



# Experience Development 101

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10am

Microsoft Teams

**With**

**Kim Clarke**

**Manager, Stakeholder Relations**

**Regional Tourism Organization 7**

## Product And Experience Development – Important Differences You Need To Know

The first question you might be asking yourself is: aren't product and experience development the same thing?

Well, the answer is really yes and no. There are a lot of the same elements that go into both including determining a theme, thinking about target audiences, thinking about the potential for collaboration and packaging, and what kind of collateral you might need, such as maps or brochures.

Here are some definitions to help you out.

**A PRODUCT** is defined as a good, activity or service that is delivered to consumers with a moderate level of differentiation, is available to a fairly wide market and is focused on cost-based pricing or is free. Some examples of product development include a self-guided touring route or guided interpretive hike through a park.



VS.

**An EXPERIENCE.** According to Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Experiential travel *engages* visitors in a series of *memorable* travel activities, revealed over time, that are inherently *personal*, *engage the senses* and *make connections* on an emotional, physical, spiritual, social or intellectual level<sup>1</sup>.



Some great examples of experiences would include writing a song with a Juno award winning songwriter, a behind-the-scenes tour at a museum where you can touch important historical objects or foraging for wild mushrooms with a local guide and using them to cook a soup for lunch.

Think about this. You can go to a restaurant and have a delicious meal with excellent customer service and be completely satisfied. You might not tell anyone about it or even think about it again. Now, take that great restaurant and add in a hands-on component, a visit

into the kitchen to meet the chef or some really great storytelling from the host and you have an experience that you might be more willing to share with your friends, family and your social media network. These are the things that make you say "Wow, that was cool."

There are a few other subtle differences between products and experiences as well. Product development might also involve investments in infrastructure like buildings or larger pieces of equipment. Experiences often use existing infrastructure (yours or someone else's) to animate the space. Experiences are more focused on the interactions with people and create a deeper emotional connection.

**Food for thought:** Could you use products as the foundation of your business, and experiences as the additional value-added pieces for smaller, niche markets to gain a higher yield per customer AND in a time when you have excess capacity?

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Arsenault (2004). *Defining Tomorrow's Tourism Product*.

## **This is an opportunity for you to add new revenues to your business!**

Product and experience development could also be an opportunity to create partnerships and collaborations to offer something new and engaging for visitors. It could be a new way to see an attraction or finding a unique way for visitors to connect to a place in a more authentic way.

So, what's in it for me?

- Connect with other people in your community to tell your story
- Extend reach into a new market
- Reduce seasonality
- Increase yield on capital investments

Ultimately, it's about finding ways to encourage visitors to stay longer, return more often and increase the economic impact they leave behind.

*This blog post is available through the RTO7 Connection, May 25, 2015*

<http://rto7.ca/Public/RTO7-Connection/May-2015/Product-and-Experience-Development-%E2%80%93-Important-Dif>

## 12 Ingredients of a Well-Planned Experiences<sup>2</sup>

Experiential Travel 12 Ingredients	Description
<b>1. Select a theme or story</b>	Identify a theme or story to focus your experience on that which is unique to your business, community, the people or places where visitors will connect.
<b>2. Celebrate local, authentic</b>	Use of local people, food, music, traditions and culture all provide authenticity and a connection to place that brings the story/theme to life. In every community there are storytellers, educators, chefs, songwriters, curators, nature guides and many others who have a passion for engaging visitors with unique, local stories.
<b>3. Set the stage</b>	Location, time of day, program length and props are all critical. Non-traditional venues and access to interesting locations off-the-beaten track provide a “cool factor”. Ensure the length of the program fits the travelers/tour operator’s interests and optimize the time-of-day to differentiate and create a reason to stay (e.g., night sky watching). Carefully select the props that might be available to ensure the experience is interactive, hands on, and delivered efficiently.
<b>4. Keep it simple</b>	Break down your idea for an experience into two or three well-paced small elements that will amaze guests. This allows them time to discover, learn, immerse, converse and connect with each other and the experience provider.
<b>5. Identify emotional triggers</b>	Ensure there is a WOW! moment, a goose bump moment that provides the element of surprise and is delivered in your own unique way. This can increase the overall price point, build marketing buzz, and contribute to stronger memories by creating excitement, intrigue and anticipation.
<b>6. Engage</b>	Stretch yourself to find multiple ways to engage visitors to learn and discover for themselves. (e.g learn with an elder to make a wild berry tea, carve in a unique medium with an artist, bird with a falconer, cook with local foods and a passionate chef, make pottery, write a song with a songwriter). Engage all the senses to make it a more memorable experience. Travelers have different learning styles – be creative!
<b>7. Guide on the side</b>	Shift from being the sage on the stage and talking to guests to being the guide on the side and staging encounters so visitors discover and learn for themselves or with an experience provider. Travelers feel a greater sense of ownership of the experience, remember the people and experiences much better and will advocate for this program later.

