

QUALITY

WHITE PAPER



Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia
tians.org

This Whitepaper was developed by TIANS as part of a broader Quality Mentoring Program for Nova Scotia Tourism Operators. The document was written by Greg Thomson, Professor of Management with the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University, and Professor of Business and Tourism at Mount Saint Vincent University.

The information contained herein is vetted and considered accurate, however, readers are urged to keep abreast of changes and developments in the Industry and associated regulatory requirements. The information contained herein cannot constitute or substitute legal counsel.

ABSTRACT

This whitepaper was developed as part of a broader Quality Mentoring Program for tourism operators in Nova Scotia.

The intent of this paper is to look at the relationship between mentoring & quality and consider the 7 quality dimensions from ISO 9000:2015 and the 5 dimensions of SERVQUAL.

Results from the Quality Mentoring Program identified needs within the industry such as improvement in product & service quality, online presence, social media management, employee engagement & commitment, revenue generation, technology upgrades, and sustainable food & beverage operations.

Program participation was voluntary, and operators self-identified their business problem or opportunity. Industry mentors were matched with the participants based on experience and competencies.

Along with the specific suggestions and insights provided by the mentor, participants also reported feeling better supported, and having increased confidence in making recommendations and changes for improvement personally and within their operation.

There is significant merit in this type of targeted mentoring, benefiting operators and improving the overall quality of the destination.

It also highlights the merit for mentoring, so more operators can benefit, and the overall destination quality measurably improve.



FOREWORD

TIANS has a history of recognizing and championing quality improvement in the Tourism Industry in Nova Scotia.

In 2014, TIANS commissioned a Discussion Paper to look at Quality from a tourism destination perspective. The resulting document, A Framework for Quality, outlined the principles and pillars that should be included in a broad Quality Strategy.

Tourism Nova Scotia, in 2017, released a Tourism Accommodation Needs Assessment, which examined the role of Quality in the tourism industry including an inventory of existing capacity and investigated the relationship between accommodation quality and performance. One outcome of this effort was that higher-quality properties consistently perform better than lower-quality properties in similar categories. Data analysis identified that occupancy rates were 22% higher among the higher rated properties.

TIANS, in 2019, with support from ACOA completed twenty quality audits of smaller accommodation operators to help identify opportunities to improve quality and enhance business competitiveness. These operators were non-branded properties in rural markets addressed a need to support businesses that had been in operation for a long time, did not traditionally access program support and needed information for updates to reflect changing market trends and consumer expectations. This initiative produced impressive results, such as, upgrades from minor state of repair to significant investments. An online Best Practice tool was also created to share with other operators.

The Quality Mentoring for Tourism Businesses Program was launched as a joint initiative of TIANS with support from ACOA in 2022. By connecting business owner/operators with qualified mentors, operators received professional expertise in a targeted business topic of their choice. This included structured feedback, insight and recommendations around improvement and innovation of tourism businesses.

Types of mentoring include:

- Operational efficiencies, service delivery, and product quality
- Online strategies and social media marketing
- Employee engagement and commitment
- Sustainable revenue growth practices
- Technology upgrades
- Sustainable food & beverage operations
- General management advice & mentoring
- Other topics, as requested by operators.

Currently, TIANS and Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) are co-leading a new Tourism Sector Strategic Plan that will inform decisions and investment to build a strong and sustainable industry. This plan will consider elements such as seasonality, product, people and quality and relationship between tourism and the province's cultural, economic, and social health.

These initiatives further highlighted the problem statement – how to further embrace quality as an industry in Nova Scotia and to allow operators access to programs and support to 'kick start' a culture of sustainable quality improvement.

BUSINESS STRATEGY

This section will consider proven generic business models to provide focus in creating (or improving) strategy for tourism operators.

