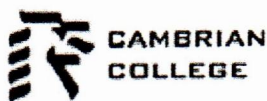


**THE
NEW
OUTFITTERS'
MANUAL**

2005 Edition

by Nina Naumenko



NOTO
*Nature & Outdoor
Tourism Ontario*

INTRODUCTION

Cambrian College and NOTO (Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario) are pleased to present *The New Outfitters' Manual*.

This manual has been created for Outfitters in Northern Ontario and students in the Nature-Based Adventure Tourism program at Cambrian College. The manual provides a general overview of the areas that affect the business of providing a quality tourist product. Included in this manual are useful website links to enable users to find further, more detailed information on particular areas of interest.

The New Outfitters' Manual is published by Cambrian College. For more information about the manual please contact the author at:

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It is hoped that *The New Outfitters' Manual* will be a valuable reference for both Outfitters and students of tourism in Northern Ontario.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Nina Naumenko,
September 28, 2005

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THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Congratulations!

You are in the tourism business, the largest industry in the world. You are in good company with Disney World, the CN Tower and Niagara Falls!

So, what do you have in common with these megadestinations? You are providing customers with a unique destination, accommodations and entertaining activities.

The business of tourism falls within the service sector. The services provided by outfitters may consist of one or more of the following categories:

Accommodations:

lodges, resorts, cabins, campgrounds

Food and Beverage:

restaurants, bars, lounges, American plan

Transportation:

fly-in service, water craft rental,
ATV rental, shuttle services

Adventure Tourism and Recreation:

the activities which drive our industry:
hunting and fishing, canoeing, kayaking,
hiking, golf, camping etc.

Attractions:

parks, interpretive centres, Native tourism,
museums

Tourism Services:

trade associations (NOTO), advertising,
travel information centres

To be successful in the tourism business, whether you operate Disney World or a remote wilderness lodge, you must put the needs of the tourist first. Do what you do best, and leave positive memories with your customers.

The Business of Tourism in Canada and Ontario

According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), Canada ranks 10th as a world-wide destination. We have a healthy tourism sector which saw tourists spend 52 billion dollars in 2003. Of that 52 billion dollars, 36 billion was spent by Canadians in their own country! That is 69% of all tourism business!

Across Canada, tourism accounts for 577,600 full and part time jobs.

All statistics are from 2003 (latest year with statistics) and were gathered by the Canadian Tourism Commission.

Ontario has the largest tourism industry out of all the provinces. Unfortunately, our tourism sector is not as organized or as heavily marketed as other provinces, such as British Columbia.

The following 2001 statistics will give you an idea of tourism in Ontario:

Overnight visitors to Ontario -	39.3 million
Overnight visitors to Ontario - who had participated in outdoor activities	14.8 million

So, 38% of all overnight visitors to Ontario participated in some outdoor activities.

For all overnight tourists that participated in outdoor activities:

Average length of stay in Ontario - 4.2 nights

55 % came in the summer

27 % stayed in private cottages

78 % traveled in adult-only parties

70 % came for pleasure travel

Shopping and sightseeing were the other two top activities that were of interest to the overnight tourist that participates in outdoor activities, especially those from the USA and overseas.

Overnight Outdoor Tourists came from both Canada and international locations:

77 % from Canada (of this 71 % were from Ontario)

19 % from the USA (leading states being Michigan and New York)

4 % from Overseas (Mostly the UK and Europe)

(2001 Ontario Tourism statistics compiled by the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation)

These statistics may not be the case for your region or even your operation, but they give you an idea of industry trends. It may seem obvious (or not) but there seems to be a huge market for outdoor activity based tourism right here in Ontario!

What does a Customer Want?

Everything begins with the customer. Meeting the customer's needs will ensure that your operation remains viable. So what does a customer want?

- A motivating advertisement
- A quality experience
- A Northern experience based on the natural and cultural assets of Ontario
- A customer-focused experience (trained staff)

In return for providing for the needs of the customer you receive:

- Satisfied customers
- Repeat customers
- Word of mouth marketing
- The obvious – a decent way of life!

The community in which you live must also provide a welcoming experience. Tourism supports the economy of many communities in Ontario but it is not recognized for its important economic, social and cultural contributions.

References:

Canadian Tourism Commission
<http://www.canadatourism.com>

Ontario's Overnight Visitors with an Outdoors Interest, 2001
<http://www.tourism.gov.on.ca/english/tourdiv/research/outdoor2001report.pdf>

Ontario Tourism Strategy
<http://tourismpartners.com/publications/Home/OntarioTourismStrategy.pdf>

Snapshots: An Introduction to Tourism. 3^d Canadian Edition. Norma Polovitz Nickerson and Paula Kerr. Pearson Education Canada. 2004.

STRUCTURING YOUR BUSINESS

"Life is too complicated not to be orderly."

- Martha Stewart

Planning and structuring your business is important for many different reasons. They are an essential part of ensuring that your business is complying with government regulations. Structuring your business also helps you manage your operation more efficiently, ensures that your business remains viable and will, hopefully, provide you with an income for your retirement years.

Basic business structure involves:

1. Company organization
2. Professional services
3. Keeping business records and tax planning
4. Retirement planning

1. COMPANY ORGANIZATION

In Ontario, there are three different ways to organize a business. It is best to talk to an accountant and a lawyer to determine the right type of business organization for you. The three types of business organizations are as follows:

a. Sole Proprietorship

Sole proprietorship is an inexpensive way to startup a business and offers the most freedom from government regulations. As sole proprietor you have complete control of the business and all of its profits. However, you are also personally liable for all of the debts and liabilities of the business. This liability extends beyond your investment in the business and will include your **personal assets**.

To create a business name, the proprietor needs to file the name under the *Business Names Act* within 60 days. For more information about registering your business name go to:

<http://www.cbs.gov.on.ca/mcbs/english/5HSSN6.htm>

b. Partnership and Limited Partnership

A partnership is a type of business organization where two or more people combine their resources to make a profit. To protect the partners a partnership agreement needs to be drawn up by a lawyer. The agreement should outline: the nature of the business, amount of capital contributions, division of profits and losses, rights and obligations of each partner, and procedures for termination of partnership.

In a **general partnership**, all partners are entitled to participate in the ownership and management of the operation. Each partner assumes unlimited liability for the debts of the partnership.

In a **limited partnership**, the partners are only liable for the amount of money that they brought to the business. There must be at least one managing partner in a limited partnership. This managing partner has unlimited liability. Needless to say, trust is an essential component of this type of business organization.

c. **Corporation**

A corporation is a legal entity, separate from the persons who own it. The owners become shareholders of the business. Each shareholder has limited liability. A corporation is more highly regulated than the other forms of business organizations. It is subject to general laws regarding contracts, holding and transferring property, tax payment and criminal law.

A company may be incorporated at a federal or provincial level. Any corporation operating in Ontario is subject to the general laws of Ontario. Most tourism operations, if incorporated, are privately held. There are strict restrictions in place regarding stock ownership and stock transfer. The control of the company remains in the hands of a few designated people.

The services of a lawyer are required to set up a corporation. Corporations are also required to file an annual report. The main advantage of this type of business organization is the appeal of limited liability. Only assets held by the corporation are liable in the case of business failure.

For more information about corporations go to:
<http://www.cbs.gov.on.ca/mcbs/english/5GFMZZ.htm>

2. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

As a businessperson, you will need to use the services of business professionals from time to time. Professionals can help you with your initial business purchase or help you create a new business. They can guide you through long term planning and budgeting and they can maximize your everyday business operations.

There will be times when you will require the services of a professional but, in the long run, the more familiar that you are with the legalities of running a business, the more you can do on your own.

The following lists the types of professionals and the services that they provide:

a. **Real Estate Agent**

A real estate agent or broker will represent your best interests if you decide to purchase a tourism operation. The agent or broker is familiar with the Real Estate laws in Ontario regarding the sale and purchase of an operating business. The agent can also provide you with financial information and asset options on purchase. It is normally the responsibility of the real estate broker to draft the offer to purchase for the buyer.

The broker can arrange with meetings with financial lenders and develop business plans for financing the purchase. Real estate agents or brokers that deal specifically with tourism operations can provide you with invaluable advice about all aspects of a property.

b. **Lawyer**

A lawyer can provide you with a range of legal services pertaining to your business and personal life. If you purchase a tourism business you will require legal advice regarding property purchase arrangements. You will also require input on legal protection when setting up your business. A lawyer can advise you on your business organization, business management, and counsel you on insurance issues.

c. **Accountant**

An accountant will provide you with sound, long-term financial advice. Accountants are familiar with corporate planning, tax planning, and retirement planning. They can help you create and implement your business management plans. An accountant can also advise you on which expenses can be charged to your operation.

d. **Engineer**

There are different types of engineers. Depending on your needs, you may require the services of a Civil engineer, for such things as structural design, road work and construction. An Environmental engineer can provide advice pertaining to water, sewage and fuel tank issues.

e. **Graphic Designer**

A graphic designer or an advertising firm should be employed to create your logo, signage and marketing material.

Professionals usually charge by the hour or by the job. Make sure that you set a fixed fee in advance and plan a maximum price for the work before it starts.

To find a suitable professional, one that knows the tourism business, talk to other people in the industry, friends, or your tourism association. There are plenty of professional firms in business so make sure that you are comfortable with the people that you do hire and that you trust them.

3. KEEPING BUSINESS RECORDS AND TAX PLANNING

Maintaining proper and complete accounting records is your legal responsibility under the Income Tax Act. Your operation's books and records may be audited at any time by federal and provincial agencies. For more details on how to set up proper records go to the Financial Management section. Developing a tax plan requires that you organize your business so that you minimize your taxes. There are two kinds of tax that you will have to pay - business and personal tax. The amount of taxes will vary depending on how your business is organized. It is imperative that you seek professional help with both your business organization and your tax planning. Each operation and each personal situation is unique and requires a setup to best suit your personal requirements.

4. RETIREMENT PLANNING

Retirement planning should begin at the same time that you set up and go into business. Discuss retirement planning with your accountant and financial advisor as part of your business plan. Saving for retirement should be an on going process. Some of the more traditional ways of saving and planning are as follows:

a. **Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP)**

The RRSP is the most common form of retirement savings. You can contribute to an RRSP on monthly basis or with a yearly lump sum. Your RRSP can be self directed or handled through a financial organization. Either way, your investment is earning interest and you reduce your payable income tax every year that you make a contribution.

Your money will be taxed once you take it out of the RRSP. However, your total earnings during retirement should be much less than when you were running your business and, theoretically, you should be paying less tax.

b. **Registered Pension Plan (RPP)**

A RPP is a pension plan where contributions are made by the business on behalf of the owner. They are tax-deductible by the business and collect interest, untaxed, until the owner withdraws them upon retirement. The contributions made by the business must be taken as a life annuity. Any personal contributions can be taken as an RRSP. This type of pension plan works best when a business is incorporated and any shareholder or employee can participate in the plan. This type of pension plan reduces both business and personal tax.

c. **Capital Gains Exemption Planning**

Many business owners only plan for retirement by having a "nest egg" waiting for them on the sale of their operation. This is not the best type of retirement planning. You need to incorporate some of the other pension plans to guarantee a financially safe retirement. Many things change over the years and it may be difficult to sell your operation down the road for what you believe it is worth.

The good news is, when you do sell your operation, there is a lifetime capital gains exemption of \$500,000 for the business owner. A spouse or family member owning shares can also qualify for additional \$500,000 exemption. Depending on your situation, you can trigger all or a portion of your capital gains without selling.

Retirement planning is a complicated process. Make sure that you talk to your accountant to determine what is best for you and your particular situation.

References:

Roger Liddle, Lodge Owner, Noto Board Member. Callander, Ontario.
Broker, N.O.R.T.H. Realty Ltd.
<http://www.northrealty.on.ca>

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT: Best Practices in Accounting and Bookkeeping

"Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons."

- Woody Allen

Financial management is all about keeping your operation's finances in order. You need to understand where your money comes from and where it goes in order to ensure that your operation is successful. Financial management is an essential part of your overall management plan that will help you plan, forecast, and implement changes to your operation.

Most small businesses fail, not from difficulties with the economy, but because of bad management. Talk to a qualified bookkeeper and accountant; find one that knows the tourism industry. Set up a proper bookkeeping system and stay on top of your finances to optimize the management of your operation. As a small business operator it is essential that you understand and practice fundamental financial management skills.

This section will deal with financial management by looking at:

1. Record keeping
2. Financial statements
3. Budgeting
4. Computer software

1. RECORD KEEPING

Record keeping is done for many reasons:

- to plan and control day-to-day operations
- to determine cash flow for short term and long term needs
- to establish budgets
- for long term planning and decision making
- to comply with tax laws
- to create financial statements

Good **bookkeeping** is essential for the optimum management of your operation. You need to establish a system to account for revenues and expenses. Having receipts and invoices on file provides the evidence that transactions occurred.

Monthly journals are used to record all transactions for the month. It is best to make daily entries to stay on top of your financial situation. At the end of the year you can tally each category to have a good idea of your total income and total costs. By breaking down your costs, in terms of areas of expenditures, you can find problem areas and address them as part of your planning and decision making process.

