Keep it real: market and communicate your credentials

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Why are we here?

- You take sustainability actions because it’s part of your values
- But you’d like customers to show their appreciation, and to choose you for it.
- You need to accept that marketing sustainability is appropriate, and learn how to do it
- We want your example of what works for you
Structure

1. Who do I tell?
2. Why am I telling?
3. What do I say?
4. Where do I tell?
5. When do I tell?
Step 1.
Does the market want to know? Who do I tell?

We do not understand the impact that sustainability of products and responsible business practices do and can have on demand, because we are asking the wrong questions and myopic analysis.
Which is your target market?

- Altruistic reasons
- Better product reasons
- Expect it already happens
- Don’t want to know, but don’t mind if you do it
- Will avoid your product
Wanderlust survey (2007)
How far would you go for a weekend break?

- 15% 0 hours - I take the train
- 47% 1-3 hours
- 27% 3-5 hours
- 11% >6 hours

- “If I’ve only got a few days I don’t want to be jet-lagged”
- “I know flying five hours for a short break isn’t the most environmentally friendly thing to do. However, those extra couple of hours could be the difference between going to an ‘obvious’ short break destination and somewhere altogether more interesting”.

- Not an issue most visitors actively consider when choosing
- Think of it first in terms of means of travel rather than tourism facilities
- Potential for poor practice to deter is stronger than good practice to attract
- Visitors want tools to help them make easier, informed decisions
- Not prepared to pay more to use tourism facilities that are taking action
2010 VisitEngland data on English consumers says:

- 58% would want to stay in accommodation with green awards/environmentally friendly practices
- 51% say that if two hotels were the same, they would choose the one with a green award
- 46% don’t want to think about being green - they want to relax
- 33% believe sustainability claims are often ways to save money and/or reduce service
- 15% think a hotel run sustainably will be less comfortable than one without green credentials.
Sustainability and marketing together make a better business

- Deepdale (Norfolk) is an eco friendly backpackers hostel, campsite, group hostel, tipis and yurts, visitor information centre, retail site and farm.

- Conservation weekends in March

- Scrap Heap Art Challenge to build art from our scrap and recycled waste.

- Earth Day event invite companies to exhibit environmentally friendly technologies

- Contents for social media marketing
Step 2. Why am I telling?

There are too many vague messages out there. Be clear what response or change that you are hoping for from your customers.
To make customers feel good

• Show them how they are “doing their bit”- by you doing it for them
• Customers feel good (or less guilty) facing easy choices. Charitable donations, public transport or recycling information… none of these get in the way of what the customer came for.
• Tell about your local suppliers, origin of produce...
It’s all about how you say it

From this

• “We realise that our business does have an impact on the environment and in this wonderful part of Wales we do not wish to jeopardise the enjoyment of future generations... In January 2008 we insulated the space above the bedroom ceilings with over 400m2 of sheep’s wood insulation.

To this

• “Our sheep will keep you warm at night. For there are more than 400m2 of sheep’s wool insulating the bedrooms ceilings. Sleep tight.”
And from this

- We now compost all our food waste in large commercial food composter that helps accelerate the compost process and in doing so divers about 12-15 tons of waste per annum from landfill to our gardens.

To this

- “We are often asked how we manage to look after our gardens so well all year round - the secret is over 12 tons of food going through our state of the art commercial composter each year.”
To raise awareness and change behaviour

• Be specific. Vague messages frustrate
• Show the difference you make
• Give something in return
To offer something extra

- Design sustainable packages for your low occupancy or usage periods, or think of services that can generate more money in high season.
Why charitable donations

• Bedruthan Steps Hotel (Cornwall) explains to customers at the point of booking that they encourage guest donations to responsible causes (while highlighting that the hotel also does their bit).

• £5 opt-out donation per booking:
  – Option 1: co2balance
  – Option 2: Surfers Against Sewage
  – Option 3: St Mawgan in Pydar Community Fund
Ecotours of the hotel premises

• Battlesteads Country Inn (Northumberland) encourages customers to report interesting sightings in our guest log.
• Getting customers to engage makes nature more fun and reinforces our many sustainability actions.
• Ecotours for guests around the site showing hedgehog houses, badge boxes and much more means customers relate to us better.
To get more customers

• Increased occupancy or higher prices?
• We all like a bargain...

• cafes giving a discount (and others putting 10p in a charity pot) for regulars that bring their own commuter mug - saving on disposable cups while gaining a loyal customer.
Feeling confident about what you are worth

• **Sandra Barnes-Keywood.** Old Chapel Forge 9 year old, 4 bed B&B

• For the first four years I was acting sustainably but scared to speak about it, until I got the courage to change my business model.

• I target business customers during the week, by having personally presented our green credentials to all the local corporations with green purchasing policies

• 90% occupancy all year (30% better than competitors)

• Price 20% above average.
Using incentives to increase occupancy

- **James Hiley-Jones.** At Carey’s Manor and Senspa in Hampshire car-free visits get:
  - 10% off standard tariff rate
  - 2 for 1 tickets at Beaulieu
  - free steam train ride at Exbury Gardens
  - 10% off cycle hire at Cycle Experience in Brockenhurst.