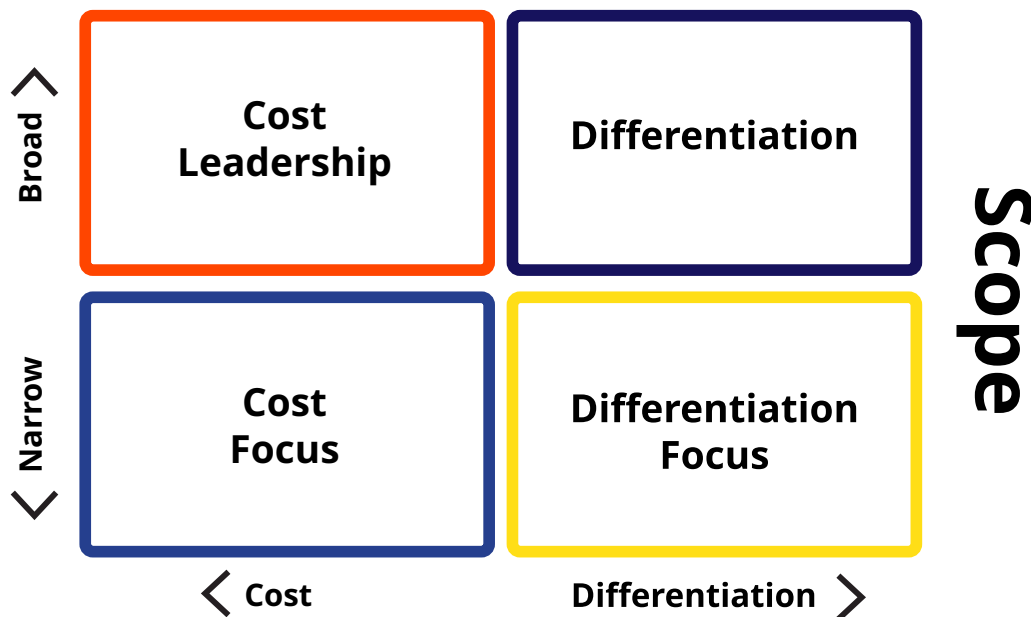
Strategy (and strategic planning) address the question of how a business will compete. This will help the business to consider customer needs & wants, its strengths & weaknesses, and the impact of competitors as it decides the process for outlining the vision for business growth and actions (or steps) necessary to get there.

Strategy is the foundation for the success of any organization. It provides a path for leadership to establish clear goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure sustainable outcomes. Strategy considers customer expectations, market conditions, and employee satisfaction.

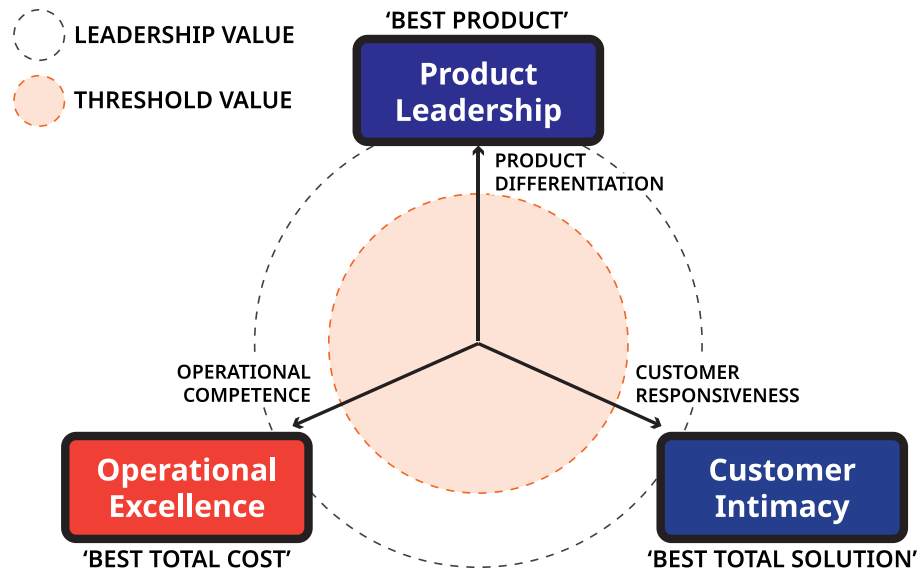
The generic strategies for business, developed by Michael Porter, helps with strategy formulation. It states for a business to be successful; it must make a choice about the type of competitive advantage it wants to attain – cost leadership, differentiation, or focus.

A business concentrating on cost leadership must focus on operating efficiency so that it can compete by providing the best price or value proposition.

A business concentrating on differentiation must focus on product and service attributes that distinguish it from competitors.



The Discipline of Market Leaders by Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema also helps with competitive strategy. This book was built on Porter's generic strategies and presented three Value Disciplines – operational excellence, product leadership, and customer intimacy.



