

SUPPORTING YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DESTINATION MATTERS

tmi

Tourism Management Institute

Supporting and Developing Professionals in Destination Management

www.tmi.org.uk

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EUTO Study Visit delegates taking time out at Aerodium, Latvia

TMI *Hot Topic*: Mixing **business** with **leisure**

By now, you should have received your flyer and booking form for the TMI Hot Topic 2008, which is on 21 May at the Royal Society of Medicine, London, and you may already have booked your place.

But not all TMI members are in business tourism destinations, and perhaps some might be thinking "Business tourism isn't part of my destination, so what's in it for me?"

Well for a start, just because you're not involved in business tourism now doesn't mean you might not be in the future, whether in your current destination or as a result of a career move. More importantly, it's an

opportunity to pick up ideas, tips or best practice which you could transplant from the business tourism sphere to your destination – handling enquiries, for example, or innovative ways to attract business.

And not all the sessions are aimed entirely at business tourism specialists, hence the event's title: *Mixing Business with Leisure*. For example, Marketing Manchester and the

Liverpool Culture Company will be talking about ambassador schemes for business and leisure, including local resident schemes. Or you might be inspired by some of the case studies from Brighton, or ideas on how to persuade business visitors to extend their stays.

Last but by no means least, as with any TMI event, the Hot Topic is a great opportunity to network with

fellow destination managers, share experience and learn informally from other professionals' experiences, as well as through the formal sessions.

There's still time to benefit from the Early Bird rate for booking before 9 April, so for more information and to book your place – or places, with a 10% discount for three or delegates from the same organisation – go to www.emmm.co.uk/tmibacd

Don't use consultants!

advice from ...a consultant...

It would be professional suicide for me to suggest that consultants don't still have an important role to play but I'd like to help you focus on the kind of consultancy projects that are value for money. Here are a few thoughts:

If there's any chance a similar report has been written elsewhere, don't commission a full scale similar project. Get hold of an earlier report and build on that, using consultants to support you if necessary.

Could you learn some of the skills? Good consultancy is usually a combination of thorough analysis, specialist experience and knowledge of the broader tourism

“Don't commission consultants if there's any doubt you'll follow through and implement the findings...”

environment. If you have skills in one particular area of the project, why not try to tackle it yourself and ask consultants to fill the gaps and act as mentors and a second opinion instead?

Don't commission consultants if there's any doubt you'll follow through and implement the findings. I try to get clients to commission strategic action plans instead of a long strategy with a brief action plan attached. It's much easier to implement the former.

Using consultants doesn't always save time, especially if you've got to spend days briefing and meeting with them. Assemble as much information as possible and suggest where the gaps are. You don't need to do the consultant's job for them but it's worth doing the bits you can do yourself so you only pay the consultant to focus on their specialist areas. Consultants



After 18 years of consultancy, Susan Briggs has decided to come clean and share some thoughts on when NOT to use consultants...

should be advisors rather than archivists of information.

Use consultants when you're stuck and need to get out of a rut to move forward, when you really need some fresh input, or when you can't agree what the best way forward is. Use them as a neutral body to arbitrate, consult with the

industry or find a way through a quagmire but let's all think again about the best way of working together. Producing long reports is surely not a good idea – we all need to focus on action, rooted in a strategic thought process but not bogged down by lengthy reports barely anyone reads.



CPD Events

8 April

TMI Master Class

Developing and Differentiating your Destination

Leeds Metropolitan University

21 May

TMI Hot Topic 2008

Successfully Mixing Business with Leisure

Royal School of Medicine, London

21-28 September

EUTO Study Visit

Attractions and Events as Catalysts for Regeneration and Social Change

Nottingham and London

7-9 October

TMI Annual Convention 2008

Mercure Holland Park Spa Hotel, Bristol



Commissioning a consultant: In brief...

Phil Evans, TMI's London Regional Representative, could talk about this for a long time but from personal experience, the one important lesson he wants to share about commissioning a consultant is: Make sure the brief is right.

Calling in an 'expert' to complete important work might seem like a good idea in principle but can be fraught with dangers and doesn't always achieve a satisfactory outcome. A great deal of public money in the visitor economy is invested in consultants. They perform a very necessary function within our sector but frequently we don't take enough care in commissioning them to do what we need. It can quite easily happen, especially when we are working to a tight deadline to achieve an overall target. We can end up rushing through the most important first step. However, if the

brief isn't right, the whole project may fail.

There are several potential stumbling blocks. We might think we know what we want but sometimes we are too close to a project, unable to see it objectively and fail to communicate our aspirations properly. We may end up getting exactly what we asked for but not what we needed. Often, it's a good idea to work backwards from the final objective and to map out how to get there. In doing this, we can stay focussed, avoiding a lengthy tome that nobody's got the time to read. If a consultant does end up telling you what you already know, then it's likely they weren't briefed properly in the first place. If you receive a piece of

work that has been produced on a conveyor belt and only tweaked for your benefit then probably the wording in the brief was too woolly, allowing this to happen.

It can be tempting to put an entire piece of work into the hands of an external expert but frequently we need to cover specific areas, so that is what the brief should concentrate on. State exactly what you want and break it down if necessary. Get colleagues to double and triple check to ensure you are asking for the right outcomes.

You will still need to monitor and liaise with your consultant to complete the project but supplying a decent brief is half the battle.

Strategic management is most wanted training topic

If you responded to the call in December, you'll have added your mite to the VocMat research exercise.

The survey work is nearly finished, with just the final results from focus groups in Italy and Turkey are still to come in. The survey results make it clear that Strategic Management still heads the list of topics on which tourism managers across Europe most want training and support. Topping the list of possible new modules is Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Tourism, closely followed by Sustainable Tourism.

All of which means that the next phase of VocMat will deliver the existing Strategic Management module to new pilot groups from May to October this year. At the same time, the University of Girona will be developing the next module, probably Innovation and Entrepreneurship, to be delivered early in 2009. In this next phase, VocMat aims to embed much more in the way of audio and video in the online course material, to take maximum advantage of the possibilities of online learning.

One of VocMat's strengths is the chance to learn from colleagues in other European countries. Transnational working will be enhanced by making it easier to use the discussion boards, and incorporating discussion sessions into the coursework. Moving the Virtual learning Environment from Blackboard to Moodle means that there will also be an instant messaging facility so participants will be able to network more easily.

Each module starts with an induction seminar so that pilot group members have an opportunity to meet each other, either in person or, if they are unable to travel to the seminar itself, via video conferencing from a more convenient location. The induction for the next module will take place in Tallinn on 8/9 May and is likely to include a short walking tour of Old Tallinn.

Interested? The deadline for applications to be part of the pilot group, at no cost, is 4 April, so you've just time to apply. The application form is available on the TMI noticeboard, www.tmi.org.uk/pages/noticeboard



The Dome Church Tallinn. Photo: Kevin Gepford.

VocMat | VOCATIONAL MANAGEMENT TRAINING
FOR THE EUROPEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci

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