Case Study

'Community Challenges are set up to help communities understand how to make their tourism offering better, they will pay back time, money & effort invested and will be a hugely beneficial experience.'

Pitlochry challenges itself to pick up the pace

"Pitlochry is considered a well established and popular visitor destination in an idyllic and accessible location. Many other communities would aspire to replicate or model themselves on it. This is perhaps the greatest threat to Pitlochry as a tourist destination and makes it a bit vulnerable in the ever changing and competitive tourism industry. The businesses and the community risk being lulled into a false sense of security and well being." ***Dennys Campbell, Project Co-ordinator, Pitlochry Partnership***

If you ask a straight question…
A growing awareness of the town being in its comfort zone prompted Scottish Enterprise to commission a detailed tourism survey on Pitlochry. The report revealed that recent and regular visitors felt there were a number of things that Pitlochry could do with polishing up a bit. These hard truths were then used to galvanise businesses and the community at large to 'raise their game' in response to visitors' explicit views.

The visitors surveyed said that improving customer service quality and genuine hospitality should be at the top of Pitlochry's action list.

"We need to ensure that we don't fall victim to our perceived success and popularity" ***Dennys Campbell, Project Co-ordinator, Pitlochry Partnership***

Information is power
Next, the group realised that information about customers, and access to that information, was a bit thin so they looked for ways to gather feedback and profiling information from visitors, to help them fine tune what Pitlochry was offering them. They also figured it'd be helpful to share some data between businesses to compare and contrast and to help spot any trends. The information will help populate a shared data base of clients which the Pitlochry Partnership can target news of events and offers to, to encourage return visits.

"It's been recognized that this is an essential tool if we're to operate an effective and successful destination marketing strategy" ***Dennys Campbell – Project Co-ordinator, Pitlochry Partnership***

For example, to help build up a picture of what customers thought of their visit, Pitlochry teamed up with coach tour company Rabbies Trailburners. They will be collecting specific feedback from their own customers about their experiences and impressions of Pitlochry and sharing it with the Partnership.

Case Study

United front

Early on, a Pride & Passion visitor experience workshop generated a ripple effect of awareness in Perthshire of all these issues and many businesses in Aberfeldy, Blair Atholl, Birnam and Dunkeld were inspired to work more closely together as a result. It was later proposed that they form themselves into the Highland Perthshire Tourism Alliance.

"Pride & Passion has helped to focus our business on the needs of our customers. Through training organised by Pride & Passion my staff were given a day experience from the viewpoint of a visitor. This really helped them understand that every customer that walks through the door is experiencing our service for the first time". ***Mark Wood, The Christmas Emporium***

What the 'Community Challenge' provided

"*The opportunity to be involved with the Pride & Passion Community Challenge gave an undoubted fillip to the confidence of Pitlochry tourism businesses. This happened partly just because of the recognition involved, but also because it has provided a focus for a number of initiatives in the area. Beginning with a customer care seminar last autumn which was over subscribed even when additional places were added, Pride and Passion has given and is still giving new energy to thinking about tourism needs and provision in Pitlochry.* **Ian Brown, Chairman, Pitlochry Partnership**

Pride & Passion has helped us galvanise the town and improve communication. Through training events, Dragons Den, the launch of a newsletter and many more initiatives. Pitlochry is now starting to pull together as a town with collective goals. These will strengthen the local economy and maintain a vibrant community ensuring Pitlochry has a bright future irrespective of economic climate. **Mark Wood, The Christmas Emporium**

The Community Challenge has been a catalyst for new activity and has re-focused the business community. A series of workshops created greater communication between business folk in the town and a willingness to work together, something that was formerly rather lacking. The Dragons' Den workshop in particular is a perfect platform to get the accommodation sector together and provides an opportunity for businesses to communicate their ideas.

At a public meeting, local businesses said that more communication about the Pitlochry Partnership and also between businesses would help get them more involved and committed. In response the Pitlochry Partnership launched a new newsletter in July 2008.

What did we all learn?

Pitlochry's Community Challenge experience showed us:

- We may think that we are doing very well but listening to the customer can provide the impetus to do things differently and really move things on.
- There is a general belief that Pitlochry has been studied ad nauseum, but studies need action to follow them up and action needs committed participants.
- Communicating the successes and achievements within the town to local businesses motivates businesses to continue supporting a group.
- Through various 'get togethers' people realised that there was a lot of talent and experience in their midst, which could be harnessed to their mutual benefit.
- Because something has not worked in previous years does not mean that it would not do so now. New members can add re-newed energy and ideas.
- Pursuing different avenues of funding takes up a huge chunk of time so having a dedicated project co-ordinator in post is a great boon.
- Communication between businesses can be boosted by taking people out of their usual environment.

team@prideandpassion.net or free phone 0800 028 0588.

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