For a business to have sustainable success, it must be a market leader in one of these disciplines, while maintaining acceptable levels in the others. The disciplines are:

- Operational excellence, seeking continuous improvement, process efficiency and cost control.
- Product leadership, offering a unique product that is easily differentiated from competitors.
- Customer intimacy, focusing on customer values and needs. It creates lasting two-way relationships while providing unique and personalized experiences.

Operators need to consider strategic intent when determining how to best compete in the marketplace and contribute to the overall Nova Scotian tourism experience.

QUALITY

“The consistent delivery of products and guest services according to expected standards”.

“A degree of excellence.”

“Quality isn’t what you put in it – it’s what the customer gets from it!”

“Quality promotes guest retention and repeat business.”

This section will consider proven metrics & principles to help operators deliver quality in all aspects of its business.

Embracing quality principles & practices can lead to continuous improvement, competitive advantage, increased profitability, and sustainability.

Quality is synonymous with customer satisfaction. It means quick response times from employees, the product and service exceed expectation, the customer needs are satisfied, and the value proposition has been met. With quality, the customer receives an experience tailored to their needs, feels satisfied with the decision to buy, and they want to return or recommend the business.

Caring is also part of quality. In his book - *Legendary Service: The Key is to Care* - Blanchard cites the power of employees with the following example:

“One of my favorite examples of Nordstrom’s service was when a friend of mine went there to get some special earrings for his wife. The woman at the jewelry department said “We don’t sell that kind of earrings here, but I know where I can get them in the mall. How long are you going to be here?” My friend said he’d probably be there another 45 minutes. The woman said, “Good. When you come back, I’ll have them for you.” When he came back, not only did she have the earrings for him, she had also gift-wrapped them. And she charged him the same amount she had paid for them at another store at the mall. Nordstrom didn’t make any money on that sale—but they gained a loyal customer. My friend has bragged about them ever since. He told me this story and now I tell it whenever I can.”



ISO 9000 and SERVQUAL are two proven models that help operators understand and implement quality.

According to ISO 9000:2015 there are 7 quality principles that can help any organization – customer focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision making and relationship management.

These ISO principles recommend participating businesses:

- Have a clear understanding of who the customer is and how to exceed their needs & wants.
- Have leadership create a vision, values, and goals.
- Have an effective team that is committed, appreciated, and service oriented.
- Maintain efficient policies and procedures, while managing costs.
- Seek improved performance and capability, while focusing on product quality and service delivery.
- Capture, analyse and use data to drive decision-making.
- Create lasting relationships with customers and all other stakeholders.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, developed the SERVQUAL model to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service along five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality.

Although an older model having been developed in 1988, it is very relevant 30 years later.

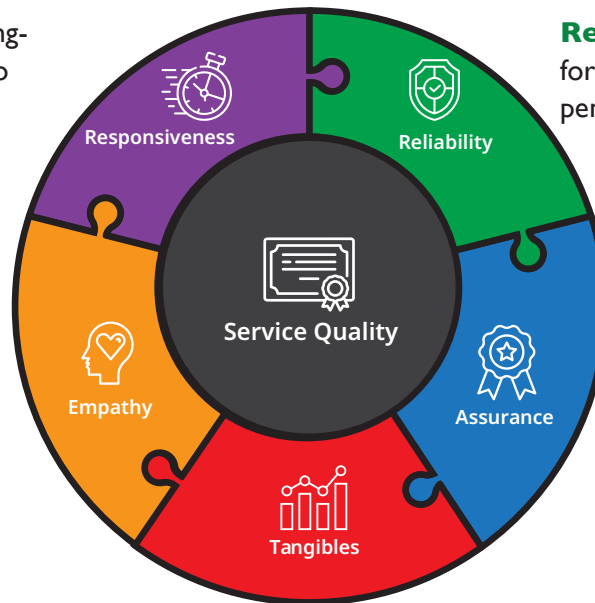
These dimensions include:

SERVQUAL MODEL

Responsiveness, the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service.

Reliability, the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

Empathy, the provision of caring, individualized attention to customer.



Assurance, the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

Tangibles, the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.

By considering SERVQUAL, businesses can determine the quality of their products and services and seek ways to improve.

Operators that embrace quality as a strategic pillar embrace the demands and choices a customer has for tourism experiences and understands quality is needed for sustainability of industry, Nova Scotia as a destination, and their specific business.

MENTORSHIP NETWORK

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a mentor is a trusted counselor, guide, tutor, or coach. An experienced person who advises and helps somebody with less experience over a period.