Payroll is another component of bookkeeping. You should have a separate payroll journal to record employee hours and salaries. As an employer you need to have a registered Business Number (BN) with Revenue Canada.

You are required to calculate and determine income tax, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Employment Insurance (EI) deductions, for all of your employees.

For more information go to the Revenue Canada payroll web sites for small businesses:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/business/topics/payroll/>

Income Tax checklist for small businesses:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/business/checklist/menu-e.html>

Talk to a professional:

Good record keeping begins with consistent, regular bookkeeping. It is best to talk to a bookkeeper or accountant to set-up or update your record keeping system.

You should meet with an accountant, one that is familiar with the tourism industry, at least once a year. By talking to a professional in financial management, your financial situation stays current and properly managed. When you work with an accountant or bookkeeper on a regular basis, your job becomes easier and in the long run, you will save money. As you gain control of your financial situation, your management becomes more efficient and your operation will be more successful!

2. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

A financial statement is a written report that summarizes the financial status of your operation for a stated period of time. The financial statement will include a balance sheet describing the flow of resources, and a statement of income that will indicate whether your operation showed a profit or a loss.

The **Balance Sheet** lists in detail your operation's assets and liabilities.

Assets include:

- Current assets - the cash or items that are expected to turn into cash (such as inventory)
- Fixed assets - the permanent items of your operation, such as land, buildings, equipment, etc.

Liabilities are your debts. They include:

- Current liabilities – the items you have for resale, taxes, wages, and expenses that have to be paid in the year
- Long-term liabilities – loans, mortgages, etc., that are paid over the long run

The **Statement of Income** is a measure of your operation's income and expenses over a period of time. It is also known as a profit or loss statement. If your income is greater than your expenses, the statement of income will show a net income. However, if your expenses are greater than your income, it will show a net loss.

Financial statements are the end product of your bookkeeping or accounting process. Your financial statement can help you to find the strengths and weakness in your operation and make timely modifications. Financial statements are also something your banker will want to see when you are negotiating any new loans.

3. BUDGETING

Budgeting is an activity that helps you:

- plan your day-to-day and yearly operations
- meet your long term financial goals
- make sound financial decisions
- organize cash flow

There are different types of budgets to consider. The three most common are:

a. **Operating Budget**

An operating budget helps you to manage your operation in terms of staffing and resources. You need to plan your operating budget for the upcoming season well in advance; during the fall and winter if you are not a four-season operation.

Set your goals and schedule them accordingly. Financing these goals depends upon the amount of income you expect to receive during the season. Using past records and booking targets, you need to **forecast your revenues** for the upcoming season.

You also need to **estimate your operating expenses** for the season such as wages, supplies and services. Don't forget to include fixed costs, such as insurance, taxes, interest and depreciation.

Once all your forecasts have been summarized you can look at the numbers and make adjustments where necessary. Try to stay flexible in some areas in case your revenues don't make their target.

b. **Capital Budget**

A capital budget must be created in order to set aside money for the maintenance of your operation. A capital budget is usually set up for the long term but, it needs to be addressed on a yearly basis. You need to know, year-by-year, how much money you can afford to spend on new items and services such as, equipment and maintenance.

c. **Cash Flow Budget**

A cash flow budget shows your operation's expected cash inflows and cash outflows over a period of time. Cash flow budgets can be difficult for the seasonal operator because there is no incoming money for much of the year. If you are a seasonal operator it is imperative that you do have a cash flow budget and that you are especially diligent in planning.

With a cash flow budget you can determine when you will have a cash surplus or a cash deficit where you require additional finances.

4. COMPUTER SOFTWARE

User-friendly computer software packages can greatly simplify your record keeping and financial management. Powerful **accounting software** can provide you with current balances, monitor your cash flow, and help you to plan and stay on your budget. By making daily entries on your computer you can easily stay on top of the financial situation of your operation.

One of the more popular office software packages among Outfitters is **Simply Accounting**.

Simply Accounting:

<http://www.simplyaccounting.com/ce/default.asp>

You can download a free trial of this software from the website. If you do decide to buy this software make sure to get the Canadian version that deals with the GST. With the purchase of the software you get free set-up support, FAQs, and a live e- forum if you really get stuck. Most bookkeepers and accountants are familiar with *Simply Accounting* and you can readily send them your statements through email. *Simply Accounting* software packages range in price from \$200 to \$1200, depending on what options you would like to purchase.

Of course, there are other accounting software packages available. Check with your bookkeeper or accountant to determine which accounting software package best suits your needs.

Managing your guests can also be made easier with computer software. *Guest Tracker* is guest management and reservation software. You can buy *Guest Tracker* software specifically for the Resort/Clubs industry.

Guest Tracker:

<http://www.hotel-software.com>

* click on to Resorts/Clubs Software

Guest Tracker will help with your front desk operations and reservations. It can also help you to book and sell your vacation packages. *Guest Tracker* is able to generate a guest list that you can use for marketing and advertising. Other features include email confirmation letters and credit card processing and settlement. *Guest Tracker* software packages ranges in price from \$700 to \$800.

References:

Roger Liddle, Lodge Owner, Noto Board Member. North Bay, Ontario.

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

OPERATING YOUR BUSINESS

"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."
- Abraham Lincoln

Operating your business involves the day-to-day functions as well as the "big picture" issues such as licensing, insurance and taxes. This section will deal with:

1. Safety and security
2. Insurance and taxes
3. Licences, permits, memberships

1. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Around the world, Canada has a reputation for being a safe and secure destination. Many international tourists chose to vacation in our country because they feel safe from violence, crime, and terrorism. It is something that many Canadians, vacationing in our own homeland, take for granted.

All guests on vacation assume that your operation is safe and secure. Safety and security is something that they buy without even thinking about. **You**, however, must be concerned with the safety and security of your guests.

SAFETY:

Safety involves the protection of people and property from injury and damage. Most accidents are caused by careless guests and employees. To insure that your operation is a safe place for guests, consider the following:

- Install **safety signs** to warn of hazards. For example post hot tub temperatures, dangerous swimming areas, operating pump house equipment, etc.
- Have **fire extinguishers** available where there are open flames (kitchens, fireplaces, etc.)
- Make sure that your roads and boat launching ramps are in good repair and have adequate signage.
- Insure that your docks, decks and patios are non-slip
- Make sure that playground equipment is installed properly and in good repair. General playground safety information can be found at:
http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/rs032_en.htm
- Pools and hot tubs must meet the public health standards. Check out the following websites for more information:

Pools- Legislation:

http://www.wdghu.org/topics/safewater/900565_e.htm

General Pool Information (based on the legislation):

<http://www.wdghu.org/topics/safewater/PublicPoolInfo.pdf>

Hot Tubs (Spas):

<http://www.wdghu.org/topics/safewater/SPAS.htm>

In the **Client Services** section, under comfort and safety, there are many more examples of making your operation a safer place.

SECURITY:

Security refers to the freedom from fear and anxiety. Again, it is up to you to insure that your guest feel secure. Guests and their property should be protected from potential harm and damage. Here are a few ways to make your guests feel secure at your operation:

- **control access** to your establishment (speed bumps, limited public access, etc.)
- **public pay phone** available with list of emergency numbers
- good **indirect lighting** at the office
- protect guest privacy by asking **visitors** to meet guests at a central location (get visitors to check in)
- employees should be aware of who the guests are at all times and **report non-guests** to management
- employees must report **suspicious activities**
- have a "**lost and found**" (it is a nice touch to send an item back to a guest if they have left it while on their vacation)

Disturbances:

Guests have a right to privacy and a right to enjoy their vacation without disturbances. If you have "quiet hours", they should be posted. On occasion you may have to deal with some disturbances. Usually rowdy guests just need a reminder to mind their behaviour for the greater good of all guests. If the situation continues, remain calm but firmly ask the guests to tone it down (you can evict non-guests). If a guest is intoxicated, return them to their room or cabin. If the disturbance continues or gets out of control, you may have to call the police.

If your operation is in a remote location, you should have a plan of action in place to deal with guest disturbances. Employees should be familiar with this plan of action as part of their training.

If you do end up **evicting** a guest, or guests, it is best that you do it with police assistance. Remember, that the guest is paying for your services and may file a damage suit if you do not have a good reason for evicting them from your operation.

Fire:

In the case of fire, all guests should leave the burning building. Employees should assist the guests and make them comfortable. Only trained fire fighters should tackle the blaze. If possible use municipal, volunteer, or MNR fire fighters.

If you own a remote operation you should have a fire-fighting plan of action. You and your employees should have some basic fire-fighting training and you should have a functioning pump and hose system available to fight a fire. Your insurance company may request proof that you have fire-fighting equipment on site.

Injury or Death:

In case of guest **injury**, you and your employees should provide first aid. It is essential that you and your employees have up-to-date first aid training and CPR. Have emergency numbers available by every phone. See the **Client Services** section for more information about first aid training and emergencies.

In case of a guest **death**, the body should remain where found and covered. If the body is found in a room or cabin, the curtains should be drawn and the door should be locked. Notify the police and paramedics. **DO NOT** talk to other staff or guests about the death until after the authorities have investigated the incident. Make sure that you are able to comfort the guest's relatives and friends, consider moving them elsewhere. You may want to send the bill to the guests at a later time, perhaps after a thoughtful phone call.

2. INSURANCE AND TAXES

Following death, insurance and taxes are probably the Outfitter's two most feared words!

INSURANCE:

You need insurance. Insurance protects you from losses, damage, and suits. Your insurance coverage has to be carefully planned since no two operations will have the same type of insurance. Each operation is unique and has its own particular set of circumstances. Your insurance agent and company must create a policy for your operation and understand insurance as it pertains to the tourism industry.

Insurance coverage is very complicated. Many types of insurance are either mandatory or something that you should seriously consider. Listed are some common types of insurance used by tourism operations:

- a. **Liability insurance** protects you, your employees and your business from claims from your guests that include bodily harm and property damage.
- b. **Property insurance** protects the physical aspects of your operation. The most common type of property insurance is fire insurance. Other property insurance involves coverage for smoke damage, wind storms and other weather events, plumbing problems, water damage, electrical problems, heating problems, etc. You may also consider getting business interruption insurance which will cover your costs, salaries, and debt if your operation was closed due to property damage.
- c. **Vehicle insurance** is mandatory. Ask for a commercial premium that will cover business use.
- d. **Personal disability insurance** will provide you with a monthly benefit if you are injured or permanently disabled. Your employees will be covered under **worker's compensation insurance** (see Employment Issues section).
<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/EmployersSBS>

- e. **Business loan insurance** is usually offered by the bank when you are negotiating your business loan. This insurance will cover your entire loan if you die before it is paid back. Be sure to ask your own insurance company about this type of insurance. They may give you a better rate than the bank.

Insurance Tips:

- insure the things that are most at risk
- read your insurance policy carefully and, at renewal time, reevaluate your insurance policy to make sure that current items are covered and items that you no longer have are deleted
- try to reduce the cost of your insurance by negotiating for lower premiums, getting higher deductibles
- remember to shop around for insurance and get at least three quotes
- if you trust your insurance company, use them for all your insurance needs to get the best possible price
- if you are a member of Noto (Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario) you are eligible for insurance discounts, check out:
<http://www.noto.net/membershipclasses.cfm>

Making a Claim:

The first time you make a claim is really when you learn all about your insurance policy and coverage. As soon as something happens, contact your insurance company. Write down all of the particulars of the situation and have receipts on file. If property is damaged, lost or stolen you maybe required to produce this evidence. Your insurance company wants your business up and running but they also want to make sure that your guests are protected from any further problems or damage.

Depending on the type of claim, payment may be quick or, if the insurance company needs to investigate the problem, the payment maybe slow in coming. If you do expect a large payment, an advanced partial payment may be arranged.

TAXES:

As a business owner you have a number of different types of taxes to contend with. For general information regarding business taxes in Ontario visit the Ministry of Finance site at:
http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_3_160_1.html

Listed are the basic tax types encountered by tourism operators. The tax information that is presented is brief and general in nature. For more information about taxes and your particular operation talk to your accountant or bookkeeper.

- a. **Property Tax** - Taxes paid to the municipal and/or provincial government. The value of your land and buildings are assessed, classified and given a monetary number. A mill rate is then applied to the assessed value of your property and your property taxes are determined.
- You can appeal your assessment if you believe that the assessment is inaccurate. There is a small window of opportunity for reassessment . In many cases, you must pay the full taxes for the current year and then get reassessed for the following year.

