



**Digital  
that  
Delivers.**

# **Resource Your Bookable Experience**

**Human – Financial – Technology**

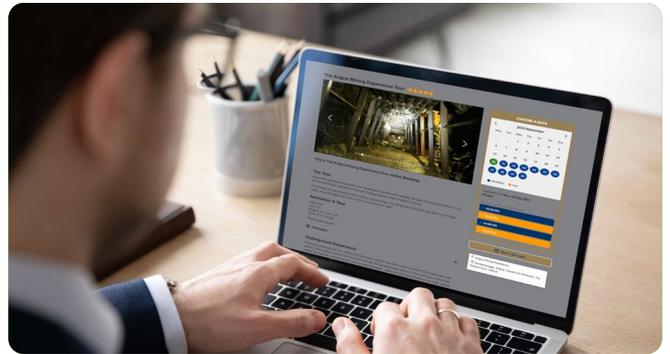


# Resource your bookable experience

## Human – Financial – Technology

### Introduction

This section deals with developing and implementing bookable experiences and specifically how to resource them. Considerations such as the skills, knowledge and responsibilities are explored.



It also looks at how the bookable experience can contribute financially and there's an accompanying financial template with a worked example that you can use to assess the likely costs and revenue associated with current or new experiences.

The characteristics of an effective online booking system – what it should do for you – are also outlined.

### Resource the bookable experience operationally

Resourcing considerations include the following:

- 1 Strategy** 
- 2 Resource planning** 
- 3 Skills and responsibilities** 
- 4 Finance** 
- 5 Measure and monitor** 
- 6 Decision** 
- 7 Technology** 

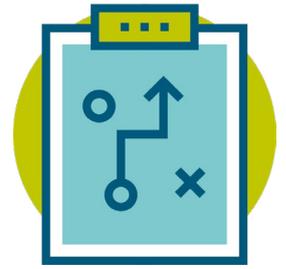
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## 1. Strategy

The starting point is to consider which experiences should be developed to encourage growth and to avoid moving too far from the core business.

Choose experiences that:

1. Align with your core vision and values – make sure that new experiences do not distract from already established experiences that are successful and profitable.
2. Align with the needs or motivations of your target market.
3. Align with the necessary skills and capacity within the business that you already have or they can be acquired easily.
4. Make a positive contribution financially.



### How do you determine if an experience aligns with your core vision and values?

This will usually be based on factors such as the research you've done, the ideation workshops you've organised and your own natural or instinctive reaction as the owner and/or manager. Don't make decisions based on instinct alone – research is vital.

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## 2. Resource planning

The main areas to consider in resource planning are:

- ✓ Leadership and direction
- ✓ Skills and capacity
- ✓ Knowledge or intellectual capital
- ✓ Available funding
- ✓ Availability of staff and equipment or assets
- ✓ Availability of online facility for booking

You need to devise how the bookable experience is delivered – what is the process?

Map out the different components of the visitor experience to identify the resources needed.



**It's critical to have the right structures and people in place to deliver your visitor experience:**

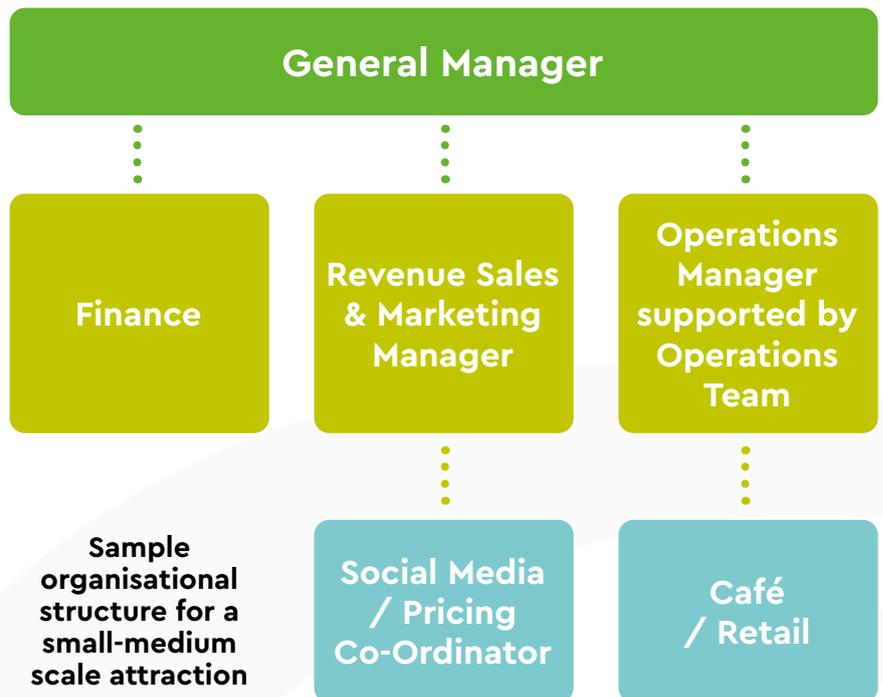
- ✓ Overall management and day-to-day operations
- ✓ Booking systems
- ✓ Maintenance
- ✓ Visitor management
- ✓ Finances
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Human resources
- ✓ Customer service