Excellent mentors are knowledgeable, excellent listeners & communicators, honest & able to give constructive feedback, able to access (find) resources, and value learning.

Rebecca Newton in her article 'Why we need coaches and mentors in business today more than ever', suggests a greater ability to deal with change, increased leadership self-efficacy and resilience, decrease in depression, and increased goal attainment & enhanced thinking, as reasons mentoring matters.

Andrew Paradise in his article 'Why Mentorship Is Essential for Entrepreneurs', suggests mentors help business owners as mentors can provide a compass based on their experience to help navigate peaks and valleys.

Mentoring can also provide a more trusted approach to knowledge enhancement, by building confidence in a more personalized way. It can also focus on quality.

TIANS has created a network of industry mentors with skills and knowledge in all aspects of the tourism industry. This network was created with a mission to be collaborative, supportive, and results driven.

The Tourism Mentors used for the Quality Mentoring Program had a broad range of skills and experience, including:

- Former senior leaders from hospitality businesses, throughout Nova Scotia
- Operational experts in accommodation, food & beverage, and event management.
- Marketing experts specializing in digital and social media.
- Sales executives with significant experience in retail, online, catering and hotels.
- Current and former post-secondary educators with industry experience.
- Food & beverage leaders, with expertise in culinary, operation, and management.
- Revenue management experts, with knowledge in pricing, distribution,
- Systems specialists, with expertise in property management, point of sale, CRM and similar platforms.
- Webmasters, to help with websites, ecommerce, and online platforms.

TARGETED BUSINESS SUPPORT THEMES

The Quality Mentoring for Tourism Business Program supported more than 75 mentoring experiences and helped 50 operators (and their employees) sign up for Hospitality e-learning courses from Cornell University at minimal cost.

Each participant sought assistance with their specific business questions and was matched with a mentor to lead the process of quality improvement.

There were 7 key quality improvement themes for mentorship:

1. IMPROVE PRODUCT & SERVICE QUALITY
2. ENHANCE DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS
3. MANAGE ONLINE BRAND & REPUTATION - SOCIAL
4. BUILD EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION
5. DRIVE BUSINESS PROFITABILITY
6. LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AS A BUSINESS TOOL
7. STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MANAGE FOOD & BEVERAGE



I. IMPROVE PRODUCT & SERVICE QUALITY

In his article, 'the hospitality industry's hidden secret: quality and service' Groebler suggests:

"Quality and service are two of the most important elements for successful hospitality businesses. Quality involves offering guests a product or service that's up to standard. This could include everything from the food served in a restaurant to the rooms in a hotel. As for service, it's all about how you treat your guests and make them feel valued."

Quality and service are two of the most important elements for successful hospitality businesses. Quality involves offering guests a product or service that's up to standard. This could include everything from the food served in a restaurant to the rooms in a hotel. As for service, it's all about how you treat your guests and make them feel valued.

Quality refers to how well a product or service satisfies customers needs, offers value for money spent, and provides convenience. In tourism it also considers the availability of distinct experiences, ease of transportation, and access to medical services, if needed.

The SERVQUAL Model dimensions - reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness provide a clear framework of core benchmarks for businesses to deliver.

Product quality varies by market segment and demographics; however, the universal guest expectations include:

- Cleanliness and maintenance
- Sufficient safety and security
- Reliable internet
- Comfortable beds and ample hot water for accommodations
- Current interior spaces including ambiance, décor and lighting
- Attentive service

There are many legacy operators perceived to offer 'tired' product. This require prioritizing maintenance, smaller 'quick fix' improvements, and capital expenditure.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

Benchmarking quality starts with applying the SERVQUAL model to identify gaps between customer expectations versus their perception of the service received.

This is achieved through customer feedback questionnaires that includes questions based on the five dimensions of service quality.

