

3 Tips to Have Your Best Busy Season Yet



The summer months are upon us and this means the busiest time of the year for most tour and activity companies. Since a successful busy season can mean the difference between a good and bad year it's important that you have a strategy to make this your best year yet.

If your business is in a destination that's highly seasonal a strategy is even more important. For example some destinations like Uruguay and Croatia get as much as two-thirds of their visitors during the summer! It's a well known fact that people love summer and this means the summer

season is your best opportunity for growth. In fact a recent survey by Facebook found that 43% of respondents had goals of spending more time outdoors and 32% wanted to try a new activity.

In order to help you prepare, I've put together 3 tips to make sure this turns out to be your best busy season yet. Follow these simple tips and you'll also have a blueprint to make sure each subsequent summer is better than the last.

Tip #1: Prepare

Firstly, if you want to have a successful busy season you're going to want to make the necessary preparations. While this may seem obvious, there's a lot that can go into preparing for your busiest time of the year. Let's take a look what you have to do *at a minimum* to be prepared.



Goal Setting

We all know that it's important to have business goals but did you know that having goals can actually improve our chances for success?

In a study of a group of Harvard MBA students, the students were asked if they had clear, written goals for their future. 13% of the students had goals but did not write them down while 3% had written goals. The other 84% didn't have any goals.

Ten years after graduation the same students were interviewed and the group that had goals were earning three times as much as those who didn't have goals. What's even more amazing

is the students who wrote down their goals were earning ten times as much as all of the other students combined!

Along with setting goals you'll want to have a way to measure whether it was a successful busy season or not. Depending on what your goals are it could be easy or hard to measure them.

What metric will you use to define success? Sales? Customer satisfaction? Here are a few goals that you might want to set for your business as well as some ways to measure whether you've reached those goals or not.

- Sales goals - Consider setting a goal to have more gross sales than you did for the same time period during the previous year.

This is probably the easiest goal to measure because all you need to do is compare your sales reports for the busy season to the same time period of the previous year. You can do this easily within ActivityRez with our powerful reporting features.

- Conversion goals - Do you want to convert more visitors into customers?

You can measure what percentage of people who visited your website converted into customers by installing analytics on your website. If you have a brick and mortar location you can count how many people walk into your store and divide that amount by the number of transactions you have. To do this have an employee stand by the front door and greet your guests while using a manual people counter to measure how many visitors you have to calculate your conversion rate.

- Revenue per transaction - A great way to increase sales without an increase in traffic is to add more products to each transaction.

Challenge your employees to sell at least two products on every transaction or sell higher ticket items. They could offer a souvenir as an add-on, cross-sell other complimentary products, or upsell the customer into an activity that includes more bells and whistles.

- Customer satisfaction - Good business isn't just about sales right? Set a goal to have a positive satisfaction rating from your customers so you can increase referrals and return customers year after year.

After you've fulfilled the activity for your customers ask them to fill out a survey on a card with a simple question about how they felt about their experience. If that's too hard to do, email your customers afterwards using a free email service provider like MailChimp along with a survey that you can create using Google Forms, Google's free service for creating forms.

Create a Strategy

Now that you've created goals for yourself, your business, and your team it's time to figure out how you'll reach those goals.

Your strategy can vary wildly based on what your goals are so when creating a strategy take a lot of factors into consideration. You should:

- Figure out what each of your employees' strengths and weaknesses are and set them up for success by putting them in roles that play to their strengths. If you need help in some areas consider hiring seasonal workers to help with customer service and other less specialized jobs.
- Figure out a way to get in front of your customers that are most profitable and convert best. If this isn't your first year then you already have a good idea of which type of customers are best to target. For example, is your cost to acquire a local customer on a staycation lower than a someone visiting from another country? If so, you may want to focus your efforts there.
- Consider incentivizing employees with bonuses, gifts, parties, or paid time off. If there's something tangible that your employees can look forward to it's easier to get buy-in from your entire team. Here at ActivityRez we use Bonus.ly for employee recognition. With Bonus.ly your employees can reward each other for doing a great job which helps promote teamwork.

Training

Since you've already made investments in hiring and keeping your employees happy it's wise to invest in training them because there's little room for error during your busiest time of year.

Much like setting goals and creating a strategy you might feel like your employees are already well trained and you just don't have enough time to get around to it. However, when you consider that the simple act of visualizing success can improve performance it makes sense to make the effort.

To give you an idea of what a difference practice and visualization can make let's take a look at an Australian study that measured how well 3 different groups of students performed at free throw shooting if they either practiced free throws, did not practice free throws, or visualized shooting free throws.

Surprisingly, the group that visualized shooting free throws had a 23% improvement over the group that didn't use visualization. The group that actually practiced free throws improved 24% over the group that didn't practice or use visualization. So the takeaway here is that practice improves performance but visualization can be nearly as good as practice itself.

