

Grow your tourism business

A business toolkit for collaborating to
create memorable visitor experiences
and grow your tourism business

EXPERIENCE
WEST SUSSEX

All on Board

GROW YOUR TOURISM BUSINESS

Collaborate to create memorable visitor experiences

This toolkit shows you how to grow your tourism business by collaborating with other local enterprises to create visitor experiences that will captivate – and propagate – your target market.

Positive collaborations make it easier to develop extraordinary new tourism products without investing too much of your time or budget.

Collaborating with like-minded tourism SMEs enables you to punch well above your weight when it comes to providing authentic travel experiences. Memorable visitor experiences go well beyond the piecemeal provision of individual goods and services, such as B&Bs, bike hire or guided tours. Instead, visitors today expect an immersive and authentic experience that puts them at the heart of a destination: its culture, its people, its heritage and its environment. They want to connect with and gain a deeper understanding of the place.

That's a difficult outcome to achieve as an independent tour operator or accommodation provider. But when you come together to create a seamless experience that covers every stage of the visitor journey, the result can be an experience, or series of experiences, that works to extend your season and reach new audiences.

The key is to determine the best partners to collaborate with. Are your target markets a good fit? Are your products or services complementary or competitive? Between you, are you able to offer everything the visitor needs to have an engaging experience, from accommodation and transport to shopping and food and drink? Can you create a unique experience that can't be replicated elsewhere? And will it be easy to book?

It's also worth considering how well you will work together and what each partner brings to the collaboration beyond the visitor experience itself. Can you introduce each other to new ideas? Are you both willing to share insights and help grow your networks? Will the experience benefit all collaborative partners equally, financially and otherwise?

An effective way to grow your business is to collaborate to create authentic and memorable visitor experiences.

COLLABORATION IS KEY



Case study

Pied a Terre Adventures is a family-run business that offers walking and outdoor experiences, some of which involve collaborations with other local businesses. The Beer Trail guided walk, for example, ends with a tour and tasting at a local independent brewery.

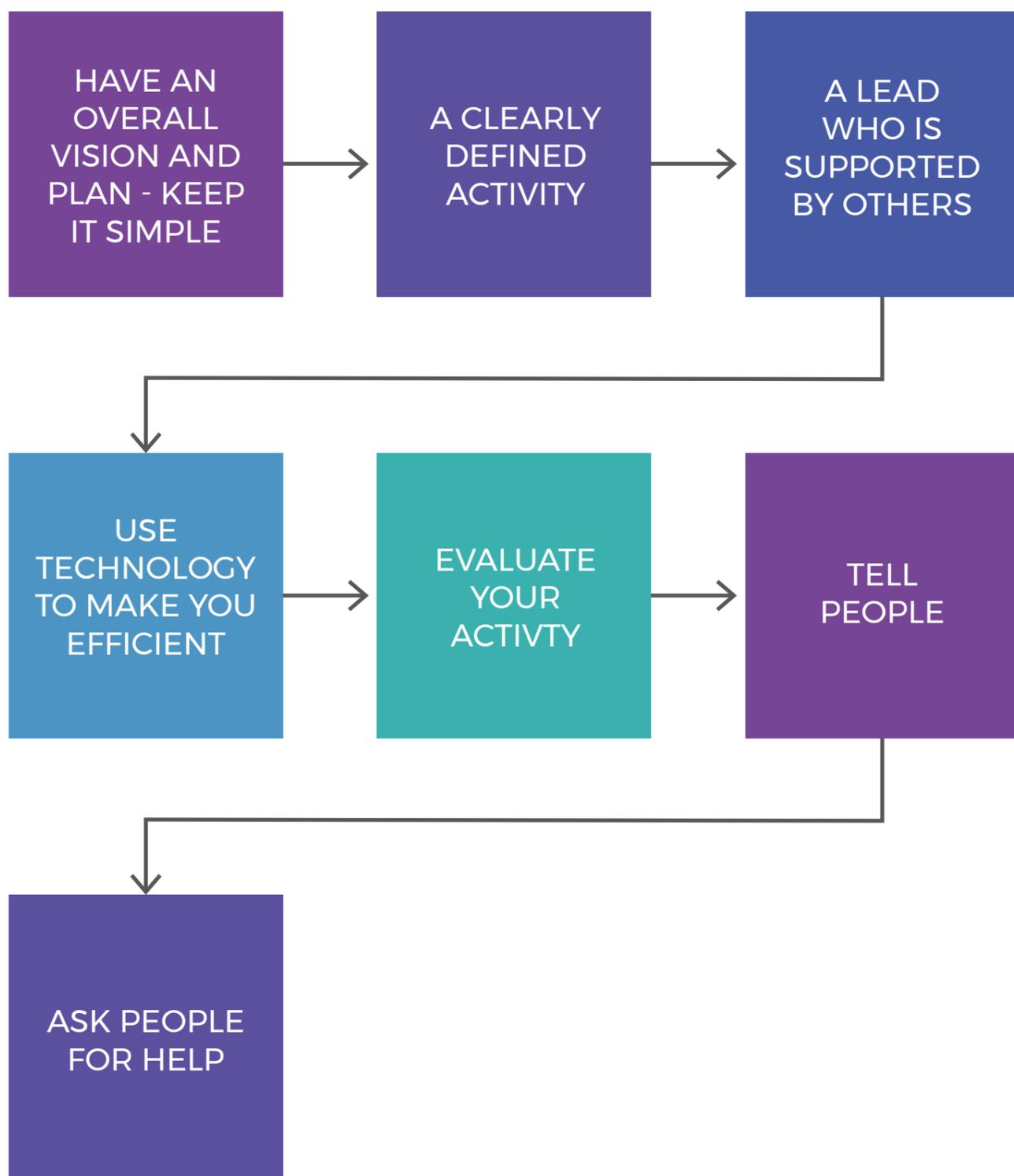
Owner Richard Betts believes that smaller businesses can offer remarkable experiences. *"We want to be able to give that immersive experience with local partners and specialists. We've elevated that to working with multiple providers – food producers, vineyards, distillers – to pull together a package to showcase the best of the local offering."*

