

Tourism Reimagined: WHEN CREATIVE RISK SPARKS REAL GROWTH

Creative Risk Quick-Start Guide

Taking a creative risk - and realizing the benefits - requires a change of mindset. It won't be easy (the worthwhile things never are), but as you saw in the presentation, there are a number of brands genuinely benefiting from this way of thinking.

So here's a little checklist you can use to keep your team, your agency - and yourself - accountable for stepping into these unfamiliar and occasionally uncomfortable spaces.

- Every piece of marketing serves a purpose; as you evaluate it, keep that purpose in your mind. And remember, it's not just what it says, it's about how it makes you FEEL. Balance the functional/rational/analytical with the emotional (because that's where the real decisions are made).
- Has anyone done it - or something like it - in the DMO world? Two ways to go with that - you either feel a need to do things that haven't been done OR you want to mitigate risk by seeing similar work in the world. Choose your path.
- It's okay to start small and grow into risk - explore opportunities to get curious and play in social platforms. How does your destination sound in different channels? Try it out without featuring anything for sale, or even without mentioning a single partner.
- If you're feeling a little (but not too) feisty, try testing some low cost digital campaigns focused on uber-niche tourism audiences and travel trends. Things like sleep tourism, set-jetting, or experience chasing (for example - eclipses, bird migrations, northern lights viewing, stargazing, firefly season, etc.)
- A/B test your creative; experiment and see what the data tells you. Don't pull it after one day; it's important to give the media channel a chance, in order to learn how people are responding. Use this opportunity to test edgier headlines or creative ideas, put up against more traditional creative.
- Find weird. Find authentic. Find what locals like. Step out of what they know (eat, stay, play) and serve 'em what they don't (the neighborhood cat who is now a TikTok star.)
- Pare down. Try saying one thing, and one thing only, instead of trying to tell the full story in one little ad. Cramming in a hundred messages leads to information overload - a surefire way to make people forget you.
- Build support within staff and stakeholders; create a community of advocates and champions. Create a culture of boundary pushing and finding the creative edge. Rely on them when they say you're pushing too hard - or not hard enough.

WE'D LOVE TO CHAT FURTHER!

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Creative Risk Quick-Start Guide (for Stakeholders)

Some have a great relationship with stakeholders who are super supportive; others have a love/hate relationship there (and some have both!). Either way, as you see the value of stepping into risk, having them on your side and understanding what you're doing is an important way for you to feel comfortable taking those risks.

Here's a little checklist you can use to help ensure you're doing everything you can in bringing them on board, helping them keep their counsel strategic, and celebrating their contributions.

- Stress the importance of strategic feedback; keep them out of the weeds. You don't need the Board to comment on a color palette or typeface; you want their feedback on an idea, the concept, and how it will make the audience **feel**.
- Don't just invite the leaders of the Board to participate; include those folks who've a) shown a particular interest in and passion for the destination and its brand, and b) folks who represent a variety of subgroups and less well-represented voices.
- Invite direct engagement between the board and your agency partners (if relevant). Often a third party voice can say something in a way that's different (and often more effective) than you or one of your staff.
- Set up a "risk workshop" in which key staff, stakeholders and board members are invited to discuss the balance of healthy and scary risk; how to support and encourage the former while managing and mitigating the latter.
- Put testing mechanisms in place; demonstrate and reinforce that this is not merely "for fun," but a way of growing and enriching the destination brand's voice, which leads to greater awareness and interest. AI can be a good low-barrier-of-entry system to start to stress test conceptual ideas (but don't take it's word for it. Be sure to poke, prod and ask real humans, too.)
- Enlist their support not just as stakeholders but as residents to help you find local, authentic stories. Give them the opportunity to see something in the world and know it emanated from an idea they had; that's powerful as a way to more strongly connect them to you and your mission.
- Work with your stakeholders to create a "risk budget" - a small (or medium) budget specifically set aside for creative risk-taking.
- Invite them to push you to go farther; appreciate them when they pull you back.

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