- b. **Corporations Tax** - Are business-operating taxes paid to the provincial government. For more information talk to your accountant and check out this website:
http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_3_3391_1.html
- c. **Employer Health Tax** - Is a provincial payroll tax (payable by employers) on remuneration paid to employees. If your payroll is \$400,00 a year or less you are exempt from paying this tax. For more information go to:
http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_3_3371_1.html
- d. **Retail Sales Tax (RST)** - The retail sales tax is an 8% provincial tax applied to all items sold by your business. There is no minimum amount and you must apply for a Vendor permit if you sell taxable goods. For more information go to:
http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_3_3373_1.html
- e. **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** - Is a federal sales tax applied to all goods and services in Canada. It is paid by the customer but collected by you if your business has gross annual sales of over \$30,000. The GST is calculated at 7% of the cost of goods and services.
Each business has a registered GST number. Your business collects the tax but is eligible for tax credits before submitting it to the government. For more information go to:
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/business/topics/gsthst/menu-e.html>
- International guests are eligible for a GST refund. For more information on this refund go to:
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/nonresidents/visitors/tax-e.html>
- f. **Payroll Taxes** - As an employer you must deduct federal Income tax, Canada Pension Plan (CPP) premiums and Employment Insurance (EI) premiums from your employees wages. As an employer, you must also pay part of their CPP and EI premiums. For more information go to the following website:
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tax/business/topics/payroll/>

3. LICENCES, PERMITS, MEMBERSHIP IN ASSOCIATIONS

To operate a business in Ontario there are many different type of **licences and permits** that you must acquire, depending on the type of operation that you run. Listed are some of the permits that may pertain to your particular operation:

- Business licence - imposed by a municipality or organized township
- Vendor permit, for collecting RST - (provincial)
http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_3_6695_1.html
- Liquor licence - (provincial)
<http://www.agco.on.ca/en/b.alcohol/b.alcohol.html>

Membership in various associations is usually voluntary. There are some general associations that do represent large sections of the tourism industry:

- Noto - The voice of Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario
<http://www.noto.net/membershipclasses.cfm>
- Canada Select - Accommodations rating program
<http://www.canadaselect.com/>
- Ontario Accommodation Association
<http://www.ontarioaccommodation.com/>
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Regional Travel Association

Affiliation with specific organizations is usually based on the types of activities that you and your operation are involved in. Membership in these organizations can improve your exposure in a niche market. Listed are some **activity-specific associations**:

- Paddling Ontario Alliance
<http://www.paddlingontario.com>
- ATV Ontario
<http://www.atvontario.com>
- Ontario federation of Snowmobile Clubs
<http://www.ofsc.on.ca>
- Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
<http://www.ofah.org>
- Ontario Marine Operators Association
<http://www.marinasontario.com>
- Ontario Cycling Association
<http://www.ontariocycling.org>
- Hike Ontario
<http://hikeontario.com>
- Partners in Eco-Adventure Tourism
<http://www.peat.on.ca>

References:

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

O TEC. *Outdoor Guide Training Manual*. Franklin Field Services. 2000.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

"There is no future in any job. The future lies in the person that holds the job."

-George Crane

Every tourist operation is different and need for numbers and types of employees will vary on the size and type of operation. The **quality** of your employees can make or break your business. In many cases, the degree of success of a business relates to the attitude of the employees toward the operation. It is essential that the tourist operator creates an atmosphere of respect and understanding which provides a good place for employees to work and allows them to be proud of their association with your operation.

So where does the tourist operator find, recruit, train and retain these quality employees that will enhance their business? Many operators are isolated and cannot access a competent labour pool. The abundance of good paying jobs in other Canadian sectors makes working long hours in a low-paying, seasonal industry, not very attractive to many potential employees. However, there are many people, both local and from "away", that are very interested in the life style of the great outdoors in your area and the tourism sector in general.

This section of the manual will address the many areas of employment that will affect a tourist operator. For quick reference this section will be organized as follows:

1. What type of employee do you need?
2. Who should you hire?
3. Training Practices
4. Information that you and your employee need to know
5. Your relationship with your employee

1. WHAT TYPE OF EMPLOYEE DO YOU NEED?

The first thing that an operator must do is identify the kind of work that needs to be done and build a **job description** outlining all of the particular duties. The job description should describe the **job** not the **person**. Job descriptions can be very specific, as for a cook or chef, or job descriptions can be very broad in nature of duties, as for a maintenance worker. A job description should describe all tasks that are considered part of the job.

Building a Job Description.

A Job Description should include:

- Title of the position
- List of all job duties (can include percent of time for each task, or list duties in order of importance)
- List of responsibilities
- List of conditions under which work is performed (including bad weather)
- List of conditions of employment such as shift times, days on/off, length and dates of contract

- Physical, educational requirements (can include skill type certifications)
- Training requirements (such as First Aid, CPR, or other certificates)
- Rate of pay, room and board options and availability

Job descriptions should be written prior to hiring and reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.

2. WHO SHOULD YOU HIRE?

So, now you have a couple of job positions to fill at your operation. **Get the word out!!!**
There are a few ways to recruit potential employees:

- Let people know that you are seeking new employees. Tell people in your daily conversations. Tell current and former employees. Post advertisements in your operation in a public area. The more people you have to choose from, the greater your chances are of finding the appropriate employee.
- Place an ad with Human Resources Canada, JobBank. Your job ad can be placed online, in person or over the phone and updated or deleted at your convenience. Your ad will not only be viewed by locals but by other interested Canadians looking to work in your area. Go to the following web site for more information:
<http://www.sdc.gc.ca>
- Place an ad in newspapers and magazines. Place an ad in the NOTO *Outfitter* or on the NOTO website.
- Advertise with high schools, colleges and universities for seasonal employees. Colleges and universities have employment offices where you can place your ad. Many schools have tourism and hospitality programs. You can contact the coordinator or professors of these programs directly to let them know that you are hiring. Usually having a direct relationship with the people that know the students will ensure that you will get the best possible applicants.

List of Ontario Colleges:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/list/college.html>

List of Ontario Universities:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/list/univers.html>

Now you have a list of applicants in front of you. Which person will be the best fit for your business and your style of management? In any business, **communication** is the key to success. You must hire team members that can pull together, share ideas and responsibilities, and create a pleasant working atmosphere. The best piece of advice in recruitment is:

“Hire for attitude, train for the job”

Attributes of a great tourism employee are a good work ethic, a cheery disposition, punctuality and a commitment to service.

The Interview

Once you have reviewed the job applicants it is time to prepare for the interview. You should put together a list of questions that you will ask each person interviewed. Types of interview questions should include:

- Questions, which will have the person telling you about themselves and previous job experiences.
- Direct questions which will inform you about their skills, education and employment history.
- Problem solving questions, where you will get insight into how a person will react in a particular situation.

Once you have outlined your questions you can schedule the interviews. Provide a private place for the interviews and don't forget to take notes during the interview.

People interviewed can be rated according to how they answered each of your questions and how they presented themselves in the interview. Go over their resumes once more and narrow down your candidates. At this point **check their references**. If possible, talk to someone that has been his or her previous supervisor. It is just plain bad management NOT to check their references. Remember, your employees can make or break your business!

Once you have chosen your employee and made the offer of employment, you will need to describe the terms of employment. This is best done with a contract or employment agreement.

The Employment Agreement

The employment agreement should reflect the job description in terms of duties and responsibilities. Other types of specific information should include:

- wages and pay periods
- hours of work
- length of contract, potential for extension
- possible bonus for completing contracts, for students that may want to return to school early (* one suggestion is to pay back half of the season's room and board)
- working conditions
- benefits (such as use of equipment)
- room and board costs
- conditions for termination

3. TRAINING PRACTICES

Training employees is essential for all successful tourist operations, no matter what the size. Employees need to perform their tasks competently and in a pleasant, efficient way because what they do and how they do it, ultimately reflects on your business. Trained employees will make fewer mistakes, have fewer accidents and will take pride in their work.

The amount of training depends on the tasks to be performed by the employee at your operation. It is best to assume, when training a new employee, that they know nothing. It is also important to remember that common sense is not common!

The Training Program

Training the new employee starts with:

- Orientation to the operation
- Skills training

An **orientation** to the operation will give the new employee a background on the history of the operation and how the operation is laid out and managed. The new employee will meet other employees in the workplace setting and observe your management style in action. Let the employee see exactly what is expected of them and they will feel more comfortable fitting in to your operation.

Proper **training** begins and ends with you, the operator. If you want a job to be done properly, in a particular fashion, then YOU must do the training. There are three steps to proper training:

- **Prepare to train.** Write down all duties and break them down into step-by-step tasks. Include everything you expect your employee to know. You can create an in-house training manual or have fact sheets on hand for the employee to refer to. Set the time and location for the training and gather any required materials and equipment.
- **Train the employee.** Give an overview of the procedure and show the employee how the task is performed. Have them practice the task; have patience and make them feel confident. Repeat if necessary!
- **Follow up** with a mini performance review on the new employee. Go through the review thoroughly with the employee. It is easier to correct a mistake now than have it become a habit.

Remember that your new employee can only master so many tasks and take in so much information in a day. Plan your training sessions as efficiently as possible until all tasks are covered.

Also remember that employee training is not "free". Under the Employment Act you must pay your employees for their time during training.

Your employee is a reflection of your business in your customers' eyes. In the case of employee injury, the lack of proper training may be detrimental to both you and your business. Employee training should be taken very seriously.

4. INFORMATION THAT YOU AND YOUR EMPLOYEE NEED TO KNOW

There are specific employment standards that you, as an employer must be familiar with and comply with. Your employee should also be aware of these standards and many of them should be addressed in his/her employment agreement. Most of these standards are the law and are enforced by the Ministry of Labour.

The following references and web sites will provided you with more specific information:

The Employment Standards Act (general information)
http://www.gov.on.ca/lab/english/es/factsheets/fs_general.html

Minimum Wage (note the rates differ for hunting and fshing guides)
http://www.gov.on.ca/lab/english/es/factsheets/fs_wage.html

Vacation Pay (yes you have to pay!)
http://www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/es/factsheets/fs_vacation.html

Public Holidays
http://www.gov.on.ca/lab/english/es/factsheets/fs_public.html

Health and Safety. A Guide to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. 88 pages.
<http://www.gov.on.ca/LAB/english/hs/ohsaguide/index.html>

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (Workers Compensation).
Employers Section.
<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/Employers>

Employers duties in terms of Prevention.
<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/PreventionYHSRR>

First Aid Program Site. For everything you need to know about your first aid requirements.
<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/FAP>

First Aid Regulation 1101. First Aid requirements of the legal kind. 22 pages.
<http://www.sja-haltonhills.org/wsib1101.pdf>

Sexual Harassment DOES happen in the workplace although many people may not be aware of it. Sexual harassment doesn't just involve the sexual act, it can be found in many forms including:

- jokes of a sexual nature
- unwanted touching, unwanted advances
- photos that are offensive or demeaning
- degrading another employee based upon their gender

It is up to you as an employer to provide a safe, professional, working environment. Employees are protected from sexual harassment by the Human Rights Act. Legally you, as a person in authority, can be held responsible if something did happen between your employees.

In-house Rules

In-house rules need to be compiled, written out and explained to the employee. A policy handbook or a guideline sheet should be given to or be available to the employee for review. Your policies and rules will reflect your type of operation and management style. Policies that you can address may include:

- smoking areas
- performance reviews
- benefits, include rules of borrowing equipment
- room and board rates
- rules for fraternizing with guests
- dress code
- discipline and cause for termination

Your rules and policies set the tone for your operation's day-to-day activities. By having written rules and policies you can deal with most situations in a fair, obvious manner.

5. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR EMPLOYEE

The best advice for hiring and retaining an excellent employee is: make your operation a nice place to work. Recognize your employee and the work that they do. An operator must be aware of the qualities of each employee to put them in the right position and make them feel like an essential part of the business.

There are many ways to get your employee actively involved in your business:

- allow the employee to contribute new ideas and problem solve
- have staff meetings to discuss issues and the business at hand
- have special activities and encourage staff participation in events such as horseshoes, campfire night, etc.
- hold recognition events such as a family picnic, staff meal and party

There is bound to be stress in any organization, no matter how big or small. By keeping a line of communication open with your employee you can solve most problems before they become a crisis.

References:

Roger Liddle, Lodge Owner, Noto Board Member. North Bay, Ontario

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

O TEC. *Outdoor Guide Training Manual*: Franklin Field Services. 2000.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

“Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing, but nobody else does.”

-Stuart Henderson Britt

“Nobody counts the number of ads you run; they just remember the impression you make”

-William Bernbach

1. MARKETING

Marketing, by definition, means to make a communication about a product or service, the purpose of encouraging the recipients of the communication to purchase or use the product or service.

In the tourism industry, marketing involves communicating **the image** of your operation to potential customers. Customers will choose the vacation that best portrays the image of the vacation that they are seeking. It is up to you to create, build and promote this image of your operation. To be successful, you must actively plan to market and advertise your business on an ongoing basis.

Marketing any product involves planning around the customers' needs. Marketing experts have analysed customers' wants and needs and have identified eight common factors: product, price, place, promotion, packaging, programming, people and partnership.

These eight factors, the **eight “P’s”**, are used to create marketing plans. In this section of the manual only the first **four “P’s”** will be addressed: **Product, Price, Place and Promotion**. The other four “P’s” are addressed, informally, in other sections of the manual.

a. Product - what are you selling?

To successfully market your business, you must develop your operation's **image** from the perception of your guests. What your guests “see” or perceive your business to be like is what you need to project in your communications and advertisements. This is your product.

Much of what your guests want is beyond your control- the location of your operation, your particular **piece of Northern Ontario**. What is in your control are the support elements - accommodation, food and beverages and additional services. It is important to make sure that the product that you are selling is really the one your customers are buying. You may be offering the support elements, but your customers are almost certainly buying a piece of Northern Ontario. That being said, you need to have a hard look at your operation from the guests' point of view. Your operation is not just a collection of quaint cabins, and a rustic lodge set in the Northern wilderness. Your operation is reflected in your staff, the degree of repair and cleanliness of your facilities, and your commitment to customer service. By talking with and surveying your guests you can get a better idea of how they perceive their vacation (your product), and use their positive comments to promote your business.