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<sup>2</sup> Developed by Earth Rhythms

Experiential Travel 12 Ingredients	Description
<b>8. Harmonize with positive cues</b>	Positive cues ensure that everything supports the theme/story and is in the right place, the right context, is somehow seamless and feels right. It can include everything from lighting, sound, background noise, venue choice, use of decorations, a specific location (e.g. a unique ecological zone, trail or vista) and ensure all amenities are in just the right place.
<b>9. Create intimacy</b>	Small groups provide better opportunities for storytelling, interactions and conversations with experience providers, and guests know that this has a high value. It is more exclusive and may require additional guides. For motor coaches, 4 groups of 12 people can shift from a 'mass market' appeal to a more intimate environment for a period of time.
<b>10. Relevant takeaway</b>	Takeaways increase the value (and, therefore, the price point) of an experience. They become the basis for personal pride and "word of mouth" marketing after the experience. Be creative! Examples include 1. WildPlay Element Parks gives guests a piece of cut up bungee cord as the memorabilia for their special corporate events. 2. A small bag of raw Icelandic wool from a heritage sheep breed on a sheep farm can be kept and talked about. 3. A piece of raku pottery that a traveler made as part of an art experience is an entry point into a place, storytellers and the friends that accompanied you. 4. A recipe.
<b>11. Personalize Customize</b>	Consider each group and how to make the program special for them through all the touch points. Retain the core elements. Be prepared to tweak the delivery based on what you know about their needs and interests. Guests will recognize the special effort you made and are more likely to recommend the experience to others.
<b>12. Price for value</b>	Unique, differentiated, personalized, small groups, attention to detail, memorable takeaway, special setting, access to local people all have value and differentiate an experience from mass market tourism opportunities. It is more than access to a museum with a guide, more than an interpretive walk in a park, more than attending a show. Examples include 1. Picking apples in an orchard and pressing your own juice to take away. 2. Making your own pizza at a wood-fired eatery. 3. Listening to stories with a local songwriter and then writing a new song together. 4. Learning from a local artist about the local murals, and then creating a mural together. 5. Meeting a local photographer and going to one of their favourite places to photograph nature or wildlife.

From: Transformative Guest Experiences, RTO7 Experiential Tourism Training Workshop. March 21 – 23, 2016, with Celes Davar, Earth Rhythms

## The 12 Ingredients in Action

1. Quickly review the 12 ingredients of a well-planned experience (previous two pages) and answer the questions below.
2. Use these to help build your experience.

Experiential Travel Ingredient	IDEAS!
1. What is the <b>story/theme</b> of the experience? Suggest a memorable <b>3 or 4 word</b> title that could be used to market this experience.	
2. What <b>is local and authentic</b> about this experience that brings meaning to visitors?	
3. What will be done to <b>set the stage</b> to make the experience, the timing, activities and logistics work effectively at the location?	
4. What can be done within the available time to deliver the content and activities <b>simply</b> ?	
5. What are some elements of <b>surprise and discovery</b> ? What will make your guests say <b>WOW!?</b>	
6. What <b>methods</b> can you use to <b>engage</b> guests? What <b>senses</b> can you incorporate?	

