



TOURISM
EXCELLENCE

Adventure Victoria

Michael Watson

Tel. 0407 841736

michael.watson@adventurevictoria.com.au

www.adventurevictoria.com.au

How did a group of relatively small adventure tourism operators in Victoria's north-east break into the international marketplace? – through cooperation and a shared vision that the customer pie can be grown through collaborative effort.

Adventure Victoria is a cooperative sales and marketing campaign, supported by a centralised booking service, but there are no fancy St Kilda Road offices running it.



Watsons Mountain Country Trail Rides, Adventure Rafting, Australian Adventure Experiences and Adventure Guides Australia realised at a Tourism Victoria international travel workshop in November 2005 that they needed to pool talent and resources to enter the potentially lucrative, but fiercely competitive international marketplace. On their own they were just micro businesses that could not offer a broad enough product to attract the attention of the big players in the travel industry.

Using their own funds, plus in-kind support from Mansfield Shire Council, North East Victorian Tourism (NEVTi) advice from Tourism Victoria staff and funding assistance through the Australian Tourism Development Program (ATDP), they have since developed printed promotional material, a website and they attend international trade shows to sell their combined product to the world.

Program participant Michael Watson says the beauty of the collaboration is its simplicity. In addition to running their own businesses, each of them has taken-on a different role within the umbrella business: Business Development Manager; General Manager; Administration and Compliance; and Marketing.

Clients enquire through a central information number and, depending on their particular interests and needs, they are referred to the individual provider for further information and to enter into negotiations.

Adventure Victoria also uses an e-commerce site to provide online bookings. Buyers can choose one or more of the components, to suit their programs and client profiles.

It's still early days for the product and the principals readily admit that they're still in the learning phase. They have changed their product offering several times, primarily to accommodate different trip durations. They have also tried different bundling of products to suit different market needs.

They realise that it is often a 3-5 year exercise to build solid international trade, but success is being realised. The international component of Watson's Country Trail Rides business has risen from 1% to 19% of business turnover.

Adventure Victoria started marketing to the Eastern Hemisphere, but now concentrate on the Western Hemisphere markets. Their planning also includes a fair degree of market research and client evaluation.



Key lessons:

- *The international travel trade often seek a broader product offering than what one business can provide*
- *Look to other like-minded quality partners to package for the travel trade*
- *Success in the international trade requires perseverance and significant resources. It often takes 3-5 years before any real results are seen*
- *Listen to the international buyers and be flexible in your product offering to meet their needs*
- *Assistance with international product development and marketing is available free of charge from Tourism Victoria.*