



CENTRAL COUNTIES

Executive Director Update – August 2015

I had a big lightbulb-over-my-head “Aha” moment the other day. I was meeting with one of our municipalities and we were discussing alignment and marketing. Their issue, and I suspect the issue of most people reading this, is determining how best to leverage very limited advertising dollars. They have several events they want to promote and their plan was to do some print advertising throughout the region with a call to action back to their municipal page.

The reason they, and other stakeholders, drive back to their own websites is that each of them have to report stats back to the “powers that be”. This creates an industry culture of competitiveness and a circle-the-wagons mentality. The moment of clarity began to form. If we are truly all working towards a common goal of driving more visitation and revenue to the tourism and related businesses in our region, then all success should be shared. If we can all buy into that concept two things are going to happen. 1) Everyone will instantly increase the ROI on the reach of their advertising and 2) the statistics you report about impressions, reach, referrals, etc. will be much higher than they have ever been before.

It’s brilliant in its simplicity. Your end goal is to make sure consumers know what it is you have to offer. Let’s say you are a municipality (but it works for individual tourism stakeholders too) and you have \$5,000 to advertise your events/attractions/accommodations each year. Traditionally, you would be driving consumers back to your website (www.municipality.ca). The reality is that that kind of money has very little impact. However, if the municipality were to drive consumers to the regional website (www.regionaltourism.ca/municipality), suddenly they will also be leveraging the regional dollars being spent to drive consumers to the site. And if all the municipalities and stakeholders did the same thing, there could be tens, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars being invested to drive consumers to the regional site.

We have talked a lot over the years about building destinations. Each municipality in Central Counties has great things to offer consumers but not many of them are big enough, or compelling enough to drive more than a day trip. However, when you combine all of the tourism assets of each municipality, a destination begins to appear. Consumers who see your advertisement and are interested in what you have to offer will be able to build a visit that also includes them spending time and money at other locations in the regions. And consumers who see another stakeholder’s advertisement and are interested in what they have to offer, will now be able to see what you have and may include a visit to you as part of their plans.

The reporting now becomes a collective win. The municipality in this example will be able to report on how many visits to (www.regionaltourism.ca/municipality), how many links back to www.municipality.ca, how many referrals from (www.regionaltourism.ca/municipality) to other places on the regional website and how many referrals from other places on the site back to the municipal page. These stats are incremental to their own website traffic. The important stats that everyone has to report will show the big increases that come with true collaboration.

In the coming months, I would like to explore this opportunity further and we will be reaching out to our regional and municipal stakeholders to get the ball rolling on this simple, yet incredibly impactful shift in how we leverage our limited funds.