Experiential Travel Ingredient	IDEAS!
7. How can you make it <b>self-directed and hands-on</b> so guests can learn for themselves and be less dependent on the host or guide to tell them information?	
8. What are the <b>positive cues</b> to harmonize this experience (everything seemed to fit just right)?	
9. How can the experience be staged to create a more <b>intimate environment</b> for a larger group? What <b>benefits</b> can the intimacy bring?	
10. What is the relevant <b>takeaway</b> from this experience?	
11. What can be done to <b>personalize or customize</b> this experience? Why does this have value?	
12. What is included in this experience that <b>creates value</b> that a guest would be willing to pay for? What differentiates this experience from a mass-market activity?	

## Consumer Segmentation Programs

This type of data is an important source to help you understand consumers. It is important to remember that this is a high level overview of consumers and the data you have collected in **your** business is always best. However, here are a few ways you might use this information to augment what you already know.

1. Find ways to improve current product offerings by looking at social and emotional needs
2. Use the travel experiences sought to help develop new ideas for products or experiences
3. Try to market to your audience more effectively using the media consumption information

RT07 also has access to segmentation analysis through the Prizm system designed by Environics Analytics. This system classifies all Canadians into one of 67 lifestyle types based on income, urbanity and life stage – with names like The A-List, Stressed in Suburbia, New Country and Asian Achievement. If you have at least 500 postal codes from the last two years, ask us how we can help you!





## Marketing in the Age of COVID

With some many changes to public health protocols happening so quickly, it's important to have a marketing plan that can adjust as quickly as the regulations. RTO7 is an advocate for digital marketing for many reasons, including the flexibility that digital channels provide.

Here are some tips for both organic and paid advertising on social media platforms:

- Pick a social media platform that you're comfortable with. You can choose more than one but you don't need to use all of them!
- Create strong visual content using both videos and images
- Get creative! Use of reels, stories and guidebooks are all cool features through the Facebook and Instagram platforms.
- Try live videos and pre-recorded videos to create variety.
- Schedule organic posts through Facebook and Instagram to post when your audience is active on those channels.
- Create boosted or sponsored posts to reach a new audience.

Knowing who your customers are will help you to build a marketing plan to reach them cost effectively:

- Send customer feedback surveys and ask about their digital consumption habits.
- Ask your customers how they want to hear from you!
- Collect customer postal codes and reach out to RTO7 for a full customer analysis including media consumption.

Here are some other great tips:

- Make sure your website is current!
  - Include COVID protocols
  - Have an option to purchase online
  - Have a solid refund, return or cancellation policy
- Claim your Google Business listing! – It's FREE
- Set up Google Analytics on your website – It's FREE
- Make sure your website is mobile friendly.

## Experience Planning Template

Use this Planning template to start to craft your idea.

**Experience Name:**

**Theme/story/Main learning from the participants:**

**Experience Provider (s):**      Main contact  
Partners  
Storyteller

**Location:**

**Date:**

**Group Size:**    Min  
Max  
Optimal

**Experience Length:**

### Target Market

Demographic	
Geographic	
Psychographic	
Additional Interest	

**Activity Flow**

Introduction > Transition > Activity 1 > Transition > Activity 2 > Transition > Activity 3 > Transition > Conclusion

<b>Time</b> Count how many minutes each activity will take	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Experience Component</b> What will happen during each section?	<b>Notes!</b> Mark down any props, director's notes, or cues to help shift to the 12 Ingredients of a well-planned experience
	Introduction		
	Transition		
	Activity 1		
	Transition		
	Activity 2		
	Transition		
	Activity 3		
	Transition		
	Conclusion		

## Resources

### 2021/22 RTO7 Partnership Opportunities

Please visit [www.rto7.ca](http://www.rto7.ca) for details.

Sign up for the industry e-blast <http://rto7.ca/Public/Special-Pages/Mailing-List-Signup> to find out the latest on program updates, upcoming events and happenings around the Region.

### Workforce Development

#### Tourism Service Excellence Training

<http://rto7.ca/Public/Resources/BGS-Tourism-Service-Excellence-Training>

### Typsy!

Free Resource!