Below is an example of the 22 questions used to construct this model and serves as a guideline for developing the questionnaire for operators to prioritize quality improvement:

SERVQUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

MAIN FACTOR	NO.	DIMENSION/QUESTION AREA
TANGIBLES	1	Up-to-date equipment
	2	Physical facilities are visually appealing
	3	Employees well-dressed/neat
	4	Appearance of the physical facilities are consistent with the type of service industry
RELIABILITY	5	The firm meets their promised time-frames for response
	6	The firm is sympathetic and reassuring, when the customer has problems
	7	They are dependable
	8	They provide their services at the times promised
	9	They keep accurate records
RESPONSIVENESS	10	They shouldn't be expected to tell customers exactly when the service will be performed, negative
	11	It is not reasonable to expect prompt service from employees, negative
	12	Employees do not always have to be willing to help customers, negative
	13	It's OK to be too busy to respond promptly to customer requests, negative
ASSURANCE	14	Employees should be trustworthy
	15	Customers should feel safe when transacting with employees
	16	Employees should be polite
	17	Employees should get adequate support from the firm to do their job well
EMPATHY	18	Firms should not be expected to give each customer individualized attention, negative
	19	Employees should not be expected to give each customer individualized attention, negative
	20	It is unrealistic to expect employees to fully understand the needs of the customer, negative
	21	It is unreasonable to expect employees to have the best interests of the customer at heart, negative
	22	Firms should not necessarily have to operate at hours convenient to all customers, negative

The results of the SERVQUAL survey can be used to develop strategies and action plans for quality improvement. These can be supported by resources available through TIANS and its partners, such as:

<u>TRAINING</u>	<u>HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online learning and National Certification from Emerit. • Nova Scotia Best Customer Service Program • Clean It Right • Tourism Rocks - Tourism Ambassador program for Nova Scotia • Serve Right Responsible Beverage Service Server Program • WHMIS • Food Safety Training Basics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Hiring: a Tool to Help Employers • Tips on Recruiting International Talent through the Canadian Immigration System • Online HR Toolkit • Online modules – Strategic Workplace Planning
<u>QUALITY IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>ACCESSIBILITY TIP SHEETS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Guide to Starting and Running an Accommodation Business in Nova Scotia • Operating An Accommodation Business in Nova Scotia • A Guide to Starting and Running a Restaurant in Nova Scotia • A Guide to Planning and Hosting Festivals & Events in Nova Scotia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and Inclusion for Visitors with Disabilities • Accommodation Sector - Providing a Welcoming, Inclusive Experience for Travellers with Disabilities

2. ENHANCE DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS

An online presence is the collection of information and content about any organization across the internet. Its is important to attract new customers, legitimize the business, increase revenue, and customer engagement.

The website acts like a tour guide for any hospitality business showing product and service options, facilities, and nearby attractions. If designed well, it can be a powerful tool for direct sales. It is crucial that the website for any business provide an online sales or booking function.

The website needs relevant content that shows the visitor what they can expect to experience at the business, and destination. Quality content will engage the audience and encourage them to act (book). If the user finds the content valuable, they are likely to share it.

It also needs to be optimized to increase web traffic. This includes adding keywords, basic SEO techniques, consider 'core website vitals' to manage how Google ranks the site, increase linking, and use advertising, when possible.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

The steps to improve an online presence are:

- Build a professional website that provides a clear path to purchase.
- Post regularly on a social media.
- Ask for testimonials and reviews.
- Consider creating a newsletter.
- Use search engine optimization (SEO)
- Connect with your audience.
- Manage your google business profile.
- Manage your business listings.
- Linking to other websites
- Consider online advertising and influencer partnering.
- Ensure accessibility to anyone with a disability.
- Add (and manage analytics)



For operators not knowing how to start, TIANS and partners provide access to recorded webinars and online resources in the Digital Technology Resources Hub – nsdigiport.ca.

3. MANAGE ONLINE BRAND & REPUTATION - SOCIAL

Social media platforms are a great way to connect with potential guests to build brand awareness. It also a way to stay relevant with guests that already know you too.

Social media allows customers to find, connect, and contact hospitality businesses by word-of-mouth strategy.

Customers see social media as a credible source to find more information about companies and to find out what others think of them and have experienced with them.

Social media management starts with a setting goal such as to build brand awareness, generate sales, grow the audience, or drive web traffic, etc.

Successful social media strategies start with choosing the right platforms and creating a plan. The plan should include content creation, scheduling, audience engagement, campaign development, analytics, community building, influencer collaboration, competitor analysis, and customer support.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

A social media management plan is an important element of any marketing strategy. The steps to create this plan are:

- Step 1 - Choose goals that align to business objectives.
- Step 2 - Learn everything you can about your audience.
- Step 3 - Get to know your competition.
- Step 4 - Do a social media audit.
- Step 5 - Set up accounts and improve profiles.
- Step 6 - Find inspiration.
- Step 7 - Create a social media content calendar.
- Step 8 - Create compelling content.
- Step 9 - Track performance and make adjustments.

