

**Holiday dreaming and planning has changed dramatically in recent years. Technology is driving a fast-paced, on-demand global lifestyle, which has impacted not only our desire for travel, but our expectations from travel experiences.**

When dreaming and planning holidays, your Ideal Customer(s) want things like:



Personal, authentic experiences (not mass produced or commodified)



Personal service that makes them feel valued



Interactions with communities and local residents



Connections with purpose-led brands that contribute to looking after the planet (e.g., brands that are addressing sustainability)



To support local and immerse in local communities wherever possible (e.g., food, culture etc.)

## Turning products into exceptional experiences

Creating exceptional experiences requires a reimagination and redesign of traditional tourism products to integrate an increased level of personalisation and interaction.

You are in the business of creating memories, and experiences that are closely aligned with your Ideal Customer(s) travel motivations are more likely to generate

demand and allow them to create lasting memories they can reflect on for a lifetime.

People will invest in experiences that closely meet their travel motivations, which means businesses can generate higher yield per experience, which in turn can work towards building a sustainable long-term business.

## Step 1: Designing your experience

### What is your experience?

Having a clear understanding of exactly what you are offering to your Ideal Customer(s) is the first step in building your exceptional experience.

- What is the actual experience?
- What are the core elements that make up the experience?
- What Canberra experience themes does your offering align with? (e.g, food and wine, festivals and events, arts and culture, nature and outdoors, and family fun.)
- Is it a time-limited experience, seasonal or regular experience?

### What is your story?

Customers connect with people and stories, so articulating your story will be an essential component of designing your experience.

- What are the benefits of your experience for your Ideal Customer(s)?
- Why should they participate in your experience, what will they gain?
- How does your story resonate or align with your Ideal Customer(s) values, or personal stories?

### How can your customers participate?

Exceptional experiences require a level of participation and interaction, so identifying how you will get your customers involved is a core part of experience design.

- How will your experience be immersive? Could your customers learn something new? Touch or taste something? What senses will be stimulated?
- What will be the 'bragging rights' at the dinner table or the thing they post on social media?
- How can your local knowledge of the area and the hidden gems help deliver truly memorable, engaging and interactive experiences?
- What pictures will they capture that will translate what made it truly memorable?

### How can you personalise your experience?

Attention to detail and personalisation will give you competitive edge and add value to your customers' experience.

- What aspects of your experience could be personalised?
- What new ideas could you add to your experience to personalise it further?

## Step 2: Planning essentials

### Due diligence

When developing your experience, it is essential to think strategically to ensure the viability of your idea, and to manage the fall out of any other factors that may impact business operations.

- What are the major impediments to facilitating your experience? Have you done a risk management plan?
- Will you require additional/changed insurance premiums to cover your activities?
- What risk does your experience pose to your local environment or community?
- How are you planning to offset any impacts that may occur? How do you plan to communicate this to your customers?

### Logistics

Understanding the logistical needs to deliver the experience and paying close attention to detail in this delivery will impact the outcome for your customers.

- What time of day / day of week will the experience be offered? Think about what days suit your ideal customers and fit in around your other business schedule.
- How long will the experience go for? How many hours? This will help you to plan the human resource commitment.
- Which team members will facilitate the experience? Those who can deliver the best hospitality, have a detailed understanding of the history of your business, are a relevant subject matter expert, and also know the region are best placed to host experiences.
- Will you rely on other businesses to supply parts of the experience? How will you manage these suppliers?
- How will you ensure your customers feel safe when they are with you? (e.g, personal hygiene and/or physical safety).

### Pricing for profit

Delivering exceptional experiences can lead to increased profits for your business. Some of the key questions to ask yourself when pricing your experience include:

- What is the cost of marketing your experience (assets, distribution costs)?
- What is the actual cost of delivering the experience (time and consumables)?
- What profit margin would bring the best value back to your business?
- What are the prices for similar experiences in other destinations?