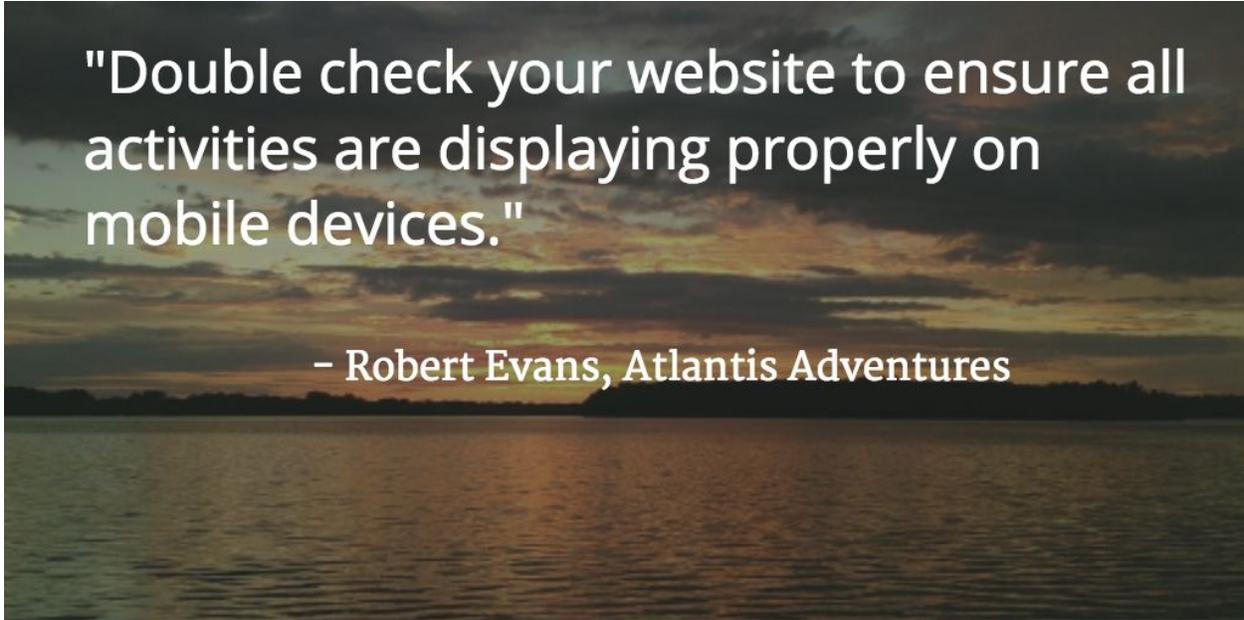
Double check your processes

Hopefully, by now you have processes in place for making sure every aspect of your business runs smoothly. Now's the time to double check those processes to make sure everything still works.

To start with, here's a list of things to check before the busy season arrives:

- Make sure all contact phone numbers and email addresses on your website work and that the appropriate people are receiving them.
- Complete a booking on your website to make sure it will work for your customers as well.
- Check that your employee contact information is up to date so if anyone calls in sick you know how to get in touch with other employees to help out.
- Do you have a process for generating referrals from customers or getting repeat business? If you do, make sure it's as streamlined or if possible automate the process. If you don't have a process, now's the time to make one.
- Ensure that every step in your checkout and fulfillment process is clear (including your itinerary and cancellation policy) so you can manage your customer's expectations and prevent a possible poor experience.

These are just a few things to take into consideration. Since this list can grow pretty long I recommend focusing on things that will reduce friction for your customers to book your tours and activities. For example here's a great tip from the Manager of eCommerce at Atlantis Adventures.



"Double check your website to ensure all activities are displaying properly on mobile devices."

– Robert Evans, Atlantis Adventures

Tip #2: Analyze

Technically this tip will be more helpful once next year comes around but if you plan on following these tips each year it's important that you give yourself something to work with from the previous year.

Earlier I mentioned creating goals and putting a system in place to track them. Once the busy season is over you will want to review those metrics to see whether you reached your goals or not. Whether your goal was to improve sales or customer satisfaction you'll want to look at the data you collected and form a hypothesis about why you did or did not reach your goal.

For example, did you fall short of your goal to increase direct bookings on your website? If so take a look at your website's analytics to determine what your conversion rate was. Was it lower than the 1.56% conversion rate that the travel industry is known for?

Your hypothesis about why your conversion rate was low could be that it was due to hidden fees that are added during the checkout process or maybe your website lacks a clear value proposition.

Write down your hypothesis and save it for later so we can revisit it.

Tip #3: Follow Up

Finally you'll want to apply everything you've learned from preparing for and analyzing the results from your busy season.

I recommend bringing your entire team together to do a post-mortem where you can discuss everything that did or didn't do well. This is also a great time to recognize employees who did an outstanding job and celebrate everyone's accomplishments.

Based on the feedback you get from your team during the post-mortem you can create new processes for next year. Also you'll want to use the hypothesis you formed earlier to create next year's strategy for reaching your goals so be sure to save it somewhere handy.

Conclusion

The busy season can seem overwhelming, but this is the moment you look forward to all year. In fact, the busy season might even be the reason why you got into this business in the first place.

So don't let another busy season pass without a plan of attack. Prepare, analyze, and follow up to ensure your team's success as well as inspire your customers to come back year after year!