Most operators understand the importance of social media; but need support to optimize their efforts. There is social media management tools available that can allow users to publish, monitor, and manage all social media platforms from one dashboard.

In the article '5 Best Social Media Management Tools (2024)', Jennifer Simonson highlights the best platforms by value, features, and customer ratings. They are:

- Zoho Social – best for individual creators, starting at \$10 USD per month.
- Buffer – best on a budget, starting at \$6 USD per month.
- Hootsuite – best comprehensive system, starting at \$99 USD per month.
- Social Pilot – is the best for managing a large number of accounts, starting at \$26 USD per month.
- Sprout Social – very comprehensive system with powerful analytics, starting at \$ 249 USD per month.

Additionally, TIANS and partners provide access to recorded webinars and access to online resources in the Digital Technology Resources Hub – nsdigiport.ca.

4. BUILD EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION

Employee Engagement and retention is important for any business, and if more so in hospitality. Happy, committed employees are more productive and efficient. They are also more dependable, usually the strongest performers, and are willing to make a special effort to do more than is expected.

The foundation of employee engagement is shared values, trust, fairness, employee involvement in decision making, appreciation & management support, and understanding.

Engaged employees contribute to organizational goals, team effectiveness, workplace culture, and customer satisfaction.

Engagement and commitment is even more important in remote locations where the pool of potential employees can be limited.

Successful operators are able to consider employee needs, are open to compromise, and are flexible. These operators are rewarded with loyalty and retention.

Successful operators embrace generational gaps, diversity, and work life balance.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

Building engagement and commitment starts with leaders recognizing the importance of its people and creating a culture that supports it. This starts with a vision and values of what they want to be.

The following article is a great starting point - 'Employee engagement: 10 best practices for improving your culture' by Christina Wood.

- Show recognition in an authentic way.
- Spend time with your people.
- Create psychological safety – so if they raise a concern or complain they know they won't be penalized.
- Join the quest for meaning – employees are engaged when they do something that matters to them.
- Create heroes who live your values – foster employees who share values.
- Measure engagement with an employee opinion survey.
- Have fun together.
- Facilitate growth opportunities for them.
- Help people navigate change.

TIANS and partners also offer resources and tools that can help build employee engagement and commitment, such as:

- The Online HR Tool Kit
- The HR Self Assessment tool
- Workplace Management Engine

5. DRIVE BUSINESS PROFITABILITY

Revenue generation is the heartbeat of any organization. It directly impacts financial health and sustainability.

Revenue is sustainable when the customer's needs (and wants) are met, and they perceive value for money.

Operators can grow revenue:

- through quality product and service as customer satisfaction drives repeat business and referrals.
- by making it convenient for customers to buy. This can be through online booking platforms, merchandising & presentation of products and services, and the sales skills of employees.
- by increasing market share, expanding products & service offerings, exploring new pricing strategies, and partnering with other local businesses.

Successful operators embrace seasonality and find creative ways to encourage customers to buy in slower periods or create demand for underutilized capacity.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

To achieve sustainable growth, operators must create strategies to increase revenue. Jay Abraham's 3 Pillars of Revenue provides a framework to do so:

- Increase the number of customers.
- Increase the average transaction value.
- Increase the frequency of transactions.

First, consider all activities to expand the customer base through marketing, targeted promotions, and referrals by providing quality.

Second, consider yield management and dynamic pricing to maximize revenue potential, having appealing merchandising on-site and online, upselling & cross-selling other services, and having an engaged team of sellers who are rewarded.

Last, consider building long-term relationships with customers to encourage repeat business and referrals.



6. LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AS A BUSINESS TOOL

Technology is essential for the success of any hospitality operations. It streamlines operations, increases efficiency, and improves customer service while reducing costs.

Technology helps operators capture customer data, manage inventory, process payments, and have efficient operations.

Platforms such as point-of-sale (POS) systems, property management systems, online booking systems, and customer relationship management systems are the most common. With new cloud-based options and the SaaS model (software as a service) technology is also affordable.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and Chatbots are newer technologies that can be used for predictive analytics allowing operators to better understand their guests to offer a more personalized experience.

There is a large disparity between tourism operators with technology adoption; with many Nova Scotia businesses lacking basics operating systems (POS in restaurants and PMS in accommodation businesses) and online reservation systems.