Refer to the [\*Pricing your experience\*](#) guide for more information on pricing considerations.

### Evaluation

Establishing metrics that matter, and a feedback mechanism to help you continually improve your experience, will assist you in delivering an exceptional experience for your ideal customer.

- How will you gather feedback about your customer's time with you? How can you personalise this approach?
- How will you integrate learnings from feedback into the design of your experience?
- What metrics will you measure? What information is relevant to achieving your overall business goals?

Refer to the [\*Online listings and customer reviews\*](#) guide to learn more about feedback mechanisms for your experience.

## Step 3: Delivering your experience

The experience your customer has with your brand starts well before they arrive at your door. When you are designing your experience, think about how you can build a relationship with your customer and engage with them before, during and after their time with you.

### Communication

Make genuine connection with your customers as soon as they book and invite them to share details about their travel plans. Think about how you could use this information to personalise your communication with them prior to their arrival, whilst they are with you, and to keep your brand alive with them when they return home.

### Empowering your staff

The interactions your customers have with the people in your business will set the tone for their time with you, and be cemented in their memories, good or bad.

Customers also love connecting with their hosts to unearth information about the history of a place, local hidden gems, and ways to discover something new whilst they are on holidays. Therefore, ensuring your staff have the knowledge and stories to share is essential in establishing the trust and authority required to turn your customers into happy advocates.

Empowering your staff to manage any situation is essential. Resolving your customers challenges or issues quickly and with minimum fuss will go a long way to creating advocates, even out of seemingly unhappy customers.

### Surprise and delight

When someone feels surprised and delighted, they are more likely to retain the memory. Consider how you can add a non-marketed, value-rich moment in your experience that has a surprise impact on your customer. How can you help to capture this for them in a way so they can re-tell this story?

### End strong

Most experiences end with something that is less than inspiring (e.g., paying the bill, checking out etc). How can you design your experience to end with a lasting positive impression? Is there a value-add you could provide to extend their experience?

## Step 4: Marketing your experience

How you communicate your experience, and the channels you engage to sell your experience, will be influenced by your Ideal Customer(s) Journey Map. This map can assist you to identify key touchpoints for brand awareness, engagement, conversion and advocacy.

Refer to the [Understanding your customers](#) guide to learn how to do this.

To help you align your experience with your Ideal Customer(s) Journey Map, you may like to consider the following questions:

### How does your customer discover your experience?

- What stories or messaging should you share on which channels to get in front of your Ideal Customer(s) when they are dreaming and planning their travel experiences?
- How are they booking your experience? Consider setting up and optimising a sales page on your website with online booking functionality.
- Who influences their travel dreaming stage? Friends, family, and online review websites are key.

### What do they experience before they book?

- What marketing assets will you share with your Ideal Customers to inspire them to book your experience? Consider photos, video, stories, reviews, and testimonials.
- What does your ideal customer need to hear to make them book?
- How do you address any customer concerns or challenges that may prevent them from booking?
- How do you link your experience with the wider destination and other tourism experiences to enhance their stay?

### How do you get customers to commit and build anticipation?

- How can you simplify the booking process so that it aligns with the way your Ideal Customer(s) prefer to purchase experiences?
- How can you build their anticipation for the experience? Consider inviting them to follow your business on social media. Share helpful itinerary planning stories and articles with them.
- How can you ensure your customers are prepared for their visit? Set the right expectations of your experience and anything they need to know or do before their arrival to ensure they have the best experience possible.

### How do you encourage advocates and repeat bookings?

- How can you encourage your guests to share their experiences through a positive review?
- How will you keep in touch with your customers?
- How can you encourage them to share their story with their friends and family?
- What is your customer's next experience with you?
- How can you use the personal information your customers have offered you to encourage them to become a repeat customer, or enjoy your business through another experience?

Refer to the [Online listings and customer reviews](#) guide to learn how to encourage visitor advocacy.