Developing a clear experience process flow will allow for optimum manpower planning for both management and operational resourcing. This sample organisational structure reflects what one would expect to find in a small or medium scale visitor attraction.

Given the scale of many visitor experience providers, it is critical that the skill set of the operational and management team is robust and well rounded.

The very nature of visitor experiences – as service providers – means that all resources are required to multitask as is normal practice in high season or on high demand days.



**Sample organisational structure for a small-medium scale attraction**

Staff resource does not always mean recruiting new staff members. A more flexible option could be where you buy in services on a contractor basis, so you buy in the resource as and when you need it. A typical example here is specialist staff providing a food experience.



### 3. Skills and responsibilities across key resource areas



#### Finance

Cost benefit analysis, projections, marginal costing, ability to project revenues and costs for new projects and experiences, commercial experience, ability to work as part of an integrated team with sales, operations and other key staff.

#### Revenue Sales & Marketing Manager

Overall responsibility for implementing sales and marketing strategy, including pricing and capacity management across all channels and segments, with a remit to drive visitor numbers, revenue and ancillary spend. Required skills include business analysis, sales and marketing, collaboration, relationship management, product innovation and development, revenue management and pricing.

#### Social Media Coordination

Given the role of social media in the promotion of visitor experiences as well as in driving brand awareness, it is recommended that a dedicated resource is in place to support social media. This need not be a full-time resource.

#### Pricing and Inventory Management

A critical function; distributing inventory on the various channels you use to distribute and sell your visitor experience and managing pricing. It is possible, in a small to medium sized visitor experience provider, that one full time resource could manage the two functions of social media and pricing and inventory management.

## 4. Finance

### How do you assess if your bookable experience is financially sustainable?

The key point is that the additional income generated from the bookable experience must exceed the additional cost of carrying it out.

From a financial point of view, each new bookable experience should be viewed as a mini business in its own right. The outcome financially should be at least a break-even position if not a financial surplus. While it is acceptable to have an initial loss to build a product in the early days, monitor it closely to make sure it will lead to a profit within a short period of time.

The following steps will establish the financial outcome.

#### A. Calculate costs

Estimate all costs:

- ✓ Estimate direct variable costs including staffing, cost of sales, direct equipment, infrastructure needed, direct overheads
- ✓ Build in an estimate of fixed cost allocation to the bookable experience

Work out net profit or loss by subtracting total estimated costs from total revenue.

From an overall business point of view, assess if the net result is worth all the effort.

Use the practical template to decide if a bookable experience will contribute financially and, if so, by how much.

#### B. Revenue potential

Set the price of the bookable experience, based partly on the cost base calculated above and the mark up required. Decide if discounts will be offered and what price applies to each category of visitor e.g., individuals, families, seniors, groups, children.

Estimate the full revenue potential – calculate the total price of bookable experience. Multiply this by the number of visitors likely to purchase the experience. Ensure estimates are net of Vat.



Remember that early challenges and even failures are normal and are part of the learning.



It's a good idea to calculate your operating costs per day. For example, do you know your costs for opening for an additional hour/day, public holiday versus a standard working day?



Estimate discounts and work out the impact they will have if you use them for groups or tour operators / agents who give you big volumes.