You can also check out the competition in your area. Appraise their operations as well. Compare and note any differences in what is offered to their guests. Make an honest appraisal of your operation's location, design, facilities, condition, quality of service and pricing. By examining the strengths and weakness of your operation you can decide on a course of action to change or improve upon features of your operation to give your guests a better vacation.

b. Price - How much do you charge for your product?

One of the areas where most operators can improve upon is product pricing. Somewhere between the break-even cost and the advertised price is your profit margin. The profit margin enables you to offer special rates to groups, lower off-season rates, and wholesale rates to the travel tourism industry. It also allows you to decrease rates if competition increases.

Knowledge of your customers and their purchasing power is also an important factor. There are psychological effects to price rates as well. If your resort is higher in quality or has newer amenities, your prices should reflect this. Likewise, if you offer additional services or a unique atmosphere your prices should be higher. Higher prices will attract customers with a higher income.

c. Place - Where to sell your product?

Most customers buy your product or package directly from you. There are other avenues where you can sell your packages. Travel agents and tour wholesalers can provide other channels to distribute your product. These avenues will be addressed later in this section under: The Travel Trade.

d. Promotion - How will you advertise your product?

There are various means by which you can make potential customers aware of your product. The obvious is, of course, advertising. You can also promote your product through sport shows, sales promotion, publicity and public relations. Promotion will be addressed in the section on Advertising.

In summary:

You must examine the market and determine to whom you are going to sell; then, direct your advertising towards attracting those customers. Design your product (your vacation package) so that your market will notice it. Price it accordingly, and tell your target market that it is available.

2. ADVERTISING

Advertising is the method you use to promote your business to potential customers using various forms of media. Advertising can make or break your business. Any money that you spend on advertising may be the most important expenditure you make each year. It is best to have an advertising plan in place before you spend any serious money.

To construct an advertising plan, you need to look at the various forms of advertising and choose which forms are best for your operation. There are many ways to advertise your business, and how and where you advertise will be a personal decision based on your unique circumstances.

For the most part, you need to use different strategies for repeat guests versus new guests:

Advertising Strategies for Repeat Guests

Do not forget to advertise to repeat guests. They are your valued customers! They will only return IF you treat them well and maintain your relationship with them. It is many more times more difficult to recruit new customers than it is to maintain a clientele of repeat customers. Use your advertising money to maintain and build your personal relationship with them. Listed are a few ways to nurture repeat guests:

- Mail out **Christmas cards** or holiday greetings. Make sure that each card is personalized and is signed by you and your employees (if possible). Tell your repeat guests that you are looking forward to seeing them again in the new year.
- Send out a **newsletter** with the upcoming season's events. You can send out the newsletter in the mail or email it to your repeat guests. Again, make sure that you personalize the newsletter in some way. People receive enough junk mail and Spam!
- Pick up the **phone** and call your repeat guests. Talk to them about what is happening and important in their lives. In our particular niche of the industry customers thrive on "soft sell". You don't have to sell your product; the fact that you are actually reaching out to repeat guests is part of the "sales pitch".
- Have a **reception** for repeat guests on their return to your facility. Invite new guests to capture the good feelings and build on your community of repeat customers.

Treat your repeat guests well and they, in turn, will patronize your business. Consider this type of advertising as **customer relationship management!**

Advertising Strategies for Attracting New Guests

Attracting new customers or guests is one of the toughest things to do in any business; yet it is essential for the survival of your operation. Much of the advertising that actually works for attracting new customers in the Outfitting business is **word of mouth**. Never underestimate word of mouth advertising in our industry. That is why it is so important to run a quality operation and treat each and every guest with the best possible, consistent service. Your current guest is your best form of advertising.

Of course, there are other forms of advertising in our industry that cost upfront money! Yes, advertising does work. The best advertising plan is one that is sustained on a constant basis over a long period of time. Like many things in life, the benefits of advertising are not noticeable immediately, but are effective in the long-term.

Listed are the various forms of traditional advertising used in our industry:

a. Sport or Feature Shows

(Examples: Toronto Fishing Show, Huntin' Time Expo (Michigan), Canoecopia (Madison, WI), Toronto Outdoor Adventure Show - most shows occur in February or March)

Sport shows or "Feature" shows are an excellent way to meet your target market. A good rule of thumb is to exhibit in a show located in a city that is a proven market for your business. To advertise at a show, you need to setup and staff an exhibit of your operation. You will need to create an exhibit that will best "show-off" your operation.

A good exhibit will consist of:

- **A display**, including table, chairs, backdrop, and props. Make sure that your items are compact, lightweight and stable. Attend other sport shows to get ideas on how to arrange and set up your display.
- **Pictures, photographs and maps** should be displayed. Large, colourful pictures showing guests having fun are the best draw. You can have additional photos and information in a photo album sitting on the counter.
- **Electricity and phone service.**
- **Staff** working the show should wear **nametags**. It is a good idea to invest in quality nametags that include the name of your operation as well as the names of people working the show. Never leave the display unattended.
- **Brochures.** Have as many as 3000 brochures. Some visitors may just want a business card. Include your cell phone number on your business card or brochure so potential customers can get a hold of you quickly.
- **Reservation forms.** For signing guests on!
- **Mailing list form** Have interested, but not yet committed people, write their name, address, phone number and email address on a mailing list. A followup call or letter may get their business. This is also the basis for next year's mailing list.

Plan on spending between \$2000-3000 per show for two people. This is a time consuming, expensive way to advertise, and many outfitters have stopped attending shows since the advent of the Internet and web-based advertising. However, if you have a place in a strong niche market (such as attracting anglers from the US), sport shows may pay off for your operation.

b. Magazines

Magazines have a selective readership and are usually "special interest" in nature. They can help you advertise to a specific audience. For many Outfitters, magazine advertisements will be an essential part of their advertising plan. Here are a few points to consider:

- Advertise in magazines that will attract **your particular type** of customer. Ontario Out of Doors, is good for the hunter and angler. Canadian Geographic will attract a different type of customer.
- Your **ad should be clear and concise** to provide the reader with accurate information in a small space. Some detail is needed - American Plan, Housekeeping, etc. Your ad should be designed to capture a reader's interest so that he or she will follow up by requesting a brochure or checking out your website.

- Your **ad should appear in the classified section** or the "where to go" section of the magazine (unless you have unlimited advertising dollars!). Yes, your ad will be lumped in with all those other outfitter ads, but this strategy works in our industry. Potential customers always read these sections if they are looking for a vacation package.
- **Advertise special package plans** for your off-season.
- If possible, **code your advertising**. If you are advertising in several magazines it is a good idea to see where your inquiries came from. This will help you determine which magazine gives you the best results.

On the down side, magazine advertisements are usually expensive and need a long "lead-time" up to two to three months in advance. Your best bet is to advertise with a magazine over the long run. By doing so, you keep the name of your operation associated with the magazine.

c. Newspapers

Advertising in newspapers is not used very often in our industry. Many people read newspapers but only a few of them are interested in outdoor vacations. Newspaper advertising can work if you are trying to attract local groups and businesses. They are more suitable for the operations that run meetings, retreats, and educational programs.

You can use newspapers for free publicity if you are holding a special event. Invite a reporter to cover a special event at your operation. Local newspapers are always looking for stories and this is a good way to become more visible in your community.

d. Travel Guides

Travel guides, such as the **Ontario Outdoor Adventure Guide**, are aimed at specific markets. Many of these are government sponsored and are of high quality. The free listings are usually small, but you can increase the size and content of your ad with more money. If you are a member of Noto (Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario), your ad can run larger, depending on your type of membership.

The guides are available at all Outfitters, travel and tourism centres, and at Sport shows.

You may consider joining the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership (OTMP) for additional advertising in government-sponsored ads, publications and web sites. For more information look up Partnership Opportunities at:
<http://tourismpartners.com>

e. Mailing lists and Direct Mailing

You should have your own mailing list of repeat guests and potential guests. If you have purchased your operation, the mailing list should be included as part of your purchase options. "Noto" also has mailing lists that you can access if you are a Noto member. Use these lists to contact former guests and potential guests.

Direct Mailing involves sending brochures to those people who inquired about your operation. To "freshen up" the image of your operation, you can introduce new facilities or services or offer special "new" packages. These can be offered to repeat guests through direct mailing.

Using direct mailing to attract new customers is not the best form of advertising. Use it only for smaller, special interest groups. If you sort your mail by postal code, Canada Post will give you a special rate for bulk delivery. Direct mailing is expensive, but you are targeting your direct market with the best possible form of advertising.

f. Radio and Television

Like newspapers, radio and television advertisements are not often used unless you want to target a local market. Again, the best way to advertise "for free" with this type of media is to have some coverage of a special event at your operation.

If you have a really unique high-end product, you may want to advertise on a speciality television channel; however, plan on repeat broadcasts and a hefty bill!

g. Highway Signs

Highway signs are an effective way of advertising to the public. Signs help people find your operation and they present an image of your business. Signs tell people who you are and what you are selling.

Many Outfitters have the blue, Ministry of Transportation highway signs. Any highway sign or billboard must meet government specifications and requires a permit if it is within 400 m of the highway. To learn more about highway signs go to:

Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Commercial Signage
<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/engineering/management/corridor/signs.htm>

Once you understand the regulations for highway signs, consider the following:

- Signs must be **well placed** and positioned and legible at 100 kmph
- Signs should have **few words** and reflect the quality of your operation
- Signs should be **in good repair** and brushed out in order to be visible

Highway signs are an effective way to advertise but it is difficult to estimate their effect on your business. Signs convey a message and can create a mood or feeling of atmosphere. People can glance at your sign in passing, and derive meaning from its presence.

h. Brochures

Brochures are standard forms of advertising in the tourism industry and probably the most important means of advertising. Of all types of advertising, your brochure is most likely to make the sale. In most cases, your brochure is the product that they are buying since they cannot see the actual product that they are buying. Therefore, your brochure must then realistically represent your establishment.

Your brochure can be created by you or by an advertising or graphic design firm. In both cases **you** need to know what type of information must be in your brochure.

Brochure Content:

- **Name of your operation** and logo. Address, phone numbers, fax number, email address and website. A small Canadian flag is a nice touch.
- **Location** of your operation and map with general directions on how to get there from major centres
- List of services, types of accommodation, activities, **package types** and unique features
- **Photos** of spectacular scenery, people having fun doing exciting activities, cabins, fireplaces, dining room, lounge, and other unique features. Try putting a selling message into your photos' captions.
- The **rate sheet**, where prices are listed should be printed out separately from your brochure and inserted into your brochure. It can be changed on a yearly basis. Include: deposit requirements, conditions for cancellations and refunds, and the current exchange rate.

Typically, the life span of a brochure is three years.

Brochure Format:

The standard brochure size is 4 X 8 1/2 inches when folded so it fits into a standard business envelope and information racks. In most cases, the brochure is 8 1/2 X 11 inches in size and opens up to three panels on each side for a total of six panels.

Keep your brochure simple (KISS) and try using the AIDA formula (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). Your brochure should capture a person's attention, get them interested in your operation, create a desire for your vacation package, and then move them into action by telling them how to book the vacation package at your operation.

The **cover** of your brochure is your promotional piece and must capture the attention of a prospective guest. Keep the cover simple and uncluttered. Show off your operation with your best photo. Entice the customer to pick up the brochure and have a look inside.

The **inside pages** should contain photos and text that will motivate the reader and create a desire to purchase a vacation package at your operation.

The **back pages** should contain the information to stimulate the reader into action. Here, you list your operation's name, logo, address etc., and the information the reader needs to know in order to make a reservation.

Design Ideas:

- Check out other brochures to decide on what type of brochure you like
- Keep a photo library. With digital cameras it is easy to snap photos and update your collection
- Consider a photo of a near-by attraction
- Use logos of associations to which you belong
- Use clear, simple type and don't mix font styles

- Don't use too many colours. Black goes well with coloured photos
- Leave plenty of white space, especially in the "sell" section of your brochure. You want this material to be clear and concise so that your prospective guest will use it

Brochure Printing:

Shop around for your printer. Printing is expensive.

To determine total costs, you need to examine the factors that will influence printing prices:

- Type of paper used
- Number of colours used
- Total number of brochures printed

Brochure Distribution:

Brochures work best when they are: mailed out to direct inquiries, handed out at sport shows, displayed on site, and sent to past guests with new rates.

Your brochures can also be distributed and displayed at:

- Travel or Tourism Information Centres (NOTAPs- Northern Ontario Tourism Associations)
- Travel agencies
- Local restaurants
- Local attractions
- Public venues

You may want to deliver the brochures yourself. Consider the delivery a sales call and good public relations.

Creating your own brochure:

If you are adamant about creating your own brochure, check out your computer's word processing software. Most will have a format for brochure creation. (Word, Word Perfect, etc.)

You can also check out this site:

Quick Tips for Better Brochures.
<http://www.kirwood.com/bakers.htm>

i. Web Marketing or E-marketing

The Internet has made a huge difference in the way that Outfitters market. Any potential customer on the planet can be reached in seconds if they have a computer and access to the web. If you don't have a website for your operation, you are short changing your marketing efforts. The Internet provides a level playing field for both operators and customers.

