Executive Director Report – August 2016

Trish and I have been planning our family vacation to PEI at the end of the month. We didn't know much about the island besides seafood, potatoes and Anne of Green Gables. With two weeks to go, we now have a daily itinerary of activities booked strictly through search engine results. We have booked a lobster supper, deep sea fishing, theatre tickets and kayaking. And we know what beaches we want to visit, where the best lighthouses are and the where we are going to buy our fresh seafood right off the boats. But are we really going to the best places, or are we going to the places where the business owner/operators are best at making sure they have an incredible online presence?

I thought that it would be interesting to do the same searches we did for PEI and translate it to Ontario to see who is best at getting in front of the online audience. The results were very interesting.

First Search: Things to do in Ontario

Top Results: http://www.summerfunguide.ca/greater-toronto-area/attractions.html, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Attractions-g154979-Activities-Ontario.html, http://attractionsontario.ca/

Granted, Ontario is way bigger than PEI, however the top results are very Toronto, Niagara and Ottawa based. There aren't even any of our municipalities listed along the top of the page. However, Jungle Cat World, a Weekend with Thomas and TreeTop Trekking were listed in the summer fun guide and many of our attractions are members of Attractions Ontario. We are traveling as a family so we'd pick Wonderland as a key activity and plan around that.

Second Search: Places to Stay Near Canada's Wonderland

Top Results: https://www.canadaswonderland.com/places-to-stay/featured-hotels, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/HotelsNear-g499300-d185018-Canada_s_Wonderland-Vaughan_Ontario.html, www.sheratonparkway.com/canadas-wonderland-hotel

The Sheraton Parkway is listed three times in the top three searches. They have invested well to take advantage of the large amount of searches people make to plan their visit around a Canada's Wonderland adventure. With hotel in hand, I now know that I am visiting York, which I may not have before. Much like we started looking for things to do in the Cavendish area (where we booked our accommodations) I would now do the same thing for York.

Third Search: Things to do in York Ontario (Note that I had to add Ontario because the initial search came up with mostly things to do in England)

Top Results: https://www.ontariotravel.net/en/explore/york-durham/york-region, www.yorkscene.com/, https://www.tripadvisor.ca/AttractionsNear-g155019-d4065999-York_University-Toronto_Ontario.html

It is also important to note that along the top of that search was a series of pictures with direct links to websites. These included: Canada's Wonderland, Kortright Centre, Sharon Temple, Vaughan Mills, Boyd Conservation, McMichael Gallery and Pacific Mall.

From that search, I found some more fun things to do using Trip Advisor. And when I searched for family restaurants, Trip Advisor came up in the top three as well. To be honest, I used Trip Advisor a lot when planning what to do and where to eat in PEI. Part of it was because they always showed up in the top of my searches and part of it was because the ratings system is user generated. Going on Trip Advisor recommendations also makes me feel like I am going to the best places and not just those with the best online presence.

Do you have a TripAdvisor account? Have you been rated without even knowing it? Do you know how to use Trip Advisor to your advantage?

Central Counties has partnered with E-Learning University to provide all of our stakeholders FREE access to courses and seminars designed to make you more successful in your business. This includes a great online seminar, *Make the most of TripAdvisor for Your Business*. We encourage you to go to http://centralcounties.ca/b2b-opportunities/e-learning/ and sign up for free so that when people like me are trying to plan their vacations, they find your business.

Have a great day!

Chuck