

Ramping Up as the Curve Flattens

Adapting Your Business and Staff to Customer Expectations

Based on a webinar presented by Eva Gutsche with [STEM Consulting](#) on Thursday, May 7, 2020

Staying connected to your customers and business associates is essential as you navigate the changes in the travel industry. Finding creative ways to engage, reviewing your cancellation policies, addressing difficult conversations and situations and adjusting your operations to meet evolving customer expectations will help you prepare to ease back into your business and open your doors when the time is right.

Why Stay Connected

Staying connected with your customers helps to:

- Keep them informed of updates and changes
- Build a sense of community
- Inspire future travel
- Maintain customer relationships and encourage repeat visitation
- Sustain a positive impression of your business
- Set the stage for re-opening

WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH

- Event updates and community and regional news.
- Offer value adds such as classes, recipes and online activities.
- Develop a plan to reach out by phone, email or social media.
- Build community and share good news.
- Share news and updates for your business and for Nova Scotia.

Cancellation Policies

Finding a balance between existing policies and the relationship with your customer is important when addressing cancellation policies. Be clear on your goals, consider your options, choose an approach and implement a communications plan.

When thinking about cancellation policies on future bookings (suggestion – consider what short-term and long-term changes you may wish to implement in relation to booking policies and cancellations), think about what needs to change for your business. You will need to:

- Address post COVID-19 travel uncertainty
- Look at industry trends – what is happening?
- Consider consumer expectations
- Update and change your cancellation policy

TIPS

- Consider ability to travel (legislation and border issues).
- Think about what is fair to both parties.
- Consider short-term gain vs. long-term customer relationships.
- Consider your long-term business plan; is it contingent on repeat customers?
- Empathize and agree on a solution.

Back to Business

In Canada and Globally

Easing back into business will be a gradual process in Canada and vary by province. Timelines are fluid and there will be restrictions and safety measures in place including capacity, distancing, and others.

Globally, masks are mandatory in several countries, temperature checks for staff and guests are common, and technology is being used for health monitoring and contact tracing.

Looking Ahead

WHAT NEEDS TO BE ASSESSED AND IMPLEMENTED

- Training to ensure cleanliness for staff and guests.
- Training to assist staff in communicating new health and safety protocols
- Restrictions on group sizes.
- Operational changes to respect social distancing requirements, ie: breakfast options at a B&B.
- Hygiene standards, particularly for high touch areas.
- Sanitation products for guests (masks, hand sanitizer, wipes, etc.).
- Change in food service, ie: no more breakfast buffets.

Focus will be on local and regional travel in 2020 with the long-haul Canada market being months away and the international market likely not recovering until 2021. But the potential for recovery is good! Spending by Nova Scotians currently account for 38% of Nova Scotia tourism revenues and Atlantic Canada accounts for close to one-half of non-resident visitation to Nova Scotia. Air travel will take longer to rebound but the good news is that initial recovery does not depend on air capacity returning.

CONSIDERATIONS - LEISURE

- Marketing - as restrictions ease, invite your customers back.
- Communicate your health and safety plan.
- Create local experiences with community partners – keeping social distancing in mind.
- Promote experiences that have rebounded such as golf and boating.

CONSIDERATIONS - TRAVEL TRADE

- Don't forget the longer-term sales approach.
- Keep the lines of communication open with tour operators and travel agents.
- Respond to requests – travel agents and tour operators are working on plans for 2021.
- Help travel trade partners rebook 2020 for the future.