- 10-15% of our leisure weekend customers and 30 to 40% of our mid week conference market now arrive car free.

- We’ve realised how corporate social responsibility has become a much bigger issue and we now provide a green travel plan for conference organisers.
Step 3.
What do I say?

Be clear about the impression you want to create – with your sustainability policy, photos, text…
1. Fun/participation

- What can I do?
- People want the option of being active
- People choose a hotel based on what they can do nearby (or in the hotel)
- Wheelbarrow picnic
- Pick your own lunch
- Learn to do something
- Children’s quiz
- Town trail
- Books for walks
- Bike hire
No Smoking

It makes your breath smell and your teeth go horrid - as well as being a danger to the people who live in our forest.
Recycling point

Twiggles don’t like litter and we really don’t like waste, but we love turning your rubbish into fun new things.

So please put your rubbish in the right bin and we’ll do the rest.

Thanks

The Twiggle Team
2. Cultural immersion

- Get to know the real, authentic side of your destination
- Reinforce the image of the person I want to be
- A traveller, not a tourist
3. Better service

- Make me feel special!
- You can see things nobody else does
- Fresh, unadulterated, honest food that makes holidaying memorable- you are no longer in the rat race!
4. Empathy/ trust/risk

- We are people like you
- We think alike
- We have the same values
- That’s why you’ll enjoy your holiday here

- We are here for you
- We are a serious business
- Peace of mind
- You are not wasting your money and holiday time

- “We hire bikes- and also tell you about cycling etiquette and how to be safe”
- “we would like to share the beauty of our island/city with you in the knowledge you’ll want to keep it that way”
Family Worldwide shows we share the same values...

• “What I’m finding more and more as I travel and talk to parents, is the overwhelming number of you who are becoming desperate to help their children to engage with the real world and leave behind the screen of a computer, phone, Playstation, Nindendo DS, X-Box, Wii…”
Step 4.
Where do I tell?

Integrate sustainability as part of quality through the channels you already use. Use certification and awards to get recognition, and the internet to spread the word.
Certification

• Independent guarantee of your credentials.
• Confidence and credibility
• Not sufficient in itself, you have to communicate what it is and what it means you do better
Awards

• Only a few companies win awards. You could spend much time on it without any results, and you will need to show something unique and extraordinary.
Meet your public relations manager

- The Mill at Gordleton (Hampshire).
- Crispie the Duck, an orphan they adopted is now the hotel’s mascot.
- Photo calendar, children’s book and doorstops inspired on Crispie- with profits from the book, for example, going to a local children’s cancer ward.
Press

• What makes you different, in a way that my customers will want to read about you?
• Links from your website to previous articles, quotes
The internet

- Your website’s sustainability policy page is boring
- “minimise waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are fit for purpose”
- get used to blogging, Twitter, Facebook and other social networks
Step 5. When do I tell?

You market your company all the time.

Help customers make informed decisions
Prior to booking/purchase

• Calories of tea compared to skinny lattes or full fat cappuccinos,
• public transport deals or the CO2 emissions of their journey.
• tell customers how to get there with low CO2, and importantly what to do there without a car.
Camden food co

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After booking and confirmation

- How to prepare for their visit - what to bring, what is acceptable behaviour, dress code (if relevant), how to respect other users that will be there.
- Pre-booking of local food
On arrival

• There are no second chances to make a first impression
• Live your policy
• Tell your customers- specially self catering
• Accor’s list of actions on display
During the stay/visit

• Now you communicate by making visible the things you do. Here you decide how much you want the communication to affect the customer experience, or just be in the background.
Use one thing to tell another...

- London Lancaster Hotel sustainability is behind the scenes
- Concierge info:
  - limo & taxi companies using hybrid vehicles (geo fuel)
  - display and promote cycle hire,
  - Jogging map
  - Green London attraction brochures
- This becomes a route to communicate our much wider and deeper policies and practices.
Communicate with your packaging

- The Venus Company thinks about their impact on the environment, but also the impact on customers’ taste buds and eyes.
- They use food to tell a story - of where the food comes from and how it’s good for you.
- They use over 40 organic products, source locally, and tell customers about it.
- Not tacky in your face way, but as part of reinforcing the message that you can enjoy being on holiday.

- They communicate “sustainability” everywhere - all their packaging talks about toxic free chemicals and hydrogenated fat amongst others.
After the stay/visit

• Stay in touch with your customers. Speaking about sustainability will be more welcomed than a direct promotional message saying “book with us”.

• From trees to the staff family picture

Responsible Tourism
Say it with flowers

• Families love pressing flowers with us at the end of the summer season at Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages (Lancashire).

• We identify, collect and press flowers with families - much as we did with our own children. We keep them pressed in the cottage and once ready we post them as a memento of their holiday.

• Usually this contributes to that family reminiscing about their time with us and often leads to a further booking.