To have a website up and running you need a computer, modem, software and a local Internet provider. If your operation is remote, you should have a location in a nearby town where you can access your Internet information on a regular basis. Some Outfitters even visit the local library to access their website and email!

You may also consider Internet service via a satellite system but this can be expensive.

Websites can be set up much like your brochure but they can also provide you with additional services. A good website will contain:

- advertising of your operation (see brochure content)
- photos, web cam views, videos, graphic displays, maps
- accurate and timely information (keep current and update)
- package types, services, local attractions
- direct booking instructions and forms
- secure payment service
- email access

How to start

If you know nothing about website design or the internet, it is best to hire a professional website designer (web master). Go on the internet, check out other outdoor tourism sites that you like, talk to other operators, talk to your tourism association, and find someone that has experience in **tourism** website design.

Some of the points you and your web master need to address are:

- Integrating web advertising into your overall advertising plan
- Selecting suitable photos, texts, graphics, etc. to build your website
- Effective use of key words to plug in to search engines and web business
- Enhancing customer relationships
- Designing an online billing-payment system
- Building a tracking system so that you can keep track of the number of people that visit your site and other statistics
- Access to the website so that YOU are able to update and change information
- Links on your website are seldom used by potential clients. However, you can link your website to other, niche marketing sites such as GO FISH, Green Tourism, etc.

It is important that you are able to communicate effectively with your web master. You are the only one who knows your operation inside and out. Your web master must get a basic understanding of your operation and your website needs in order to best advertise and package your operation on the Internet.

The government is sponsoring inexpensive web strategy sessions for tourism outfitters. You can get more information about these sessions at:

<http://www.tourismkeys.ca>

j. Other forms of advertising

There are other forms of advertising that take into consideration **public relations** and personal selling techniques. Your name and your operation are synonymous to the local public. By being visible in your community, you are automatically promoting and advertising your business. Remember that word-of-mouth advertising is a driving force in our industry. Many local people have relatives and friends that visit the area and some of them may consider a vacation at your operation.

There are many ways to improve your community status:

- Support local sports programs and community events through **sponsorships** (make sure that you set aside advertising money for this)
- **Membership** in the local Chamber of Commerce, Regional Travel Association
- Get involved with **local clubs** that are aligned with your part of the industry (snowmobile clubs, hiking clubs, OFAH, etc.)
- Invite community groups to use your operation for **meetings** and special events
- Send regular **press releases** to the local media
- Hold stunts, **special events** and invite **celebrities** to your operation
- Make **personal appearances** and speeches
- **Follow up** group visits with personal letters to organizers
- **Meet** with business leaders and local politicians

Advertising Summary:

How and where you advertise is entirely up to you and the nature of your operation. It is best to identify your target markets, set an advertising budget and then select the media you will use to advertise. It is important to understand that advertising is not a science. Some types of advertising may not work for your particular operation.

3. THE TRAVEL TRADE

Organizations that promote and sell your packages, such as travel agents, tour operators, etc., are collectively known as the "travel trade". Many Outfitters don't use the travel trade at all, but if you are thinking about attracting more international travellers, you may consider getting the travel trade to promote and sell your packages.

In many countries, the travel trade has a strong influence on promoting travel decisions. The travel trade community is very knowledgeable about its customers and is in a good position to promote and sell tourism packages to them.

There are many different types of organizations in the travel trade. They range from government bodies, which will help to promote and assist marketing your operation; to tour operators, such as the US National Tour Association, that can include your product in one of their packages. Travel agents usually create custom packages for their clients, but they can promote your packages as well. With the internet, it is easy to hook up to the travel trade and offer your packages as part of what they sell.

If you choose to offer your packages to the travel trade, you must pay the organization a commission for supplying the business (usually a percentage of your package price). However, you only pay commission on actual packages that have been sold through the travel agency. Usually this is extra business that you may not have received anyway.

By working with the travel trade, you can develop and promote new products. Many off season packages and non-traditional packages can be offered successfully by the travel trade. Although not all operators will consider working with the travel trade, it can be a successful relationship for others.

References:

Roger Liddle, Lodge Owner, Noto Board Member. North Bay, Ontario.

Raymond Rodda. Marketing Professor. Cambrian College, Sudbury, Ontario.

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

Snapshots: An Introduction to Tourism. 3rd Canadian ed., Kerr, Paula and Nickerson, Norma Polovitz. Pearson Education Canada. 2004.

HOUSEKEEPING AND MAINTENANCE

"Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

"Quality, service, cleanliness, and value."

-Cavett Robert

Cleanliness is indeed a major component of a successful business. In the tourism industry, "clean" is associated with care and quality. All of your customers want to stay in a clean, fully functional cabin or room. Rustic means simple and countrylike; it does not mean old, musty, dirty, and run down.

As a business owner you must keep your operation clean and in good repair. This is necessary not only to satisfy your guests, but also to build your reputation and to create a group of returning customers. It is also necessary to maintain and protect your investment. Your modern, clean operation transfers into money when it is time to sell and retire.

1. HOUSEKEEPING AND LIGHT MAINTENANCE

Organizing and managing housekeeping and light maintenance is an important job and must be taken seriously. Depending on your type of operation there are a minimum **four** areas which should be cleaned and maintained in a routine manner:

- a. Cabins and guest rooms
- b. Indoor public areas
- c. Offices and employee areas
- d. Outdoor public areas

a. CABINS AND GUEST ROOMS

Cabins and guest rooms are often cleaned according to industry standards based on the type of package offered. These packages include the following:

American Plan accommodations call for the daily cleaning of guest rooms including bedrooms, bathrooms, living and dining areas. Daily cleaning should involve making beds, changing towels, and general cleaning.

Housekeeping Cabins can be cleaned once a week, but many operators set up schedules where the cabins get a cleaning mid week as well. Midweek cleaning involves a thorough cleaning of the bathrooms, stoves and ovens, floors, windows and furniture. A fresh set of towels can be provided mid-week. On the weekend (change-over day), cabin clean up is much easier, with just a quick cleaning of all areas, plus a thorough cleaning of the refrigerator/freezer and kitchen areas.

In general, cabins and guest rooms should have three different types of scheduled housekeeping:

- i. Regular weekly, biweekly, or daily cleaning
- ii. Occasional cleaning
- iii. Deep cleaning

i. **Regular housekeeping**, in operations with cabins, is usually done on a weekly basis but may be done on a daily basis, depending on your guests' needs and package type. Guest rooms are usually cleaned daily.

The basic steps of regular cabin cleaning are:

- ✓ Assembling your cleaning supplies. Most operations have carts, that carry the cleaning supplies, equipment, clean bedding, towels etc. Make sure that these carts are fully stocked prior to cabin cleaning day.
- ✓ Clean the cabin once the guests have left. A systematic approach to cleaning the cabin will ensure that all cleaning tasks will be done. A checklist of cleaning tasks may help to organize cleaning staff and can serve as an inspection list for management. Regular cleaning of the cabin must include: cleaning the bathroom, kitchen, dining and living areas, making the beds, dusting, vacuuming or sweeping and garbage removal. Any items that require repair or maintenance should be noted by cleaning staff, written down on the checklist form and given to the supervisor or operator for follow up.
- ✓ Inspection of the clean cabin should be done by management or the operator and will ensure that the cabin is clean for the next clients. Any staff cleaning problems can be noted and addressed. Inspection should also involve noticing any damages and making the appropriate repairs.

ii. **Occasional cleaning** involves such things as: turning mattresses, taking inventory of cabin items, dusting hard to reach places, cleaning of bedspreads, scrubbing down cupboards, etc. Depending on the size of your operation and your own personal standards of cleanliness, occasional cleaning may be done during regular cleaning.

iii. **Deep cleaning** in our industry is routinely done at the end of the season. Deep cleaning involves such tasks as: high dusting, cleaning walls, windows, cupboards, shampooing rugs, furniture, washing curtains, bedspreads, and vacuuming trim, corners and carpet edges. Any major repairs and cosmetic changes, such as painting, can be done at this time.
Storing items for winter is also done at this time. By putting dishes, bedding, etc., in plastic bags for the winter, you can avoid double cleaning in the spring. Keeping mice out of cabins is always an on going concern. Some operators use cloves and bay leaves in mouse-prone areas.

b. INDOOR PUBLIC AREAS

Indoor public areas are places where you greet and meet your guests and where they meet other guests. It is best to clean these areas once a day.

The **lobby**, or place where the guests register, will create a first and lasting impression. The lobby should always be clean and the front desk should be free of clutter and paperwork. This area should reflect the nature of your business and have some suitable seating. Pictures, photos of previous guests, information, membership plaques, awards and magazines will add to the ambience of your operation.

Entrances to indoor public areas must be easy to access and must be safe to use. Also, entrances must always be clean. Snow and ice removal is an absolute necessity in four season operations. Mats inside and outside of all entrances will keep downtracked dirt and provide added traction. Mats must be cleaned regularly to be both pleasing to the eye and safe.

Common rooms or meeting rooms or a common cabin can be used for events such as weddings, or can be used by your customers as an entertainment centre. These areas should be cleaned right after an event, but if they are more of an entertainment centre, they can be cleaned in your weekly schedule.

c. OFFICES AND EMPLOYEE AREAS

Offices and employee areas need to be as clean as guest areas and public areas. Providing a safe, clean environment for yourself and your employees is another sign of a quality, caring operation. The cleanliness and quality of your staff's working and living areas are reflected in the quality and loyalty of service they provide you and your guests. Too many operations are neglectful in meeting the needs of their staff in this area.

Each staff member is responsible for keeping his or her working and living areas neat and orderly. Regular, usually weekly, cleaning of these areas must be scheduled with the housekeeping staff.

d. OUTDOOR PUBLIC AREAS

Outdoor public areas are the places that your guests see and use while they are staying at your facility. It is important to note that outdoor public areas create much of your operation's image and can influence potential clients and local citizens. Outdoor public areas include such things as: building exteriors, landscaped areas and lawns, driving and parking areas, beaches, docks, swimming pools, hot tubs, etc. The types of outdoor facilities will vary according to your type of operation.

Building exteriors should be clean and in good repair. Painting and general maintenance should be scheduled yearly, preferably during the offseason. Renovations and major repairs should be scheduled in your long-term plans.

Landscaped areas or grounds require a maintenance program. Lawn care is routine and will consist mostly of mowing during your busy season. The use of fertilizer and chemicals is not necessary in a rustic setting and can contribute to the growth of algae in your lake. If you insist on using fertilizer and chemicals, use them before or after your busy season and ensure that there is no run-off into your water body.

Trees and shrubs should be maintained as not to interfere with guests or their view. Dying and dangerous trees should be removed in the spring or fall. Make sure that the trees you have removed are replaced and make tree planting an annual event. A forest setting is part of our Northern Ontario landscape and can provide privacy around your cabins.

Brightly coloured blooming flowers, either in beds or in planters, can enhance your landscape. The area outside of your main entrance to the lobby should have some special landscape feature to help direct clients to this area. Your public sign, visible from a public road, should also have a well-maintained landscaped area around it to show the quality and care you give to your operation and to project a good public image.

Driveways and parking areas must be clean and well maintained. Provide garbage cans and pick up garbage daily. Sweep areas, if paved, to remove sand, gravel and leaves. In the winter, snow removal and access to your buildings are a necessity, even if your operation is not four season. In many instances, access to your buildings must be provided at all times of the year for full insurance coverage.

Signage on your property must be easily visible, accurate, and have a uniform theme. Make sure that your signs are in good repair by inspecting them on a yearly basis.

Beaches and docks should be clean and in good repair. **Swimming pools and hot tubs** must not only be clean and in good repair, they must meet public health standards. A maintenance schedule will ensure that you meet these requirements.

CONTRACT or IN-HOUSE cleaning and maintenance

How you clean and maintain your operation is dependent on its size. You can hire staff, contract it out, or do the work yourself. Some tasks may be done by staff, but many operations contract out such things as laundry, landscaping and snow removal. It is best to examine all options and then choose the most cost effective method.

2. MAINTENANCE, ENGINEERING AND REPLACEMENT SCHEDULING

All facilities, including water, sewage and heating systems, require regular inspection, regular maintenance and future replacement as facilities and systems age. Again, keeping your facilities in good working condition makes your business attractive to clients and ensures that your facility will be attractive for future resale.

Regular inspections of **cabins, guest rooms, and public areas**, will ensure that the necessary repairs are made. These inspections should be done at least once a year. An inspection or maintenance checklist should be created for you cabins. A checklist can include:

- ✓ electrical
- ✓ lighting, indoors and outdoors
- ✓ plumbing and fixtures
- ✓ heating and air conditioning
- ✓ fire places
- ✓ doors and windows
- ✓ roofs

- ✓ flooring
- ✓ furniture
- ✓ fire extinguishers

After the inspections, repairs should be prioritized and completed during the off-season. Plans for major repairs and upgrades should be built into your long term financial planning. By planning repairs and upgrades, you will avoid emergency repairs and have a higher quality unit to rent out at a higher price.

