Five must do's to streamline your **Multi-day Tourism Business**

Introduction

Delivering great operations is key to running a successful multi-day tourism business. This guide aims to provide you with information, tips, tricks and practical methods to help streamline and grow your multi-day tourism operation.

Multi-day tourism operations can be complex. There's lots of moving parts, logistics, people management (staff, guides, providers), tasks to complete, resources to facilitate and assign, and numerous third parties like customers and agents to communicate with...and so the list grows.

You need to be well organised, have an extra pair of hands, run on limited sleep, try not to worry, and get through the chaos that each season brings... **but it doesn't actually have to be like this.**

There's no question that as an operator you need to consider how to bring efficiencies into your business, how to work smarter not harder, and to use technology to assist you with task, people and process management. If you're still working off spreadsheets or multi-apps to run your multi-day operations then please talk to us and we can help you determine if Odyssey, as a 'fit for purpose' Operating System, is suitable for your business.

Definition: Multi-day Operating System

A management system that is the engine of your multi-day operations. Connecting to the customer booking (either direct or via a 3rd party) the Operating System manages the work of making the tour, trip or departure all happen.

Let's take a look at some insights from our experience working with Operators like you... we hope they add value to your business.

The five key areas we focus on are...

1. **Product**
2. **Providers**
3. **Customer Experience**
4. **Operations**
5. **Data**

Product

Your products are the cornerstone of your business. Your customer considers the products you offer, and then selects an option of interest. This might be via an online purchase, or your customer might prefer to work directly with you to build their next holiday or adventure.

Delivering a trip or tour product in a well organised, systematic way is a critical step in meeting customer expectations. Whether you have analogue systems, spreadsheets, multiple apps or a modern platform like Odyssey, having an Operating System designed to handle the complexity of multi-day is invaluable.

Product - Masters are a Priority

There are numerous types of multi-day products and different ways to set these up. Product design can be influenced by your customers requirements, your business model, location, provider options, or the logistics of running the trip – can you bike, hike or kayak that section?

Examples of different product types include…

Scheduled (fixed departure) vs custom (bespoke) vs Pick n Mix

Guided, self-guided or supported

One activity or multi-activity

One location or multi-location

Being able to quickly create a product that suits a particular customers requirements can be time consuming, as can replicating the same departure over and over again.

Therefore the key to efficiency is your ability to 'clone' or replicate from a Master product quickly, make adjustments as required and communicate the price and product specific departure details out to the customer, your team and your providers. There is more to this than just creating an itinerary.

Also, having the flexibility and speed to create new products, modify, or duplicate existing products is essential to extend the product range and offerings within a season. Transitioning these products from year to year at a press of a button is optimum.

Additional time is often spent recreating or copy & pasting during this process, especially out of spreadsheets. Therefore efficiently responding to customers and suppliers, and saving staff time is key to increasing your business productivity.

Odyssey Tip: set up your Operating System with your terms eg do you call your product a trip, tour, departure or something else… Odyssey uses your business language.

Product and Pricing - Costs

Pricing a product is one of the most important tasks. And there are numerous methods and formulas out there to help define this, calculate the costs, determine profit margins etc. We've listed a couple of calculation tools below which might help.

South Australia Tourism Commission

Bookable Tourism – Net Rate Calculator

Different Price options…

To be competitive your Operating System should be flexible enough to handle a diverse range of customer needs. For example, offering fixed pricing for scheduled departures, but also being able to provide costed pricing if making bespoke or custom products. Customers often require changes to their package, so having the flexibility to adjust both products and pricing quickly is important. To make products attractive at different times of the year, you might need to provide seasonal price variations e.g. peak vs off-season demand.

Product and Bookings

Bookings are the individual customers who will join a product e.g. trip, tour or departure. Each customer 'booking' is unique. Getting this right is especially important in multi-day because variation between customers can occur, especially if you offer fixed departures where customers may not know each other, or have different needs. Therefore, capturing the detail is critical, like rooming configurations, diet or allergies (if you are providing meals), or customer heights to allocate the right sized bike.

Keeping on top of what customer 'booking' information you have and what you need to obtain can be a headache… **ideally you'll want to set up systems that identify the 'readiness' status, or enable the customer to input their own detailed records.**

Product & Your Team

Your service teams and staff connect to different stages of your products eg Sales vs Reservations vs Operations vs Admin vs Finance vs Management. Each of these services has a vested interest in some part of the product e.g. Reservations book the customers into providers, Operations get the vehicle, bikes or other equipment ready for that particular trip, Finance need to know when payments are due… you get the idea.

