

The challenges

1. Relatively low numbers of tourism operators who are members of a recognised Regional Tourism Organisation or Local Tourism Association.
2. A lack of time in small to medium business operations to attend networking and professional development activities.
3. The cost of attending industry events and the cost of employing replacement staff to enable owners and/or regular staff to attend.
4. A perceived lack of relevance to their business operation, the 'What's in it for me?' syndrome.
5. A lack of awareness about what learning and networking opportunities are on offer.
6. Participation by those already committed to self-improvement and networking, yet a failure to reach and to convince the majority who are not connected.
7. The inclination of many operators to only participate during times of economic downturn, when they perceive that their need is greatest.

Key strategies

1. Active promotion by Tourism Victoria of the 'Tourism Excellence' program, including skills development opportunities, accreditation and award schemes.
2. Encourage tourism associations to examine the cost-benefits of their tourism membership schemes, in order to communicate more tangible reasons for involvement.
3. Encourage tourism associations to consider a cost-effective 'one-fee' membership system, which could embrace multiple industry bodies, eg a local and a regional association.
4. Develop regional tourism leadership programs, based on the Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Program, to create more effective and longer lasting networks.

5. Tourism Victoria to convene quarterly gatherings of regional tourism staff, as well as an annual workshop of industry leaders, to share knowledge and to address specific issues affecting the industry.
6. The State Government to work with the tourism industry to continually improve the structure of Victoria's tourism industry, including alternative industry membership schemes for regional bodies, such as marketing levies.

Desired outcomes

1. An increased number and geographic spread of industry leaders, champions and mentors.
2. Increased participation by industry operators in relevant tourism associations and industry sector bodies.
3. Development of a state-wide register of all tourism business, in order to facilitate better communication.
4. Greater tourism operator participation and confidence in industry training programs.
5. Stronger, better resourced and relevant industry associations.

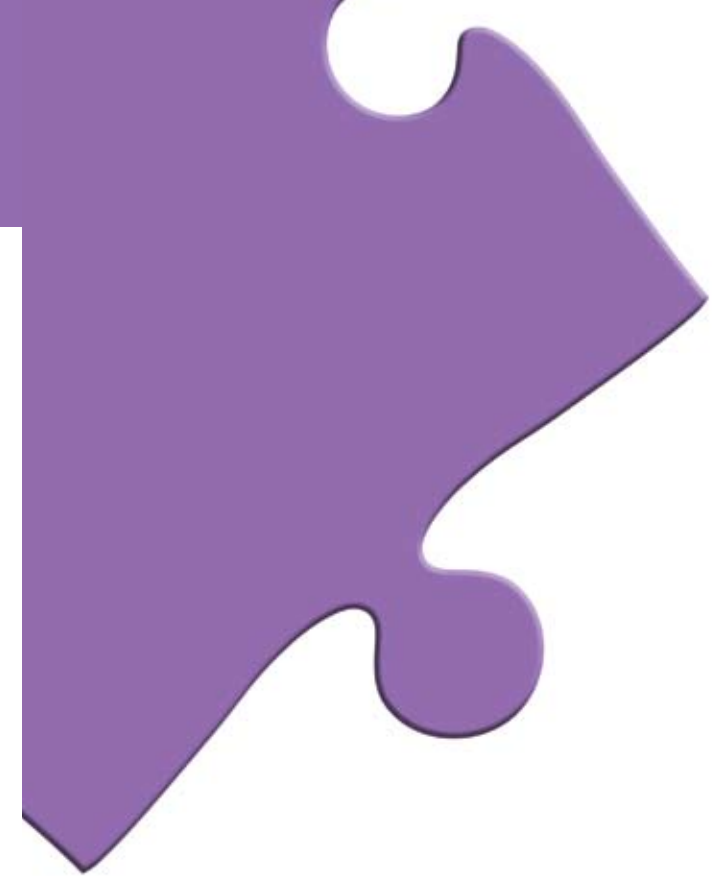
Want to know more?

Visit the Tourism Excellence website containing toolkit, case studies and other relevant material to help achieve our vision which is ...

... that by 2010 Victoria's tourism industry is recognised for delivering outstanding visitor experiences.

tourismexcellence.com.au

Module 5 'Participation – Getting Involved'. April 2008



PARTICIPATION
GETTING INVOLVED



TOURISM
EXCELLENCE

“Being able to network and bounce ideas off each other is fantastic and is a vital part of being in business. You must make time to participate in industry activities. Time spent participating in an event far outweighs the downtime in the business. We all lead busy lives – just don’t lose sight of what you are trying to achieve and take time out to get help and network.”

Janine Rose, General Manager, Otway Estate – Winery & Brewery

“You will be surprised how much your own experience can be of benefit to other tourism industry operators”

Matt Noble, Australian Wine Tour Company.

Participation – Getting Involved

Tourism thrives on networking, and networking tends to grow from being involved in the myriad of opportunities our industry makes available:

- Tourism and industry sector associations.
- Industry briefings and information sessions.
- Seminars and workshops.
- Training opportunities such as short courses.
- Conferences.
- Familiarisation programs.
- Accreditation schemes.
- Awards.
- Cooperative marketing.
- Trade missions, joint promotions/ packaging etc.

In fact, few industries offer their players such an array of opportunity to become involved. Research shows that out of the 90,000 tourism related businesses in Victoria, more than 90% are small or micro businesses*, yet less than 10% are believed to be adequately connected to their wider industry.

Reasons why some business operators do not get involved is that they feel they are too busy and that it is expensive to employ replacement staff to allow owners or regular staff to attend industry functions. A lack of awareness of the opportunities, scepticism about the quality of what is on offer, or a perceived lack of relevance are also cited. A lack of communication between industry associations and their business communities may also be a factor hindering participation.

For many of Victoria’s successful tourism businesses there is a direct correlation between their success and their involvement in the wider industry. It’s no surprise that some of the busiest people in the industry are regular attendees at business and networking events. They know that the contacts they make, the new ideas and intellectual stimulation they gain, their ability to influence policy and decision-making, and the opportunities to work with like-minded people, far outweigh the perceived cost and time involved.

They agree that the benefits are two-fold: the ability to create a higher profile for their own business, and the opportunity to learn about other businesses. This, in turn, enables them to recommend other local products to their clients. In doing so, they recognise that they are able to enhance the total ‘experience’ for the visitor and to more broadly sell the benefits of visiting their region. Engaging with others also helps them to identify better practices, which can make their own business more efficient and/or profitable.

Despite tourism being a ‘people business’, professional isolation can be a major downside for many small to medium enterprises. While many operators are educated and come from diverse backgrounds, their experience in business - and especially in tourism - may be very limited. Therefore, learning from other operators – either formally through short courses and workshops, or informally through networking functions and social events – is a recognised way of keeping up with changing social and economic trends, new technology and with government initiatives for developing or marketing the industry.



* Bolin and Greenwood, 'Tourism Businesses in Australia', 2003