Good Ideas Exchange

There are lots of good ideas out there. All over the place. The trouble is, often they stay 'out there' and don't make it to 'over here', so only a few people get the benefit of them. That's where the Good Ideas Exchange comes in.

Each are some good tried and tested ideas submitted by some Communities Pride & passion has been working with. These Community ideas are the best, or unique good idea for improving the visitor experience and then we show it to all the other Communities. It could be a service, or a way of providing better info, or a new facility or activity offered jointly.

Everyone then can see these good ideas and where they've come from. The next part of the Challenge is for each Community to pick at least one of the ideas from somewhere else, and apply it for themselves. If any hints or help is needed to make someone else's idea happen, the source of the idea is known so should be able to help with some practical tips, and even some blueprints, probably.

Not every idea will suit every community, obviously, but the potential is huge.
Now...who's first?!

Retailers and hospitality join forces in Edinburgh's West End.

In our ever widening quest for good ideas, we had only to go around the corner to our local community for a perfect example of joined up thinking. A group of specialist retailers got together to host a bit of "a do" over Christmas 2007. The local independent gift and greeting card retailer who'd recently move into larger premises, teamed up with a nearby fashion retailer for a fashion show and shopping event. On arrival all 120 guests were given a glass of 'fizz', supplied courtesy of a local food company.

Shoppers received a goody bag including special discount offers from participating stores and the chance to take part in the lucky draw which took place towards the end of the evening (keeping customers engaged and browsing!). During the event, guests were asked to fill out a postcard with their contact details, so that the retailers could keep them informed throughout the year.

This is just one example of how working together can provide so many opportunities for building your business and promoting your local area. For more information on ideas from this group of traders e.g. special December shopping evening and the free parking scheme for local shoppers please go to :-

www.papertiger.ltd.uk/blog.htm

And whilst we're on the subject of Edinburgh we saw a snippet in "The Drum" magazine from Gerry Farrell, Creative Director of the Leith Agency. He was commenting in the vox pop on "How can Scotland encourage homegrown brands?". His response struck a CC chord with us..

"We can share our resources on a pro bono basis with local entrepreneurs. The Leith Agency has initiated a series of free marketing clinics for small Leith-based businesses to put something back into the local community. We regularly give up two hours after work to help and advise small businesses on their marketing strategy".

Is there a local agency in your area that might follow suit? It's worth a try.

In the picture in Huntly

Huntly tourism businesses realized that for individual and joint leaflets, websites and publicity material a stock of good images of the town and local area would be required. All that was available was copyright images from professional photographers, which attracted a fee for use. Someone locally had the bright idea of involving teenagers in the solution to this issue by launching a photo competition for under 16s where the best images would form the basis of a free, shared local image-bank. The kids would also be credited for their photos being used.

Referral system in Linlithgow is a winner

Hazel Hay who runs Cauldburn House in Linlithgow gave us the low down on the town's referral system which is boosting business for local accommodation providers.

The Royal Burgh of Linlithgow is a popular destination for visitors from all over the world. Its charm, history, wealth of attractions and close proximity to Edinburgh and the Airport makes it an ideal spot for touring central Scotland. For years, every evening in the month of August, visitors from all over the world have flocked into the town and surrounding area looking for accommodation for the night. Unfortunately, the Tourist Information office closes at 5.00pm, resulting in a lot of weary and despairing people walking the street of Linlithgow.

They asked in the pubs and restaurant for the names and addresses of places to stay and knocked on every B & B establishment in town, only to hear "we're full, no I'm sorry I don't know who might have a room tonight. You may need to try Falkirk" BUT this year we found a solution! A number of the local accommodation providers in the area got together and set up a spreadsheet with one co-ordinator. The spreadsheet shows the names of those participating, their telephone numbers and the days they have availability.

As availability changes, they e-mail the co-ordinator their changes, which are noted on the spreadsheet and the sheet is then e-mailed to all participants twice daily. If a cancellation comes up in an area, then the sheet is amended immediately and sent out so that the vacancies can be filled and tourists retained in the area. All e-mail and telephone enquiries for dates later in the month are referred to those who have availability.

The end result is that all available bed spaces in the area are being filled, tourists retained in the area and there is an increase in business for the local restaurants and attractions. From a very basic beginning and the willingness of businesses to work together, great results are being achieved. **So this year our Pride and Passion are truly showing in the Linlithgow Area, to the benefit of all local businesses and tourist alike. Hear Hear!**

Hazel would be more than happy to chat to you if you want to find out more about the referral system.

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The future stars of Scottish tourism

Over sixty youngsters in P4 and P7 at Low Port Primary School visited Linlithgow Visitor Awareness Centre on Burns Day earlier this year. They were welcomed by three volunteers who provided an insight into Tourism in the Royal Burgh.

They spent the day finding out about the town's website www.linlithgow.com, their local Star Trek hero (James Doohan of "Beam me up Scotty" fame), JoLoMo's painting "Winter Falls on Linlithgow" and even had the chance to take part in a local tourism Q & A led by Community Challenge leader Ronnie Bamberry.

The pupils were amazed to find out about the wealth of knowledge that was on the site and all agreed that the it would be a great tool for classroom research regarding the town.

The smiles on the pupils faces when the Coffee Neuk owners arrived with portions of typical Burns Day food - haggis, tatties and neeps - was worth seeing! As one of the teachers expressed, she was so proud of the kids eating the 'National Food' as they had been reluctant to do so in the past.

The group rounded off the day by taking home so goodies including a 2008 Linlithgow Calendar and Pride and Passion car stickers and notepads. Overall it was a great experience for the children, teachers, class assistants and the Linlithgow Visitor Awareness volunteers.

Acting on feedback in Peebles

Peebles Retailers Association collect information about visitors to the town by placing short questionnaires in shops, hotels and cafes in the town. The seven questions find out about the type, length and purpose of people's visit, what they did while in the area, what they liked and so on. They're building up a picture of the types and interests of visitors so they can better respond to what they want.

How do they get people to pick up and fill in the forms? The printed version is attached to a very attractive free postcard of Peebles that attracts the attention when you see it on tables and counters. All people have to do is tear the perforations to 'liberate' their free postcard, leaving the questionnaire ready to be completed. To encourage people to fill in the form, which is also available on the peebles.info website, the retailers offer the carrot of a quarterly prize draw and information-feeds about special events in the town.

PEEBLES RETAILERS ASSOCIATION
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88 HIGH STREET
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SCOTTISH BORDERS
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