There is also an opportunity for data collection and analytic systems to better understand visitors' motivations and preferences and align product and service offerings accordingly.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

The most common uses of technology in tourism include improved accessibility and convenience, enhanced purchasing and reservations, data collection to personalize experiences, and streamlining operational efficiency. These features are the basis for point-of-sale (POS), property management systems (PMS) and customer relationship management software (CRM).

When investing in a new system, operators should consider:

- Is the system cloud-based? This is usually sold as software as a service SaaS and minimizes hosting & maintenance costs, can enhance data security, and is charged as a monthly usage fee.
- Is the platform user friendly? This includes optimization for mobile functionality, what is the user experience like for guests, and is intuitive for staff usage and training.
- How is the service supported? If something goes wrong – how responsive is the vendor.
- What are other users saying? Talk to other users and see what they think. Consider reading online reviews and blog posts.
- What are the monthly and on-going costs? This will ensure there are no surprises.
- Seek help. There are consultants in your area that have implemented these systems before. If it makes sense, ask.

7. STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MANAGE FOOD & BEVERAGE

There are no shortage of obstacles for successful food & beverage operators. These include managing inflation and rising food costs, attracting new customers and retaining existing ones, operational efficiency, meeting changing customer tastes & preferences, delivering quality, creating experiences to customers.

Successful operators must:

- Understand the importance of standardized recipes, a process to manage (and analyze) food costs, and regular menu engineering. This creates a more profitable menu by highlighting the most profitable items to customers.
- Focus on operational efficiency. In the front-of-house, this can include KPI's such as how quickly a customer is greeting and seated, how their orders are taken, how well and quickly the food is prepared, etc. In the back-of-house, this can include standardized recipes and photo boards, kitchen layout and equipment, creating efficient workstations, food preparation in advance, inventory control and adequate dry, frozen, and refrigerated storage, as well as KPI's for order accuracy and timing.
- Be aware of trends, special requests, and dietary requirements. Examples include exploring local ingredients to enhance menus, partnering with local microbreweries and wine producers, and creating community hubs.
- Understand the importance of quality for all aspects of the operation. This should include SERVQUAL factors such as reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness. Examples of this could include quality and freshness in the food & drink, the service the diner received, the restaurant décor, design, and ambiance, and the overall experience.
- Recognize the impression and connection that a food & beverage experience can have. From the taste and presentation to the cultural significance and shared experiences, food has the power to evoke emotions, create connections, and leave a lasting impression.

LESSONS & BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS

First, TIANS and its partners have resources available to enhance the sustainability of Food & Beverage operations; these include:

- National Certification for Food & Beverage Manager, Food & Beverage Server, Bartender, Line Cook and Kitchen Help through Emerit.
- Food Safety and Responsible Beverage Service programs.
- A Guide to Starting and Running a Restaurant in Nova Scotia.

Second, as the financial outlook can be challenging, operators embrace the concept of menu engineering - a way for a food & beverage operation to evaluate its menu pricing by using sales data and food costs to guide which dishes to feature and their menu price.

Equipped with that data, menu engineering involves categorizing menu items based on their popularity (sales volume) and profitability.

The steps to successfully menu engineer are:

- Choose a time period.
- Cost your menu.
 - Calculate food cost per serving.
 - Calculate (contribution) margin (sale price – food cost per serving)
 - Determine menu item popularity from POS reports.
- Categorize menu items based on profit and popularity.
 - Plowhorses: Low profitability, high popularity
 - Raise the price, make them smaller, re-work the recipe.
 - Stars: High profitability, high popularity
 - Draw attention to these items on the menu.
 - Puzzles: High profitability, low popularity
 - Why aren't they selling? Too expensive? Bad promotion? You need to figure out why.
 - Duds: Low profitability, low popularity
 - Rework or remove the item.
- Redesign your menu.
 - Choose menu psychology - for placement & formatting, eye movement patterns and the burden of choices.
 - Have well written descriptions and pictures.
 - Emphasize Stars and Puzzles.
 - Train your staff.
- Measure your new menu's impact monthly.



THE VALUE OF NETWORKS

Mentoring networks (and programs) can provide opportunities for operators to gain knowledge and expertise from people who have been in the same field for a long time, as well as build relationships with people who can provide support, advice, and valuable connections.

Mentoring networks can also help operators to better navigate their professional lives and make more informed decisions. Mentors can also help operators stay motivated, overcome obstacles, and develop the skills they need to succeed.