Your challenge is for these services to work seamlessly together, not in silos e.g. staff say 'nobody passed on that information', or 'we didn't know this or that'. The trick to running a smooth and efficient operation is to have these services well aligned and connected. The product is at the centre of this because it includes the detail such as activities, accommodation, pricing, customer details, operational logistics and so on. **Your team need the relevant information to be accurate, complete, up to date, and accessible.**

Odyssey Tip: having the right product information available, for the right people, at the right time is critical.

Providers

Providers are an important stakeholder for any multi-day operator. The relationship you have with them is critical to the success of your products, because they are the people and businesses looking after your customer.

Communication

The Goal
- Clear, informative and timely two way communications with Providers.

Problem
- Missing the deadline for final confirmation and getting penalised a percentage of the booking – this can be very expensive.
- Which Providers require communicating with and when?
- Copy & Paste from templates to email, then personalise, then record somewhere this has been sent, and the status gets changed when a reply from the provider is received.

Solution
- Colour coded system to show what's been actioned, what responses have been received, or not.
- Indicators to show emails read/not read.
- Templated emails built into your product with clear and consistent channels to communicate with Providers. And see if they've opened the email or not.
- Add specific provider documents to emails that show rooming arrangements, dietary etc
- Set up automated emails to ensure urgent and specific provider deadlines are met, or monitor the whole product through a 'readiness to depart' system... colour code these to provide a visual prompt.
- The ultimate efficiency is to have Providers give confirmation details online and direct into your Operating System... no need for Providers to have access or log-ins to your system.

Odyssey Tip: get the website link for the Providers online booking portal, then add it to your Provider record to quickly and accurately check room availability.

Customer Experience

You know it's important to look after your customer – but how can you stand above your competitors, and get great reviews, referrals and repeat business?

Customer & Journey Mapping

The first step is to understand your customer, check out our blog to build an Ideal Customer Profile or Avatar.

Next step is to decide how and when you should communicate with them throughout the whole experience they have with your company. Map out the 'touch points' from the enquiry stage through to when they have completed their trip, and as a returning customer. Now you have a clear pathway and points to deliver your communications.

Communication

Once you have your customer journey mapped out you can decide how and what communications you have with your customer. Here's 3 ideas for you to consider.

Online forms – provide your customer access to online forms where THEY can enter all the data you need. Getting this data into spreadsheets will be tricky, so ideally have this data automatically populate direct into your Operating System.

Emails – big efficiencies can be gained by having templated emails with customer specific data coming automatically from your Operating System, including with personalised messaging... "*got that unicycle for you Mary*"

Texting – operating in the outdoors comes with different scenarios like weather, natural disasters or you just need to make contact with customers. Doing this direct from your operating system, and in bulk, can be a life saver.

Professionalism

- Creating glossy itineraries is one thing. Ensure you have all your activities, accommodation, meals and place information included. And if a groups accommodation is split between two providers, that each customer has their own itinerary.
- For extra customer delight include the amenities that each accommodation provides eg wifi, hair dryer, shuttle services etc.
- To ensure you're keeping up with customer expectations push each individual itinerary to a Mobile app.
- Your branding should be across all your communications like emails, itineraries and online forms.

Odyssey Tip: ask us about our professional luggage labels... branded, durable, and with data direct from Odyssey... *"I know my bags will be taken care of."*

Odyssey Tip: 'where are they now' feature... find your customers for quick contact.

Operations

Running Operations seamlessly is at the heart and soul of delivering great multi-day experiences to your customers. Multi-day operations have lots of moving parts eg people, resources, time management, health and safety, weather etc etc.

No matter how 'good' you are before the customers trip, if operations fall over, your customers will be left with a bad experience. Therefore it's important for this to work well, and that means your operations run smoothly and seamlessly.

Resource Management

Scheduling resources can be a bit of headache if not done well. Not having a system to coordinate resources like drivers, vehicles, guides or equipment is a recipe for things to go wrong eg missed pick-ups, double ups or over allocation of resources are common. Even worse if you have other contract companies delivering your services.

Therefore it's important your operating system provides up to date, clear and concise data from the product bookings and departures. This data needs to be live, so it can be amended or updated quickly and new information given to guides or drivers.

- Being able to see staff rosters eg whose on what trip, and when, is important as your team and fleet grows.

- If you offer shuttle services & luggage transfers - try and optimise the 'run' to bring logical order to collections and drop-offs.

- If you manage resources like bikes – ensure that scheduling bookings against the right sized bike is accurate, and consideration is given to cleaning, maintenance or transfer days.

Depot

- As your business grows you'll likely have depots where your vehicles and equipment resources are managed from. Trips or tours will often start and finish from here, therefore you need to give depot staff reliable and current data.

- If you move customer luggage then you'll need a fast and professional luggage label or tag production system to make this transport service run smoothly – nothing worse than a customer's luggage going missing, or is not delivered.