This micro-learning system can help strengthen/refresh your knowledge and skills, your understanding of how to do specific processes in your current or future role and get/keep you career-ready for the tourism and hospitality industry, helping to ensure we're all providing exceptional customer experiences.

We think you'll love it! You can watch a short video intro (featuring some of what Typsy has to offer) here <https://info.typsy.com/welcome-to-typsy-usa-tm>.

Ask RTO7 Staff about how to sign up.

### Product/Experience Development Programs

#### *Experience Implementation Program*

<http://rto7.ca/Public/Resources/Experience-Implementation-Program>

#### *Sustainable Tourism Implementation Program*

<https://rto7.ca/Public/Programs/Sustainable-Tourism-Implementation-Program>

#### *Operations Implementation Program*

<https://rto7.ca/Public/Programs/Operations-Implementation-Program>

#### *Recruitment Implementation Program*

<https://rto7.ca/Public/Programs/Recruitment-Implementation-Program>

### Marketing/Communications Programs

#### **[BruceGreySimcoe.com](http://BruceGreySimcoe.com)**

Consumer website highlighting experiences, activities, places, festivals, and events.

- Operator Listings
- Festivals and Events listing
- Packages and Promotions

### **RTO7.ca**

This industry website is the link to what's happening at RTO7. Find information on RTO7 programs, industry updates, customer service training, and industry events. Subscribe to our blog, RTO7 Connection. Have an industry event to add to the calendar? Email your event info to [info@rto7.ca](mailto:info@rto7.ca).

### **Stakeholder Site**

This stakeholder website is available exclusively to RTO7 stakeholders and includes an image bank, reports and information. Registration is required to access this information.

### **Social Media**

Post, Like and Share!

Facebook: BruceGreySimcoe (consumer)  
 Facebook: RTO7Connection (industry)  
 Twitter: @BruceGreySimcoe (consumer)  
 Twitter: @RTO7Connection (industry)  
 Instagram: @BruceGreySimcoe (consumer)  
 Instagram: @RTO7Connection (industry)  
 Pinterest: @BruceGreySimcoe (consumer)

#brucegreysimcoe

Subscribe to the RTO7 Connection blog via RSS Feed - <http://www.rto7.ca/Public/RTO7-connection>  
 Newsletter Sign up! <http://rto7.ca/Public/Special-Pages/Mailing-List-Signup> (industry)

### **Collaboration Program**

<http://rto7.ca/Public/Programs/Collaboration-Program>

### **Partnership Program 2021/22**

<http://rto7.ca/Public/Resources/Partnership-Program> Signage

*Digital Advertising*

*Image Production (Images/Video)*

*Language Translation Services*

*Experience Development/Consumer Research/Workforce Development*

*Video/Image Social Media Advertising Campaign*

*Storytelling*

### **Ontario Staycation Tax Credit**

<https://rto7.ca/Public/Resources/Ontario-Staycation-Tax-Credit>

### **Destination Ontario**

<https://ontario-travel.blog/> - Please note: the website is under development

For more COVID recovery programs visit [www.reliefwithinreach.ca](http://www.reliefwithinreach.ca)

## Destination Canada

[www.destinationcanada.com](http://www.destinationcanada.com)

EQ Profiles - <http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/explorer-quotient>

Experience Development Toolkit -

[http://en.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Resources/sec\\_exptoolkit\\_lores\\_final.pdf](http://en.destinationcanada.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Resources/sec_exptoolkit_lores_final.pdf)

Canadian Signature Experiences - [http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/canadian\\_signature\\_experiences](http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/canadian_signature_experiences)

## Bruce County

General Resources

Free business listing offered to all tourism operators on our consumer website [www.explorethebruce.com](http://www.explorethebruce.com)

[Celebrate International Women's Day with Sarain Fox](#)

Join Business to Bruce and Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey on March 10 for a celebration of International Women's Day with a focus on women's equality, #BreakTheBias #IWD2022. Learn more at:

<https://business.brucecounty.on.ca/iwd-2022>

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## **Burning Questions!**

Use this page to jot down any questions that you have during the presentation.