Your operations' **plumbing and sewage systems** also require regular inspection and maintenance, especially if you use lake or well water and only run these systems during the frost-free time of year. Much of the regular maintenance and repair of these systems can be done by the operator or a maintenance person. However, for larger, more complicated projects, a professional should be employed.

Routine inspection and maintenance of **furnaces, fireplaces and air conditioners** should also be scheduled. Again, any major repairs should be done by a professional.

Most operations have a workshop or equipment shed where tools, maintenance equipment, spare parts, etc., are kept. Make sure that your workshop is clean and orderly, and that you have plenty of spare parts on hand.

References:

Roger Liddle, Lodge Owner, Noto Board Member. North Bay, Ontario

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

"Do what you do so well that they will want to see it again and bring their friends."

-Walt Disney

"Every great business is built on friendship."

-JC Penney

"Good service is good business."

-Siebel ad

Service is one of the most important commodities that is offered in the tourism industry. People want to be treated well, and want to feel comfortable in a friendly setting on their vacation. It is up to you to create the atmosphere where your guests can make long lasting memories in the Northern Ontario wilderness. Remember, you want them to come back and bring their friends!

What is Customer Service?

Customer service is all about how your business serves the customer- how your guests will perceive your operation - by the treatment that they receive. The focus of your entire operation must be the guest. Everything you do will be reflected in the quality of your guests' experience.

Customer service involves:

- treating your guests in a friendly, professional manner
- positive interactions with your colleagues and staff
- quality care and maintenance of your facilities
- dealing with problems in a professional manner

The advantages of good customer service are repeat business and free word-of-mouth advertising. Treating your guests right involves:

1. Delivering the best possible customer service
2. Addressing specific customer service concerns

1. DELIVERING THE BEST POSSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service **must** be a planned, essential component of your business strategy. There are three areas of importance in delivering quality customer service:

- a. A customer service policy
- b. Leadership in customer service
- c. Staff training in customer service.

a. A Customer Service Policy

As part of your business strategy, you need to develop a customer service policy. This policy will be the "big picture" view of your operation. Remember, the view must be from your guest's perspective, not yours. Your guests must feel that they are getting the best possible service from you and your staff.

In order for your policy to be effective, all of your employees must be familiar with it and deliver it at all times. Your vision of customer service has to be evident at all levels of your operation, and at all times. Everyone, from you to the teenager cutting the lawn, must be able to deliver the same, quality customer service. When it comes to customer service, your business is only as strong as the weakest link.

Your policy may include commitments to:

- always please the guest
- never to offend or argue with a guest
- address all concerns to the guest's satisfaction
- maintaining a friendly and open attitude
- service with a smile!

b. Leadership in Customer Service

In order for your vision to be successful, **you** must be an active part of customer service. The commitment to top quality service must come from the top- you. By interacting with guests and being involved with delivering customer service, you can get a better understanding of their perceptions of your establishment. Think of customer service as developing a friendship with your guests. *"Every great business is built on friendship."* (JC Penney)

The way you deal with your colleagues, sales people, and most importantly, the way you treat your employees, will be evident to your customers. Your employees cannot treat guests well if they are not treated well. Your day-to-day interactions set the tone for your operation. Make positive interactions part of your customer service policy.

c. Staff Training in Customer Service

It is good policy to hire people that enjoy working with and serving people. This type of person usually has the following qualities: a good self esteem, maturity in making decisions, a positive attitude, good interpersonal skills, and a genuine interest in people. Employees with a pleasant personal appearance and good hygiene always make a good impression on guests.

Training your staff in customer service skills can also go a long way. Many colleges and even high schools are offering customer service certification. You may want to check out some training certificates offered by OTEC's (Ontario Tourism Education Corporation) such as:

Service Excellence

<http://otec.org/hrd/otrain02a.htm>

Ontario SuperHost

<http://otec.org/hrd/otrain03.htm>

At the very least, your staff should have some practical training in your particular type of customer service and understand the importance of your customer service policy to your business.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC CUSTOMER SERVICE CONCERNS

For most Outfitters, there are several areas where good customer service must be evident:

- a. Reservations - either by phone or on line
- b. The front desk - creating first impressions
- c. General assistance
- d. Dealing with complaints

a. Reservations

Reservations are usually done over the phone or by email. Reservations are usually preceded by an **inquiry about your operation**, especially by new, potential customers that are shopping around. All inquiries and reservations should have the personal touch and each request must have a custom made response. This is your first impression on a guest or potential guest and it can make or break the sale. It also sets the tone for future interactions with this person as a guest at your resort. Nothing turns off a potential guest as much as a "canned" response! People get automated responses for most things in life; they want the personal touch on their vacation!

Reservations should suit the customer's needs. It is best to ask some questions of your guests so that you can accommodate them and their party, to the best of your ability, with the resources on hand at your operation. Ask them for the dates that they would like to book and offer them alternate dates if your facilities are fully booked on the dates that they requested. Ask for their arrival time, number in the party, and any special requests (eg. cot, crib, pets, etc.). Once they are booked, advise them of your cancellation policy. From there you can ask for a deposit (usually on a credit card). Spell the guests' names properly and send them a confirmation of their registration. It is a nice touch, when the guests do arrive, to address them by name. For an even higher level of customer service, your staff should be advised as to who is arriving and address and greet each guest by name.

Cancellations do happen on occasion, usually for reasons beyond the guests' control. If a guest decides to cancel their vacation, you should try to book them at another time. If that is not possible, remind them of your cancellation policy. In most cases, their deposit will not be refunded, but it is a nice touch if you can offer them some sort of discount if they rebook at another time.

When booking **repeat customers**, you should make every effort to be personal and have some idea of their history. These people are part of your extended community and consider you as a "friend". It is up to you to thank them for their continued "friendship" by treating them with personalized service. If your operation is large and you can't remember all of your repeat customers, then it is a good idea to have a customer history card or file on hand to refresh your memory!

b. The Front Desk

Your **front desk**, or place where you do business transactions, is another area that will create a first impression. This area should be neat and clean and allow some privacy for the transaction to occur. Customer service is all-important here and you should be courteous and professional, but personal whenever possible.

If the guests are **checking in**, review their reservation and ask if they require additional services. Review all of the features that are part of their vacation package. Let them know that they can always check back with either you or the staff if they need assistance.

If they are **checking out**, ask them if they enjoyed their stay and if you could do anything to improve it. This is a great time to get customer feedback if you are running a small operation. Always address the customer by name and smile! Small talk is fine, but don't let it get in the way of the transaction. After they have departed, you can update their customer history card or file.

Phone calls should be taken promptly. You and your staff should have and use a standard greeting for your operation. If you have to put someone on hold, make sure that you ask his or her permission to do so. Phoning them back at their convenience is always an option.

Take messages down in writing and include: date and time, name of the person calling, reason for calling, and name of the person that took the message. Let the caller know when they can expect the return call.

c. General Assistance

Guests will have many questions about the amenities and services of your operation. In order to make your life easier, it is a good practice to have your employees trained in all aspects of your operation. Employees should have a basic understanding of your business and must be aware of all services that are offered to the guests. Guests will and do seek advice from your employees, especially if you are not available.

Having a good background of the local area is also important. Most guests aren't from the area and are interested in the history, culture, and resources of Northern Ontario. Guests may also need to do some local shopping and want to do additional sightseeing. Employees that are knowledgeable of the area and who can offer directions are invaluable!

Information cards or pamphlets can be placed in cabins or guest rooms but many customers feel that this is too impersonal or too institutional. For a small operation the personal touch is an important part of the vacation experience.

d. Dealing with Complaints

At some point in your Outfitter career, a guest will complain about some fault of your operation. Consider all **complaints** as feedback from your guests, an opportunity to fix something that is broken. Most customers (anywhere from 70 to 90%) who have had a problem with a business **do not** complain. They just don't return. Or, they badmouth the business to their friends.

When you deal with a complaint, you are righting a wrong. It is your duty to please a guest and encourage them to return. Do not take complaints personally. The way that you deal with a complaint will reflect on your business and the quality of customer service of your operation.

The basic guidelines for handling a complaint are:

- Be calm and professional, focus on the complaint and not the guest
- Acknowledge the problem, ask questions and ask for details
- Apologize and show your concern for the guest
- Offer a solution if the guest was inconvenienced
- Implement the solution
- Follow up to ensure that the guest was satisfied
- Learn from the complaint

When it comes to complaints, remember that the customer is always right. Your business depends on how the customer perceives your operation. A complaining customer does not want to be belittled, or educated as to how you run your business; your guest just wants satisfaction. He or she wants the quality of accommodation and service that he or she paid for.

Sometimes complaints can be used as suggestions to improve your business and solve problems in your operation. Many larger businesses have survey forms in their cabins, guest rooms or restaurants. This may be too impersonal with a smaller operation, but you can still receive feedback from your guests. Journals can be placed in the guest rooms or cabins. Guests may feel more comfortable just jotting down a few words at their own convenience. Sometimes, the best way to receive feedback is by having a friendly, open conversation with your guests at their convenience or at check out time.

References:

OTEC. *Outdoor Guide Training Manual*. Franklin Field Services. 2000.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

CLIENT SERVICES

"Give the customer everything that you can give them, keep the place as clean as you can keep it, keep it friendly."

- Walt Disney

Client Services are the little things that you provide that makes your guests' stay more pleasant and more convenient. A good rule of thumb is always to deliver **more** than what the customer expects. By providing a broad range of products and services that are not in your brochure, you can over-exceed your guests' expectations and make their vacation even more memorable.

The range of products and services that you can provide to your guests will vary on the type and size of your operation. The following list shows some basic things that you can do or provide for your guests' convenience:

1. Comfort and Safety
2. A Weather Report and Forecast
3. Food and Beverage Services
4. Laundry Services
5. Rentals
6. Retail Area

1. COMFORT AND SAFETY

Comfort and safety are usually "invisible" services. Think of them as an extension of your insurance policy. Your guests know that you are insured but are not interested in the details of your policy. However, comfort and safety are primary concerns when customers are planning a vacation.

Comfort is a product that you are providing and selling in your cabins, guest rooms and main lodge. As the level of comfort increases in your operation, the quality of your operation also increases and, accordingly, the more money you can charge for your product.

If you are interested in providing quality services according to national standards, you may want to check out:

Canada Select:

Ontario's Accommodation Grading System.

<http://www.canadaselect-ontario.com/about.htm>

Safety must be a major concern for an operator. Most accidents are caused by the unsafe behaviour of guests or employees. Your employees must be aware of your inhouse rules (see Employment Issues section) and should have basic training in FirstAid and CPR. Additional safety precautions can include using warning signs in areas where safety hazards may exist, and having fire extinguishers on hand in any area where there is potential for an uncontrolled fire.

As an employer and business owner you should develop a plan of action in case of an accident and make sure that your employees are familiar with it. Emergency phone numbers should be located near all staff phones also stocked First Aid kits should be available. Many times you and your staff will be the first line of medical assistance, so you need to know how to stabilize a guest until he or she receives proper treatment.

Record all accidents (both guest and employee accidents) in an accident logbook. Date, time, description of accident and those involved should be noted. This information will be required by your insurance company if there is a claim or by the Workers Compensation Board or Ministry of Labour in the event that something happens to an employee.

2. A WEATHER REPORT AND FORECAST

Much of your guests' time is spent outside and many guests may not be able to get the weather report on their own, so why not provide them with a weather report and forecast? You can post the daily weather report/forecast outside on an information board or inside in your lobby area. You can post the actual web pages from environment Canada, or you can use coloured chalk and a chalkboard for the creative touch! The weather is always something that people are interested in. The following web sites will provide you with all of kinds of weather information:

Weather Web Sites:

Environment Canada

<http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/forecast/canada/>

The Ontario Weather Page - A very comprehensive site!

Choose your location and then get information regarding current conditions, five-day forecasts, marine conditions, road conditions, snowmobiling and skiing conditions, bug and pollen conditions, air quality.... and more!

<http://ontarioweather.com>

3. FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES

Depending on your type of operation, food and beverage services will vary. Many operations have American Plan packages or licensed restaurants; others may have only Housekeeping packages. It is not within the scope of this manual to outline restaurant management. However, general liquor licensing information is always of value:

Liquor Sales and Licensing:

Application Forms and Guides:

<http://www.agco.on.ca/en/b.alcohol/b2.1.salesLicences.html>

Bring Your Own Wine (BYOW) Endorsement. New in 2005.

This endorsement is an **addition** to your liquor sales license.

<http://www.agco.on.ca/en/b.alcohol/b1.types.html#byow>

Many operations provide various food and beverage items to their customers through a retail outlet or service. Other operators provide boxed lunches, shore lunches, or daily provisions on long canoe trips. Some operators even have vending machines on site.

A nice touch for operations with cabins is to provide a gas-powered barbeque. Also, many customers enjoy the convenience of microwave ovens.

4. LAUNDRY SERVICES

Laundry services can be provided for your guests for a fee, if you have onsite laundry facilities. An alternative is to provide coin-operated washers and driers (don't forget to have a coin operated detergent dispenser!). This works especially well when your guests are mostly families. In addition to providing them with a convenient service, the coin-operated laundry facility is a good source of additional income.