Coach tour business is a very valuable source of volume and once secured can be long term but be prepared to discount. Remember too that contracting is usually carried out at least one year in advance.



Alongside sales from admission tickets or participation in your activity / day tour, food and retail can be a big source of revenue. Are there opportunities for you to expand your offering or to partner with a local business to satisfy this demand?



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## 5. Measure and monitor

Identify what KPIs (key performance indicators) you will use to measure the success of the bookable experience. Measure against them on a regular basis and take corrective action as required.

KPIs can include:

- ✓ Numbers purchasing the bookable experience
- ✓ Overall profit or loss
- ✓ Visitor/customer feedback and satisfaction ratings
- ✓ Impact on overall resources of the business/organisation particularly staff and management
- ✓ Has the bookable experience enhanced the overall vision and values of the business?



**What gets measured gets managed**

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## 6. Decision – scale up or abandon

Bookable experiences that score highly against your KPIs should be scaled up and get a higher priority within the organisation.

Considerations for scaling up:

- ✓ Ensure new teams are recruited or services bought in where needed, to avoid overload
- ✓ Review pricing and target market to ensure that initial thinking was right
- ✓ Is the online booking system capable of scaling up, given likely visitor targets?

Poorly performing experiences should be abandoned early – just make sure before you abandon that it's a fundamental issue and not simply teething problems.



Assess your financial performance with this excel template:



## 7. Technology

**It is recommended that all experience providers should work towards having an online booking system.**

An online booking system should be easy to navigate for the potential visitor and easy to operate by you and your staff. Depending on the scale and business requirements of your operation, you might choose an off-the-shelf option, or you might go for a more complex solution.

Specialist support will be available through the Digital that Delivers programme to support you in procuring and implementing technology that is a best fit for your operation. Having an experience that is bookable online will be a prerequisite to availing of this specialist support.

Meantime it is advised that you do not proceed with any system procurement without consulting the Digital that Delivers team.

Once you have developed an experience that is suitable for online booking and for distribution in digitally connected third party channels, you can start to draw up a specification document that sets out what you need the online booking system to do. This document will support the procurement process with the Digital that Delivers team.



**The online booking system will be your central hub for all distribution including direct online (your website) and offline bookings (phone, email, walk-up) as well as bookings through resellers such as OTAs. It is only by using a central system that is connected to all channels that you can run your distribution in real time (managing capacity / availability and maximising sales), improve operational efficiency, and generate visitor and sales insights across all your distribution channels.**



# Recommendations

Whether it is buying admission or season tickets, booking groups or spending through your gift shop it is vital that your customer's digital journey, which will drive revenue, is easy and seamless.

Your online booking system will form the central technology hub for your business.

Benefits of having such robust integrated technology include:

- ✓ Greater insights around booking patterns and visitor buying patterns.
- ✓ Better forecasting for your business.
- ✓ Having data on future bookings will drive greater operational efficiencies all round.
- ✓ Knowing future demand and having access to guest data will support your sales and marketing.

The online booking system will support your ability to distribute inventory on direct channels (e.g. your website) and indirect channels such as the OTAs and other third-party channels that you work with.

Making your online booking system welcoming and easy-to-do-business-with is a tangible way to maximise revenue for your business.



# 7 features of an effective online booking system

An effective online booking system will have the following features:



## 01.

Content updates should be capable of being done internally in the business, avoiding the need to go to an external supplier for common updates such as;

- ✓ Product
- ✓ Pricing
- ✓ Time slots
- ✓ Imagery

## 02.

The online booking system should allow for bookability in the following ways:

- ✓ By product
- ✓ By date
- ✓ By day of week
- ✓ By time slot

## 03.

It should allow for multiple ticket types.

## 04.

It should have integrated payment functionality.

## 05.

It should allow for the following:

- ✓ Cancellation
- ✓ Amendments
- ✓ Change of date
- ✓ Change of time
- ✓ Add or reduce persons on ticket
- ✓ Payment refunds

## 06.

It should allow for the collection and reporting of both visitor and demand data.

## 07.

A system with the right reporting functionality is critical. This needs to be critically reviewed at the procurement stage to ensure that the right data and information is captured and delivered to inform good decision making.

If the right online booking system is in place, it will be easy for you and your team to do common updates without the cost and delays of going to an external supplier every time you need to change something.

