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Assessing Recovery Series: A Deeper Dive Into Evolving KPIs for DMOs

Q&A FOLLOW-UP

Q: Many DMOs are focusing staffing, skills and capabilities on *marketing*. Many of the new KPIs reflect a wider destination *management* focus. How will DMOs successfully build these new skills & capabilities?

It starts with revising the current vision, mission and goals and then making sure the DMO is equipped with the right programs. By partnering with their community to identify needed programs, the DMO can also partner on training and program development coordination with their stakeholders. This transition will take some time. Bridging the effort with tourism marketing and management are needed.

Q: What do you recommend to get businesses more engaged? I have businesses that do not respond to requests. Their information is vital.

Focus on ongoing communication and establishing both informal and formal programs to engage businesses in key decisions. Start the ongoing communication before a crisis begins so the partnerships are a part of their usual business operations.

Q: With the reality that destinations will have to rethink core markets with a phased recovery, any thoughts on metrics to support diversity, equity and inclusion? Both from a community receptiveness/welcome perspective to diverse audiences and diversification of visitor demographics.

This is clearly an important area that needs more discussion. As a starting point, we would point to the Open Letter urging action to address racial disparity in the industry, signed by twenty-one black CVB presidents and vice presidents. So, we're sharing some excerpts from the letter:

To further gain some enlightenment, we might do well to ask some pertinent questions, such as:

- In general, what are you doing in your own organizations/cities to nurture cultural change as it relates to racism?
- What steps are you taking to ensure local industry boards, committees, and staff have African American representation and leadership in your office and hospitality community?
- How are you engaging underserved communities to attract the talent of the future?
- Are you broadening the conversation to include young people, activists, community leaders, faith-based groups, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (and other) students?
- Have you developed a policy for procurement that ensures a percentage of purchases and professional

- services are from Black and/or minority-owned businesses?
- How do you engage your stakeholders to participate in co-ops and strategies with Black travel businesses to attract Black visitors to your community? (According to Mandala Research, the economic value of Black travelers has increased in 2018 to \$63 billion from \$48 billion in 2010.)
- Do your print, digital, website, POS materials represent the faces of your community and the traveling public?

Another resource is the Black Travel Alliance, which is collecting KPIs in these five major areas:

- Employment – Current number and percentage of Black people in management and on staff
- Conferences & Tradeshows – Black representation (number and percentage) on speaker panels, workshops, sessions, etc. in 2019
- Paid Advertising/Marketing Campaigns – Black representation (number and percentage) in TV, radio, print and digital channels including social media in 2019
- Press – Black representation (number and percentage) on media/press trips in 2019
- Philanthropy – Charitable contributions and support (i.e. mentorship and intern programs, etc.) to Black charities and community groups

Q: As we turn our attention from visitors to residents and pivot to support local businesses, how do we avoid being criticized for impeding on the mission of local chambers?

Two things: one, remember that attracting visitors and their money has always been a means to an end of economic growth and community prosperity for residents. Then, as you consider how your role/scope might shift, ensure communication is open between you and your chamber counterparts and/or other partners. Consider where your DMO can be effective and impactful and where the needs are in your community that are not being met or maximized—lean in there.

Q: What would be KPIs for destination development?

The KPIs for destination development are going to be unique to each DMO, for example: development of outdoor spaces, tourism infrastructure development, etc. Capital investment and jobs are some metrics you may consider, as well as project and count per annum.

Q: Any social media listening KPIs?

Positive sentiment and share of voice are traditional metrics utilized by DMOs. Start by listening to your social media using either a free or paid social listening tool, and establish benchmarks and goals for how you want to move the narrative. You may also want to overlay this data with other data such as civic pride, relocation, awareness, desirability, and visitation data.

Additionally, for any advertising, [this site](#) is so helpful to ensure that your messaging is matching the targeting.

Q: Have destinations thought of maintaining ongoing Resident and Community Advisory Panels to get continuous communication and engagement?

This is a great idea. Some destinations work on community engagement on an ongoing basis so that key community organizations, residents and businesses are constantly aware of DMO efforts. This is also a great



way to gather community input on a regular basis. Ongoing buy-in partners will understand the benefits and needs of the DMO and can be stronger advocates and drive program support.

Q: How do you convince a board made up of hoteliers that more holistic and innovative KPIs beyond room nights need to be applied?

It starts with communicating the importance of destination reputation and how successful partnerships among tourism businesses and community are needed. A study conducted by Cornell Hospitality Report revealed that a hotel that improves its reputation by 1%, can see the revenue available per room (RevPAR) increase by up to 1.42%. Within this context, DMOs' work related to destination brand and reputation are added value for hoteliers. The hotels will receive the added value over time. It may also be a good idea to communicate how overnight visitation patterns result in longer stays and more spending.

Also, consider the importance of balance on the board. Any board that is intended to represent the community should reflect the diversity of the community. As such, a board that is heavily comprised of representatives from one industry might not bring forward the diversity of thought and experience needed to move the DMO and destination forward.

Q: How are you sharing anecdotal KPIs (that are not in percentages or stats) with stakeholders to see DMO progress in this slow and uphill recovery battle, to show some brightness ahead, and to validate our work?

Success stories from local businesses and community are always needed. Metrics alone are not enough to communicate the effectiveness of DMO efforts.

Celebrate progress along the way within various re-opening phases – such as increases in business for retailers or restaurateurs. Highlight the creativity that has been demonstrated by partners in the face of adversity.

In Savannah, we're being very honest about where we are and looking at a much shorter window of comparison to tell a relevant story and share what action items we have planned to improve it.

With that said, I'd recommend looking at data month-over-month and week-over-week. You can also look at weekend-over-weekend. In some cases, we're even up YOY. Our neighboring beach (Tybee) did much better YOY, so we highlighted beach content on Savannah in response.

We use our data to show that they have a smart team, who's paying attention to the right stats and responding with data-driven actions. This has led to a high level of confidence from stakeholders.

Q: How are you reaching the residents for a sentiment survey? What's the best way to do that?

DMOs often work with a third party to conduct resident sentiment research. Why? It is important to ensure residents aren't biased in their responses if they know the source of the survey. Third parties can be area universities as well as research firms, which both can provide survey development, sample collection and analysis support. It's recommended to evaluate resident sentiment once a year, and during times such as this as often as possible—quarterly or monthly.