5. RENTALS

Rentals usually involve some sort of watercraft, such as canoes, kayaks, pedal boats and motorboats. Some operators also rent personal water craft (PWC), all terrain vehicles (ATVs), and even mountain bikes. Water craft rentals may be convenient for your guests, but they can be cumbersome for you to deliver.

Rental forms should be standard for any rental and may include **awaiver** to release you of potential liability from incompetence or negligence on the part of the renter. Do not rent equipment to minors. It is best to have your lawyer go over any rental form to make sure that you are fully protected.

With the new **boating safety** legislation, you must ensure that the renter completes the rental boat safety checklist and understands how to operate a motorboat. This provides the renter with "proof of operator competency" if he or she does not have a **pleasure craft operator card**. It is up to you to make sure that the boat meets all of the safety requirements and comes with a full tank of gas. For more information go to:

Transport Canada's all-inclusive web page.

Contains everything that you need to know about recreational boating in Ontario and Canada.

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/BoatingSafety/menu.htm>

6. RETAIL AREA

A retail area can be anything from having a few T-shirts and hats hanging up for sale in your lobby to having a fully staffed boutique or store. Again, it all depends on your type of operation and your clientele.

Fishing and hunting lodges should sell such things as maps, licenses, bait and tackle, for the convenience of guests. It is a good idea to sell just a few different types of lures, ones that work well for the fish in your area.

Souvenirs are popular with many guests, especially those from the USA and overseas. **Quality** T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, towels, etc., with the name of your lodge and logo are typically best sellers. Anything **Canadiana** or locally made usually sells well also. The key for these items is **quality**. People are on vacation and don't mind spending their money but they don't want junk. Some operations also offer other promotional items such as travel mugs, nalgene (water) bottles, carabiners, etc., with their names printed on them. Remember, this is a form of advertising! Quality items will reflect your quality establishment and will attract a quality (usually higher paying) guest.

Some necessities and supplies can be stocked for your customers. Firewood, insect repellent, sunscreen, shampoo, toothpaste, detergent, etc., may be available in your retail area. It is best to avoid food items, especially junk food, unless you want kids coming in and out all day!

Your retail area should be neat, orderly, and pleasing to the eye. Many operations get into the rustic, woodsy, Canadiana-look in their retail area. Any pleasing display will promote the sale of your retail items. Your guests want to take home those warm, Northern Ontario memories!

References:

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

BEST PRACTICES IN RECREATION

“People who cannot find time for recreation are obliged, sooner or later, to find time for illness.”

- John Wanamaker

Your guests come to your operation on their vacation to relax and to participate in some sort of activity in the great Northern Ontario outdoors. As a business owner, you can improve upon your guests' recreational experiences. New attractions and activities will enhance your guests' vacation, encourage longer stays, and can attract new customers. To improve on what you and nature have to offer, think in terms of how best to provide additional or new forms of recreation.

There are several ways to make your operation more attractive to both new and returning guests:

1. Add services to your existing operation
2. Recreational programming
3. Alternative types of recreational activities
4. Offer tourism packages

1. ADD SERVICES TO YOUR EXISTING OPERATION

Improving recreation at your operation can be done by simply adding more on-site services or features. Some services can be relatively inexpensive, but some additions can come with a hefty price tag. Depending on your clientele you may consider adding:

A Children's Playground - Many operations are family oriented and playgrounds are great for younger children. You can purchase a familytype playground from any local hardware or lumber store. Don't forget the sand box!

A Fitness or nature trail - Take a walk and identify natural features on a self-guided trail using a brochure or signs.

An Outdoor Sports Areas - Many people enjoy being involved with traditional sports. You may consider setting up one or some of the following:

Tennis court or shuffleboard court

Horseshoe pit

Beach volleyball net, basketball hoop

Play field for soccer, softball, football

Miniature golf - A course can be constructed utilizing the natural terrain.

Winter attractions can include:

Skating rink

Snow shoeing trails

Cross country skiing trails

A Recreation Centre or Entertainment Centre- This can be a large indoor room or separate cabin where all guests can go on a rainy day. Be sure to have books, magazines, games, and puzzles on hand. Craft supplies, toys, and dress up clothes are great for smaller children. Other options can include a piano, pool table or pingpong table.

If your operation is modern, you may consider having more electronic forms of entertainment such as video games, big screen TV, or even a computer with Internet access.

A Fitness Centre - Many people work out regularly and want to keep their fitness level up, even while on vacation. Having an on-site fitness centre may make customers choose your operation over a similar facility. Your fitness centre can be a large room or separate cabin. On-site equipment can include a treadmill, free weights, bench press, universal gyms, etc.

A Hot Tub or Sauna - Many people enjoy these features (especially after a workout in your fitness centre!). Make sure that rules are posted.

Add Extras to your American Plan or charge for:

Pedal Boat Rentals - Are usually very popular. Many people, teenager and children included, enjoy pedaling around the lake to sightsee and maybe even fish. Establish rules and make sure that PFDs are included.

Water Skiing - with a larger boat and motor

Pontoon Boat guided tours - take in the quiet lake sights with a breakfast tour or evening tour complete with hors d'oeuvres or carefully planned snacks.

GST Rebate for Non-Residents of Canada - Don't forget that non-residents of Canada are eligible for a Goods and Services Tax rebate of seven percent on their purchases and accommodation fees. Many non-resident guests are not aware of this rebate. You can have the GST rebate form on hand for them to fill out on their return to their own country. You can obtain the forms from Revenue Canada or download it from this site:

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pbg/gf/gst176/gst176-03e.pdf>

2. RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Recreational programming can be an important marketing tool. Planned activities create products that guests can relate to and use. Programming can generate new business and certainly encourage repeat business.

Organizing different types of activities can make a guest's vacation more memorable. Planned activities can range from such simple things as a weekly fish fry to hiring the services of local speakers, musicians, or storytellers to create an evening of entertainment. Types of programming will vary with your type of clientele. Programming ideas can include such things as:

Common meals - BBQ's, potluck suppers, Thursday fish fry, pancake breakfast, corn roast, campfire night complete with marshmallow roast and s'mores.

Games - for the kids and adults. Games can include all kinds of activities (such as three-legged race, spoon and egg race, etc.) and be set up like a Camp Olympics. Prizes can include merchandise with your logo.

Fish derby - annual events at some operations. You can plan a miniderby (even perch, rock bass, catfish) for your guests, complete with prizes.

Dance party night, bingo night

July 1st and July 4th celebrations - complete with fireworks. **Christmas in July** is another day of celebration!

Organized berry picking - you can do this when certain berries are in season (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, cranberries). This can be extended to mushroom picking and edible plant picking, if you know what you are doing.

Rock hounding - free souvenirs! Have some rock guide handbooks available to help with identification.

Off-sight picnic - plan a picnic to a near-by scenic spot. You can incorporate berry picking or rock hounding!

Scenic flights - short scenic flights can be arranged with a pilot in your area if your lake is large enough for them to land and take-off.

Pontoon boat cruises - best when the lake is quiet, in the morning or evening.

Spa, Yoga, T'ai Chi sessions - bring in some experts if you have enough interest.

Entertainment - Movie night, guest speakers complete with slides, storytellers, musicians, Native drummers or dancers. Use the local talent in your area. You may include the entertainment in your American Plan but charge others for the service.

Make up a weekly schedule to allow guests time to prepare for the fun. Try to include a contingency activity in case of bad weather. To publicize the events you can:

- hand out a printed program at registration
- post activities on a blackboard or poster in your lobby or outside
- post the program in the recreation centre, dining room, or in each cabin or guest room
- personally invite guests when they register and remind them when you see them during the day (have staff remind them as well)
- mention the daily activity on the bottom of the menu

Consider providing a **baby-sitting service** for your guests in case the adults want a night out. A couple of other nice touches are:

A welcome on arrival - have complimentary coffee or other beverages and perhaps some fruit or snacks on hand as guests register. If you have a regular checkin day at your operation, a wine and cheese party on the first night is a great way for guests to become acquainted.

A thank you - or farewell on checkout day. Again, coffee and cake or sweets on checkout day is a nice touch for thanking guests for their patronage. Guests will remember your hospitality!

3. ALTERNATIVE TYPES OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

You may consider adding different types of recreational activities to your operation. Listed below are some of the newer types of activities that are happening in outdoor tourism. For a brief introduction to some of these activities you can check out Noto's **Ontario Outdoor Adventure Guide**. The web sites will have more detailed information as to how to become involved with each activity type.

Paddling in Ontario. Canoeing and Kayaking.

<http://www.paddlingontario.com>

Hiking the Trails of Ontario

http://ontariooutdoor.com/index.php?sec=1&id=3&a_id=3

Biking the Trails of Ontario

http://ontariooutdoor.com/index.php?sec=1&id=1&a_id=2

Wildlife Viewing in Ontario

http://ontariooutdoor.com/index.php?sec=1&id=4&a_id=4

ATVing in Ontario

<http://www.atvontario.com>

Snowmobiling in Ontario

<http://www.ofsc.on.ca>

(a note of caution - motorized activities and non-motorized activities are usually not compatible)

You may even consider relatively untapped activities such as:

Fly-fishing

<http://www.fishontario.com/fly-fishing/>

or:

Rock or ice climbing

Sailing

Dog sledding

Cross country skiing

Snow shoeing

To check out other outfitters that are already offering some of these activities go to:

<http://noto.net>

4. OFFER TOURISM PACKAGES

Packaging means offering your operation, with all its facilities and services, to your guests as an all-inclusive **per person** package. Most Outfitters have some form of the basic types of packaging:

American Plan (AP) - rate that includes three full meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Modified American Plan (MAP)- rate that includes two meals, usually breakfast and dinner

Housekeeping Plan (HP) - rate that involves renting a cabin with full cooking and dining facilities, no meals included

European Plan (EP) - guest room only, no meals

Continental Plan (CP) - guest room rate that includes a continental breakfast juice, coffee, pastries.

Bed-and-Breakfast (B&B) - guests stay in the Outfitter's home or main lodge. Breakfasts, snacks and a more personal approach to tourism are offered.

Packaging your facilities and services has many advantages, both to you and your guests:

1. **Guests want to know total vacation costs.** Guests want to know in advance, approximately how much their vacation will cost. Most people will allocate a certain amount of money when planning a vacation and don't want any hidden costs popping up once they arrive. Both US and overseas guests are looking for quality all-inclusive vacations.
2. **Ease of quoting prices.** Include as many items as possible in your package price. Include charges for cabin, meals, boat, fuel, bait, guiding, flyin services, programmed activities and any special services in your package rate. Your package should be all-inclusive and the package rate should be charged **per person**. If the services are not used, you get paid anyway! Quoting an all inclusive vacation in dollars is easy and price disputes rarely occur.
3. **Easy to administer.** One all-inclusive price gets you and your staff away from documenting every transaction. Guest billing is simplified since there are no additional rentals or services. Marketing is also simplified because specific per person prices are included in your advertisements.
4. **Gas Tax Refund.** Federal and Provincial gas tax rebates are only available to guests (via you) on a package plan. No package plan = no gas tax rebate. For more information about the gas tax rebate go to:

http://www.trd.fin.gov.on.ca/userfiles/html/cma_3_8883_1.html

5. **Rebate on guests' own boat and motor.** A rebate differential should be used when guests bring their own boat and motor. For example: if \$170 is included in your package price for a boat, motor and gas, a lesser amount (say \$130) should be rebated. You still have to cover your fixed costs on your equipment so it is best not to rebate the full amount. Guests with their own boat and motor should be charged a docking fee and gas. Some operators also charge higher docking fees for larger boats (over 25 hp) than for smaller boats.

Setting Package Rates

Setting the rates is the most important decision that you will make during the entire year. It is imperative that you set your package rates by knowing what your actual costs are. The best practice is to consider cost plus profit. You need to have excellent accounting records to properly estimate your package pricing.

Basically, you determine all of your overhead costs (mortgage, salaries, advertising, taxes, expected profit, memberships, etc.) and your variable costs (gas, food, labour, merchandise, heat, hydro, repairs etc.). Determine how many guests you expect will come and how long they stay during a normal year. Then figure out the number of **guest days**. Divide your total costs by the number of guest days and you should come up with the figure **per person** per day that you require to meet your expectations. It is best to go through this exercise with an accountant, bookkeeper or small business professional if you don't have the skills.

Once you have your per person package price, check with the package prices of other, similar quality, similar services operations. You should be in the same ballpark pricing range. Rates should increase yearly by at least the rate of inflation.

Packaging other, Off-site Products or Services

To increase the number and types of products that you offer, you may decide to offer packages that go beyond the scope of the traditional hunting and fishing or ecotourism operation. By creating unique tourism packages, you can attract customers that would not usually consider staying at your operation. Listed below are some types of packaging that work well in the industry:

1. **Packaging local attractions and entertainment** Along with lodging and meals, you may want to design a shorter stay or even a weekend package that includes a trip or visit to a local attraction or an entertainment event. This type of package can be easily put together if your operation is not in the remote wilderness. Packages can include trips to a science centre, casino, racetrack, an entertainment or even educational event.
2. **Packaging with special events.** One-time packages can be arranged in conjunction with a special event in your area. You can create a Fishing Derby or tournament package. Other packages can be created around the local First Nation's Pow-wow, music festivals, local community celebrations (such as a lumberjack festival) and even sporting events such as a local golf tournament.