- Manifests are the outputs required by drivers, guides or depot staff containing all the information they need to set up and run the trip. Copy & paste from spreadsheets is risky here, so ensure you have accurate and reliable output information from your system.

Odyssey Tip: Give Depot staff access to your Operating System to view vehicle capacities, do walk-in bookings, assign extra bags etc without having to contact the Res team.

Data

Data, Data, Data... we love it... and you should to

It's not just the information. The user experience of the Operating System is really important. Unfortunately spreadsheets can be a bit hard on the eye, are prone to human errors, and are not intuitive like a 'fit for purpose' interface as found in Odyssey. Ensure that your data can connect (integrate) with other systems, and that you can analyse and report on it.

Integrations

Finance
Every business needs to find a suitable finance management system. Ideally you want your Operating System to connect to Finance to interchange customer and payment records. We choose to integrate with Xero or Quickbooks.

Res Tech (an online reservation booking system)
Choose a system and process that suits your business and your customers and agents online purchasing behaviour towards your products. We recommend reviewing Res Tech's commission based pricing, and consider if there are alternative ways to receive a multi-day online booking. We've developed a framework which shows how to receive an online booking via your website, enable direct customers to make payments, and import this data into an Operating System like Odyssey... you can access it <u>here.</u>

Reporting

Reporting is critical for any business to understand performance in relation to goals.

Having 'live' visibility of current and historical bookings (volume and value), and being able to compare by destination and by past years, helps operators to see trends and make informed decisions.

Communicating information to investors, management and staff helps build transparency, and a purposeful, focused team.

Pivot Table reporting enables you to select and manipulate data, viewed in your ideal format. You can create pivot tables inside spreadsheets, but you need to have some knowledge to do this, so alternatively look for a system that has this feature built in.

'If you can't measure it, you can't improve it'
Peter Drucker

📊 Growth

And finally... business growth.

If you run a GREAT multi-day tourism operation it's likely growth will occur, and data will be at the heart of this growth. Data that is easily received, securely stored and readily accessible will help your business run smoothly and support long term decision making. One source of truth gives certainty and reassurance to you and your team.

Here's how <u>data</u> is shared across your staff, services and stakeholders...

Product:
Master 'templates' provide data consistency.
Get product data out of your head to reduce risk.
Produce data outputs to support service teams.

Providers:
Online confirmation updates in real time.
Detailed and timed email communications.
Rates and rooming configuration at a detailed level.

Customer Experience:
Seamless transition of data between Res and Ops to deliver personal customer experiences.
Capture ALL enquiry data and not miss opportunities.
Deliver the right information at the right time across the whole customer journey.

Operations:
Accurate information enables smooth resource management.
Seamlessly integrate with luggage labels and mobile itineraries.
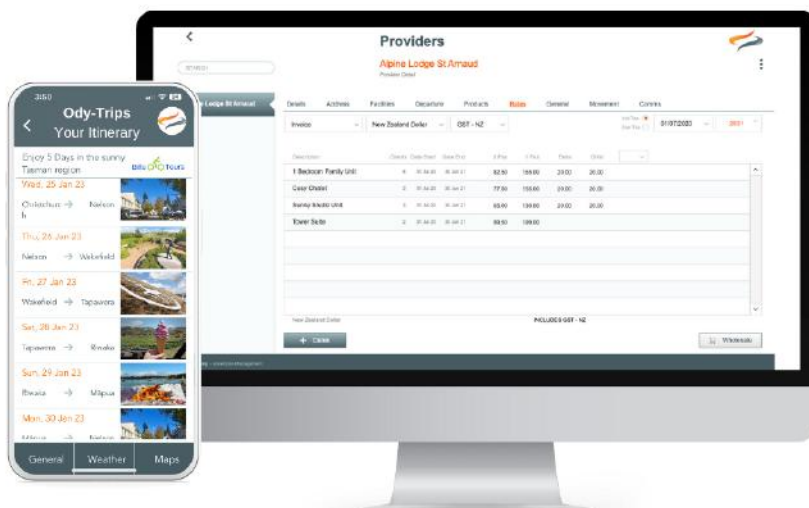Data presented in a format that's easily understood by your staff.

Odyssey Mission

Odyssey's mission is to support multi-day tourism operators in delivering their experiences to travellers across the globe. We deliver on that mission by creating software, offering services, and empowering the multi-day tourism community with modern technology.

Odyssey's industry-leading Operating System is helping multi-day tourism companies, and thousands of customer experiences.

Odyssey's easy to use, modern and comprehensive system enables businesses to manage customers, providers and operations seamlessly, while supporting business growth.

And we support you 100% along the way.

Odyssey

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