

Back to Basics : How About a Nice Sleep?

Let me begin with the good news. As a finance industry professional I should use this bulletin to talk about the federal budget and go into great depths of analysis. Out of respect for you dear reader I am not going to do that save to summarise the plan. It's very simple. The feds will continue to tax the hell out of us, borrow and spend like drunken sailors, embrace insane energy policies, preside over a cost-of-living crisis and siphon some of our taxes back to us in the form of subsidies to compensate for the economic problems the core policies are creating. Charles Ponzi would be proud.

Let's move on.....

As many of you will know I like to travel. Regrettably, my preferred destinations tend to be of the cold and snowy variety, a combination not favoured by the managing director. As a result of my upbringing, I'm also a bit of a fan of the outback road trip, a venture only favoured by the MD in winter as she is allergic to heat and flies. As a result of these defined and not negotiable preferences I do a bit of solo travel which forces me to undertake the research and reservation process usually managed by she who must be obeyed.

Most recently I've had a solo ski stint in Canada and am now in the process of final planning for a drive to Winton for that town's 150 anniversary celebration. The fact that western Queensland is experiencing biblical rainfall has not deterred me and I'm sure you can follow my progress via the evening news. Look out for an idiot sitting on the roof of a bright orange 4x4 between two "If It's Flooded Forget It" signs. The MD tells the kids to do likewise and be proud of their father's adventurous spirit. To give her credit she has put a large inflatable Flamingo in the back of the truck and encouraged me to use it as a life preserver should the need arise. She seems to find the mental image quite amusing as the SES pursue one old finance broker astride a giant pink bird down some flooded causeway.

Anyway, I digress.

The process of planning a trip, visiting web sites and reading reviews got me thinking. What is it that I'm actually looking for? Most hotels and accommodation businesses, particularly in tourism hotspots, go to great length to wax lyrical about the property, the cuisine and the magnificence of the location. That's all well and good but if the bed is designed by the Bombay nails company, the shower pressure and temperature akin to a cat's piddle and the noise from the bar an unbearable doof doof debacle then the view and ambience are going to be somewhat less alluring. What's interesting is that in my experience the more remote the location the more the emphasis turns to the basics of a comfortable stay.

It's almost as if motels in remote locations know that they are in the middle of nowhere and need to make the basics great, while hotels in amazing places feel no such imperative. On the one hand there's a philosophy of making the room exceptional coz there's bugga all else to sell the property, while others expect the location to compensate for shortfalls in what the guest experiences. Of course, that's not to say there are no terrible motels out west or that hotels in Whistler are awful but there is most certainly a discernible difference in how these properties are marketed. My attention is always drawn to web content and reviews that focus on the basics of a good night's sleep coz let's face it, that's what you are buying. Take a look at many up-market hotel sites and revel in the poetic descriptions of the property's history, the remarkable vistas and most importantly, the wellness and spa offering. No mention of a super comfortable bed, a quite double-glazed cocoon or a 100PSI, 40degree shower. You might get a pillow menu which you may need to use as a mattress topper, and what is it with this no top sheet trend, I hate that!



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Meanwhile, out west I have just booked a motel that doesn't go on about the art in the lobby, the latte bar or the fine dining. It does however include on its web site the brand and model of the mattresses they use, the water pressure and temperature of the shower and the inventory in the room. They also make it clear that the motel is very quiet which is a good thing coz if you get the wrong one those road trains can be quite the heart starter. It's all very matter of fact and I'm in.

Here's a theory which I know you just can't wait for. Maybe it's the case that in the world of the influencer, and as society becomes more superficial, businesses of all sorts feel a need to gild the lily when a perfectly serviceable and functional tomato vine would do just as well. How many times do we see persuasive and slick marketing dupe us into engaging with a business that is terrible at actually delivering the core product or service for which they exist? For me, a business that strips away all the superficial messaging and the "we love our clients" crap and just delivers, will win out every time. Here's a good example helpfully provided by Telstra:

"We believe it's people who give purpose to our technology. So we're committed to staying close to our customers and providing them the best experience. And delivering the best technology. On the best network. Because our purpose is to build a connected future so everyone can thrive."

How about we update that value statement to

"At Telstra we promise to turn up on time and not stuff you around. We promise not to leave businesses without internet coverage for days on end. We promise not to employ arrogant and rude young tech heads in our stores."

Here's one from a major international hotel operator which admittedly does a pretty good job:

"Accor's core values, which guide their actions and interactions, include Innovation, Trust, Spirit of Conquest, Guest Passion, Respect, and Sustainable Performance"

What a load of waffle. Try this.....

"At Accor we are committed to providing you with a hassle-free check in, a clean room, an exceptionally comfy bed, a hot shower with great pressure, and nice helpful staff"

In my experience Accor actually do provide this experience so why not sing it from the rooftops. For even greater amusement I encourage readers to Google core values for any of our larger corporates, particularly in the financial services sector.

That's about it folks. In the leisure and short stay accommodation game we are selling sleep. Everything else is peripheral to that basic fact and if you want to see how it's done, go west.

In closing... this will be my last column. The next one will be authored by the MD and has a working title of "How I Brought My Idiot Husband's Body Home and Met a Nice Policeman in The Process". Stay tuned.

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specialists with
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