3. **Special interest packages.** Weddings, honeymoons, anniversary and even family reunion packages are becoming more popular with Outfitters. Hotels do a great business on these events. So can you!
4. **Packages for specific customer groups.** Consider holding meetings, retreats, or educational sessions for small groups. Offer packages designed to meet their specific needs.
5. **Off-season packages.** Consider creating a package to lengthen your business season. Offer special packages in the spring and fall. There are many retired baby-boomers that are active and enjoy traveling. Offseason packages can attract their business.

Creating a Package

For a step-by-step approach to developing a package, you can obtain a copy of the **Tourism Packaging Manual, for Ontario** from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation. An on line copy (72 pages) is available at:

http://www.tourismpartners.com/publications/IndustryResources/PackagingManual/indres_packagingmanual_COMPLETE.pdf

For packages where the draw is the **attraction or event**, you need to build the package around it. In some cases, you will have to negotiate with other businesses to secure enough space or tickets for your customers. This is usually a win-win situation for all involved, and you should be able to negotiate a discount from these businesses for a certain number of guaranteed spaces or tickets.

For all package types, you need to ensure that:

- your package is planned carefully and marketed well in advanced
- your package is complete
- your package costs less than the total costs of buying the package components separately
- the package is well-coordinated and organized
- you have a clear refund policy if an event is cancelled

To **price a package** you need to consider all of your costs. Packaging is a tool used by businesses to increase the number of customers patronizing their operation. Pass any savings onto your customers rather than yourself if you do receive a discount from another business.

You need to cover all of your costs plus a profit, yet remain competitive with other businesses marketing the same type of package.

When offering a package, make sure that your **insurance company** is willing to cover all aspects of your package.

If you have no intention of ever offering a package, you may consider having an **information rack** in your lobby, complete with brochures from other businesses in your area for the convenience of your guests.

References:

The Outfitters' Manual. NOTO. Circa 1985.

Lodging Operator's Manual. BC Motels Campgrounds Resort Association. 1997.

Snapshots: an introduction to tourism. 3rd Ed. 2004. Norma Polovitz Nickerson and Paula Kerr.
Pearson Education Canada, Inc., Toronto, ON.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

"Every day is Earth Day."

- Unknown

Much of the allure for tourists visiting our area is northern Ontario's pristine wilderness and remoteness. Without a doubt, the image of a windswept pine on a small rocky island with a loon floating nearby is Northern Ontario!

To promote and maintain this wilderness, outfitters must become stewards of their surrounding environment. Environmental stewardship involves the responsible management of natural resources including proper waste management, energy conservation, and educating others to make smart environmental choices. Not only is environmental stewardship good for sustaining our unique wilderness, it is also good for our economic and social environment!

For the outfitter, there are several areas where sound environmental stewardship can occur. Most environmental concerns involve providing the customer with the essentials of life in a clean and healthy manner.

1. DRINKING WATER

Since Walkerton, the regulations for providing drinking water to clients have changed and are still changing. Changes that will affect outfitters have not been resolved. Stay tuned to NOTO to see how drinking water regulations will ultimately be resolved!

In the meantime, if you want to learn more about drinking water systems, you can check out the Ministry of the Environment's website:

Non-municipal Drinking Water Systems. Main government site:
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/sdwa/dwsr.htm#nonm>

Determine which category your operation belongs to and then download the information that pertains to you:

Year-round water system owner/operator
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/4710e.pdf>

Seasonal Campground
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/4712e.pdf>

Non-municipal systems serving the public
<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/4718e.pdf>

2. WASTES

Wastes are stuff that you get rid of. *Naturally*, there are different types of wastes.

Sewage

Most operators have their own septic systems. Septic systems are custom designed for each operation and their specific needs. Septic system design can be complicated and all septic systems must meet the requirements set out by the government. Most septic systems fall under the Building Code. In northern Ontario, septic systems are regulated by the local Health Unit or Conservation Authority.

The Ministry of the Environment has a Questions and Answers site for general information:
http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/septic/septic_qa.htm

Garbage

Garbage is where the 4 Rs come into play: **Refuse**, **Reduce**, **Reuse** and **Recycle**. The 4 Rs are most effective when they are used in the order that is presented:

Refuse excessive packaging. (Or **Rethink** your purchase)

Reduce by buying in bulk.

Reuse items whenever possible. Repair items when you are able. Bring home items in manufacturer's boxes or in cloth bags.

Recycle wherever possible.

Check out recycling programs in your area. Many outfitters go the extra mile by sorting and delivering recyclables to places outside of their area or by donating cans to local groups.

FACT: European visitors are particularly offended by lack of recycling facilities in our province!

Composting is also recycling. Composting can be done in a way that does not attract wildlife, **OR** it can be part of your customer's wildlife viewing experience!

<http://www.wildernessisland.com/main/nature/eco/compost/index.html>

3. ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Alternative energy or renewable energy is any type of energy that is not derived from fossil fuels. There are five main kinds of renewable energy: solar, wind, hydroelectric, geothermal and biomass. Depending on your location, you may be entirely off of "the grid" (Ontario's hydroelectricity supply), or you may want to supplement your energy requirements with a renewable source for environmental reasons. There is plenty of information, either on the web or in book form, about particular renewable energy solutions. If you are serious about installing a renewable energy system, it is best to have a knowledgeable company design a custom energy system for you. You can also design your own system with much research and study. Here are a few web sites to get you interested and started on your path to an alternative energy solution:

Solar Energy

Photovoltaic: Using Photovoltaic Energy in Cottages and Lodges
http://www.canren.gc.ca/tech_appl/index.asp?Cald=5&PgId=264

Wind Energy

An Introduction to Stand-Alone Wind Energy Systems (8 pages)

http://canwea.ca/downloads/en/PDFS/Intro_Stand_Alone.pdf

Stand-Alone Wind Energy Systems. A Buyer's Guide (50 pages)

http://canwea.ca/downloads/en/PDFS/Stand_Alone.pdf

Geothermal Energy

Geothermal energy is heat that is extracted from the ground. Geothermal heat is transferred to your facility from the ground or even a nearby lake by using underground or underwater pipes and a heat pump.

Transferring Heat Using Pipes Under the Ground or in Water

http://www.canren.gc.ca/tech_appl/index.asp?Cald=3&PgId=123

Biomass Energy

Biomass or bioenergy is, for our purposes, the burning of fuel wood. Most tourist operations burn wood for heat, cooking or simply for creating atmosphere. Burning wood for heat is a science and there is always something to learn. To burn your wood in the most efficient way, check out:

A Guide to Residential Wood Heating. (63 pages)

<http://www.fiprecan.ca/woodguide.pdf>

4. GREEN IDEAS

Want to learn more and do more to become a greener operator? The following web sites will further open your mind:

Green Ontario. Conservation solutions

<http://www.greenontario.com>

The Green Pages. Canada's environmental information portal (Ontario page)

<http://www.thegreenpages.ca/on/home.asp>

Mountain Equipment Co-op. Green Building Program

<http://mec.ca/greenbuildings>

Green Globe 21. An organization that promotes international ecotourism standards

<http://www.greenglobe21.com>

Sustainable Canadian Companies

<http://www.6degrees.ca/>

NATURAL RESOURCES and YOU

"Lets treat Canada as if we plan to stay."

- Susan Holtz

"The object of our game with Nature is not to win, but to keep on playing."

- Unknown

Visitors come from around the world to experience Ontario's abundant natural resources. The types of natural resources your guests experiences depends on your location and particular type of operation.

In Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is the government body responsible for managing the natural resources for the people of Ontario and our visitors. You can find your local MNR office and contact at:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/csb/message/mnroffices.html>

For tourism purposes, Ontario's Natural Resources are categorized into the following four sections:

1. Fish (or fishing)
2. Wildlife (hunting or viewing)
3. Forestry and Tourism
4. Crown Land (use, outpost camps etc.)

The MNR has management policies, guidelines and general information for each of these different areas.

1. FISH (or FISHING)

If your guests are interested in fishing (**or hunting**), they need to have valid **Ontario Outdoors Card and Licenses**. For more information about the Outdoor Card and Licenses see:

http://outdoorscard.mnr.gov.on.ca/english/oc_initial.asp?tid

The licenses will be different for residents of Canada versus non-residents of Canada. To determine the types of licenses that your particular guests require, you can access the following two web sites:

Resident (Canadian) Fishing License Options:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/ocopt.html>

Non-Resident Fishing License Options:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/ocnonresopt.html>

It is a good idea to have these options printed and posted (or on hand) for your guests to see. The different types of licenses can be very confusing!

All of this information is also available in the **Recreational Fishing Regulations Summary** which is printed by the MNR every year. You can get a copy of the Recreational Fishing Regulations Summary, in print form, from the MNR or you can download it from this website:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/pubs/pubmenu.html#fish>

More details about fishing regulations, authority of Conservation Officers, fish sanctuaries, gear restrictions, etc., can be found at:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/gen.html>

Depending on the type of guests that you have and your interest in fish management, fish biology and fish ecology; the following websites may be useful:

Transporting Sport Fish in Ontario

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/N100CD_p917.html

Guide to Eating Sports Fish

<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/guide/index.htm>

Fish Stocking Guidelines for Inland waters of Ontario

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/stocking2002/index.html>

Guide to Stocked Lakes. A must for every Angler's tackle box

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/csb/news/2002/jul3nr02.html>

Stop the Invasion! A list of exotic species that threaten Ontario's waters

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/threat.html>

2. WILDLIFE (HUNTING or VIEWING)

As for fishing, guests interested in hunting require a valid **Ontario Outdoors Card** and the appropriate **license(s)**.

Hunting in Ontario can be very complicated. Regulations vary depending on species, location, type of weapon used, resident vs. non-resident, etc. As an operator, you should be aware of the regulations in your area for the particular animal that your guests want to hunt. The following two websites contain general information about hunting in Ontario:

Hunt Ontario. A 24-page document listing the hunting opportunities in Ontario.

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/pubs/hunt%5font.pdf>

Ontario Hunting Regulations Summary (also available in print)

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/pubs/pubmenu.html>

The two Big Game species that are most sought after in Ontario are **moose** and **black bear**.

The following websites may be of interest to you and your clients if they are interested in hunting these animals:

Moose hunting opportunities in Ontario

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/csb/news/2005/jan14fs_05.html

Moose Hunter Fact Sheet (applying to the moose tag draw)

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/introandfastfa.pdf>

Black Bear Management in Ontario (21 pages)

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/ebr/nbrc/appendix_6.pdf

Importing Firearms

Non-resident hunters can temporarily import firearms but some restrictions apply. For more information on importing a firearm into Canada, applying for a Canadian firearms license or an Authorization to Transport (ATT), contact the Canadian Firearms Centre in Ottawa (1-800-731-4000) or view their website:

<http://www.cfc.gc.ca>

Wildlife Viewing

No license is required for wildlife viewing. Ensuring the safety of your guests should be part of your risk management plan. This not only serves to protect the guests, but is useful for insurance purposes and for protection from possible legal action.

It is illegal to harass, chase, etc., a wild animal for viewing purposes under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. All wildlife must be observed in their natural state and circumstances.

3. FORESTRY AND TOURISM

Both resource-based tourism and the forest industry contribute to the economy of northern Ontario. Both industries use the land and the forests for their own, sometimes conflicting purposes. There is a need to plan and manage forest resources in order to recognize the importance and interests of these two industries.

Resource Stewardship Agreements (RSAs) are negotiated contracts between a forest company and a tourist operator. The RSA outlines the tourism values that will be protected by a forest management company. RSAs ensure that both the tourist operator and a forest management company will obtain maximum value from the forest.

The following web sites contain relevant information pertaining to RSAs:

NOTO and the Resource Stewardship Agreement Process

<http://noto.net/rsa/Stewardship.html>

Addressing Tourism Needs in Forest Management - Resource Stewardship Agreements (RSAs) - an Ontario Legacy Project. A brief overview of RSAs.

<http://ontariosforests.mnr.gov.on.ca/tourismoverview.cfm>

Tourism and Forestry Industry Memorandum of Understanding (9 pages)

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/forests/adr%20program/MOU.pdf>

Management Guidelines for Forestry and Resource Based Tourism (45 pages)
http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/forests/foresttourism/doc/tourism_guidelines.pdf

Guide to Resource Stewardship Agreements (61 pages)
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/forests/adr%20program/RSA.pdf>

Guide to Forest Management Planning (20 pages)
http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/forests/fmp_guide/fmp.pdf

4. CROWN LAND USE

Crown Land is publicly owned land that is used in tourism for such things as overnight camping, outpost camps, hunting areas, trails, etc. Operators that use crown land for their clients have a legal agreement with the MNR. This legal agreement, called "Tenure", lists the rights of the operator when using Crown land. There are different types of tenure depending on specific Crown land use. For information regarding Crown land agreements in your area contact your local (district) MNR office.

Listed below are a few general information websites.

Buying and Renting Crown Land. General Information.
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/crownland/p812.html>

When is Tenure Over Crown Land required?
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/crownland/p8123473.html>

Types of Crown Land Tenure.
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/crownland/p8123476.html>

Crown Land and Camping
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/fishing/crownland.html>

List of MNR offices:
<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/csb/message/mnroffices.html>