For Richard, the key to a successful collaboration lies in finding the value in working together. *"It's a two-way process, not just about giving leads. Solid, reliable, excellent local providers can really add value to my clients. That, along with having a good support network, is the most important thing to me."*

www.patadventures.com



Developing Experiences Collaboratively



CHOOSE YOUR PARTNERS STRATEGICALLY

Who's your audience?



One of the chief benefits of collaborating to create memorable visitor experiences is the opportunity to build your audience more quickly and cost-effectively. But for this to work, you need to choose your partner strategically.

Your ideal collaborative partner, or partners, should have access to your target audience, as well as offer complementary products or services that add value to the visitor experience you are creating.

To work out if a local tourism business is a good fit as a collaborative partner, consider the budgets, ages, interests and locations of their audience.

You could also ask yourself:

- What do each of your brands bring to the experience?
- Are your values and ethics aligned?
- Are their products or services relevant to your target audience?



Case study



Sussex Wineries is a collaboration of nine vineyards in the region. Between them, they produce some of the UK's most diverse and innovative wine styles. Sussex Wineries is their joint effort to promote Sussex as one of the country's best wine-growing regions, and position it as a great destination for a foodie break, within easy reach of London.

The vineyards collaborated to host Sussex Wineries Weekend in 2018, and to produce a website that showcases the vineyards' award-winning produce, tasting rooms, winery cafes, vineyard tours, experiences and accommodation.

www.sussexwineries.co.uk





How to start

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT?
Make sure your collaborative partners' customers have something in common, such as values or budget.

Start small. The idea of creating a complete, unique visitor experience can feel overwhelming, so begin by casting about for local tourism businesses to collaborate with.

Ultimately, you're looking for a collaborative partner, or group of partners, who can add value to your product or service, and you feel comfortable working with. Your group could include, for example, a campsite owner, an e-bike rental business, a vegan café, a walking tour guide and a watersports operator. Each member of this group might have a sustainable ethos attached to their

business, which means your target audiences are more likely to overlap.

When you've identified one or more potential collaborative partners, foster a sense of community by meeting regularly, featuring each other on your social media and cross-promoting each other from your websites.

Once you've got the measure of each other's businesses, it's time to extend your collaboration by creating memorable visitor experiences.

Aim to bundle your products and services together into one new, unique experience, preferably with

one single price point. Ideally, this experience should cover the entire consumer journey starting with the decision-making process, running through online booking to the experience itself, and ending with feedback and the implementation of any improvements.

Take care to develop clear terms and conditions. The pricing should reflect all elements of the experience, and benefit each tourism business involved.

WHAT MAKES AN EXPERIENCE MEMORABLE?

Top tips



Storytelling. Like all good stories, a memorable visitor experience has a beginning, middle and end.



A strong theme. Build it around a cultural, historical or ecological topic, for example.



Interactive. Fill it with local opportunities to participate, have conversations or get hands-on in workshops.



Authentic. Embed the experience in local people, local stories. It's about human connections and great hospitality.



Unique, unusual and unexpected. Your visitor experience should be impossible to replicate anywhere else.



Well-thought-out. Remember the basic details such as health and safety, hygiene, parking, toilets and litter.

Marketing Magic



Collaborate to promote your new visitor experience

The benefits of collaborating to grow your tourism business don't stop with the creation of a memorable visitor experience.

There are plenty of ways to get your experience to market, and with a team of collaborators behind you, the process can seem more affordable and less daunting. Joint marketing helps reduce financial risk and share learnings.

By banding together to promote your new experience across the social media, websites and newsletters of every collaborator, you're making sure your new offer reaches as many people as possible, as well as putting your own tourism business in front of a new, relevant audience. You could also bring in new collaborators at this stage. Make sure other businesses in the area are aware of your experience and any special deals. Ask them to help promote your experience and, if you believe in what they're doing, reciprocate.

Don't forget to alert the local press and Experience West Sussex to your new experience. You could also place it on websites such as Expedia, Airbnb and GetYourGuide. If budget allows, invest in paid-for advertising and work with a photographer and designer to develop a succinct, appealing brand to help your experience stand out.

Finally, don't forget the other partner in your visitor experience marketing. Provide Instagrammable moments that enable your customers to re-tell the experience as their own story. Shareable selfies by beautiful backdrops, or videos of hands-on experiences and interactions with interesting people help feed the inspiration stage of your visitors' journeys.

Find out more

- [National Parks Experiences: Guide to developing experiences](#)
- [VisitEngland: Business advice hub](#)
- [Visit Ross-on-Wye: How to set up an innovative tourism hub in your town](#)
- [VisitBritain: Taking England to the world - UK supplier training and inbound tourism toolkit](#)
- [Traveloment: How to understand and create memorable experiences](#)