tour in the 17th and 18th century when a trip to the European Continent was identified as a must-do in order to become a cultured, aristocrat. Today, escapism is available to any traveller looking to get away from their routine, to leave 'it' all behind for a week or more and do something different. It's an exceptionally valid excuse to travel!

7. **50 Shades of Adventure:** Adventure is in the mind of the beholder. Sitting on a beach at an all-inclusive for 7 days is an adventure to some while taking a coach tour is an adventure to others. Some may want to do the Shikoku Pilgrimage and visit all 88 temples while others may trek to Everest Base Camp. When a client tells you they want adventure—they mean it sincerely. Now all you have to do is find out what the word means to them.

8. **Take me back to Constantinople:** An incentive to travel can be based on the goal of exploring place names that sound intriguing, historic and impressive. Think of places such as Rangoon, Timbuktu, Ulan Bator, Lhasa, Blarney, Kandy, Hohhot, Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Samarkand and others.

9. **Religion:** Pilgrimages cover every religion and belief and are a strong travel motivator.

10. **Ancestry.** Ancestry tourism, bolstered by the popularity of basic DNA testing has energized travellers to explore their roots.

11. **Wellness:** A general term usually associated with fresh air, exercise, healthy foods and a feeling of 'cleansing' the body and soul.

12. **Food and Drink:** One of the hottest travel motivators. Sushi in Toronto may be good; sushi in Tokyo is melt-in-your mouth amazing. The same may hold true when it comes to Whiskey, Gin, Beer, Sake, Wine, and Vodka. If you can drink it—why not see where and how it's made—and then sample some!
13. **Secret Special Interests:** There are hundreds of special interests that can be enjoyed and discovered through travel. Everything from wild mushrooms to railways and from spice markets to folk dancing.
14. **One Up-Manships:** Going one better and trying to out-do something that a friend did. If they went to Pakistan, then you will visit all 5 Stans (all the countries that end in 'stan')
15. **One Down-Manships:** Having a more challenging experience than a friend. If they came back with stories of missed connections, challenging treks and hurricanes, then your motivation is to bring home stories that make theirs' pale in comparison.
16. **I saw it in the movies:** Lord of the Rings? Head to New Zealand. Star Trek? Venture to Skellig Michael in Ireland; Slumdog Millionaire? Meander to Mumbai.
17. **Trips too rad for Mom and Dad:** My parents would never have approved of the kind of trip I want to take so my radical spirit, quoting Nike, says "Just do it".
18. **Photos and Selfies and Instagram:** Social media incentivizes travellers. It may be a post you saw, or a desire to show selfies in enviable activities and destinations (drinking a glass of Malbec in Mendoza).
19. **Conversations with people:** For clients who want to interact with the world around them by chatting with villagers in Nepal, making pupusas in El Salvador or quaffing beer with locals in Santiago

de Cuba.

20. **Travel for Travel's Sake:** These are the clients who say 'do I really need a reason to travel'? I just want to explore—expand my horizons—and make a difference in my life.

Travel Advisors tend to be masters of the art of establishing client relationships based on 'qualifying' clients and discovering the motivation (their incentive) to travel. They know that 'moving the mind of travellers, stirring their passions and setting the tune'...are part of the true spirit of what 'incentives' are all about. And it starts with you.

You are the Incentive!



Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

[Read more from Steve Gillick](#)