By connecting operators with mentors, they can build relationships with people who have similar interests and goals.

To successfully build a network of industry mentors, a mentor list needs to be developed and maintained, a structure that can connect people (created with the necessary resources), and an evaluation system implemented to measure outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The Quality Mentoring Program is a great jumping off point for the industry. The participating operators understand the need for support to improve the long-term viability of their business.

The results have provided personalized support from experts that have created tangible benefits. Information resulting from this program also supports the new Tourism Sector Strategic Plan and its framework for building a strong and sustainable tourism industry in Nova Scotia.

Operators that embrace operational efficiencies, service delivery, & product quality; employee engagement; and online strategies & digital marketing will contribute to the social, cultural, and economic health of the province.

This program should be considered for more operators to ensure quality throughout the province. Other jurisdictions should strongly consider launching similar programs within their province or region.

REFERENCES

- Admin. (2023, May 16). The hospitality industry's hidden secret: quality and service. Beratung Hotel & Gastronomie - Johannes Fritz Groebler. <https://hotelfritz.com/the-hospitality-industrys-hidden-secret-quality-and-service/#:~:text=Quality%20and%20service%20are%20two%20of%20the%20most%20important%20elements,the%20rooms%20in%20a%20hotel.>
- AllBusiness. (2022, November 12). How to increase traffic to your website. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/allbusiness/2022/11/12/how-to-increase-traffic-to-your-website/?sh=7483a3ea737a>
- Api, S. (2023, July 14). How does food influence first impressions? SocialStar. <https://officialsocialstar.com/blogs/blog/how-does-food-influence-first-impressions>
- Arford, K. (2023, April 3). How to Build A Stand-Out Online Presence (+Why It's So Important). LocaliQ. <https://localiq.com/blog/online-presence/#:~:text=How%20to%20build%20an%20online%20presence%201%20Establish,8%20Connect%20with%20your%20audience%20. . %20More%20items>
- Blanchard, K., Halsey, V., & Cuff, K. (2014). *Legendary Service: The Key is to Care*. McGraw Hill Professional.
- Canada, T. H. (2024, February 13). Expectations of tourism service quality. Tourism HR Canada. <https://tourismhr.ca/2024/02/12/expectations-of-tourism-service-quality/>
- Frapp, G. (2023, November 27). Using the SERVQUAL model -. Marketing Study Guide. <https://www.marketingstudyguide.com/guide-to-service-enhancement-using-servqual-model/>
- Gomez, R. (2023, September 29). The importance of social media marketing: 7 stats that prove social's role in business success. Sprout Social. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/importance-of-social-media-marketing-in-business/>
- ISO 9000:2015. ISO. (2015, September 1). <https://www.iso.org/standard/45481.html>
- Newton, R. (2020, July 15). Why we need coaches and mentors in business today more than ever. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccanewton/2020/07/15/why-we-need-coaches-and-mentors-in-business-today-more-than-ever/?sh=3f1980273826>
- Paradise, A. (2020, February 13). Why mentorship is essential for entrepreneurs. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2020/02/13/why-mentorship-is-essential-for-entrepreneurs/?sh=5cf7bcdd7e6b>
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/10011053911>
- Peryon, R. (2023, May 26). How to grow a business using Jay Abrahams 3 Pillars of Revenue. Medium. <https://medium.com/@rob.peryon/how-to-grow-a-business-using-jay-abrahams-3-pillars-of-revenue-6924ffe5ed19#:~:text=Jay%20Abraham's%203%20Pillars%20of%20Revenue%20provide%20a%20comprehensive%20framework,growth%20and%20maximize%20revenue%20potential.>
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. Free Press.

Simonson, J. (2024, January 23). 5 Best Social Media Management Tools (2024). Forbes Advisor. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/best-social-media-management-software/>

Treacy, Michael. (1997). Discipline of market leaders: Choose your customers, narrow your focus, dominate your market. Addison-Wesley.

Winstanely, G. (2023, July 3). Why your industry association needs a mentoring program. Mentorloop Mentoring Software. <https://mentorloop.com/blog/mentoring-benefits-industry-association/>

Wright, J., Bourgoin, K., & McKay, W. (2023). Starting and running a restaurant in Nova Scotia. Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia.

Wood, C. (2023, November 6). Employee engagement: 10 best practices for improving your culture.

